

Public Square

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Preparing for the unthinkable

Icy roads are a nuisance. Losing electricity for a few hours is an annoyance. Losing electricity and communication for days on end is tragic and dangerous, as we have seen in the past weeks.

The spirit and generosity of Keizerites was evident everywhere you turned after the city was hit by an ice storm. Neighbor assisted neighbors residents jumped in to help clear the community. In times of trouble American society doesn't ask how it can help, it digs in for the benefit of their fellow man.

We have to wonder what would happen if everybody was in the same boat in a lifechanging disaster? Some say that our region is overdue for a major earthquake but predicting an earthquake is nigh impossible. Experts can speculate, but nature doesn't check in with humanity before an earthquake.

Modern weather forecasting can almost pinpoint windstorms, snow and ice storms and heat waves, allowing each of us to prepare for

them. We need not worry about an ice storm in August or a heat wave in January. Yet every day of the year we all live under the threat of an big earthquake. That is the disaster every household needs to be prepared for.

An earthquake that destroys everything will affect those that traditionally respond: fire and police. Households need to take the steps to look after themselves.

The recent ice storm and power outages demonstrate the importance of having the items needed in a major event.

Any fire district or fire department can provide vital information about preparing for an emergency.

What should every house have stocked in its emergency kit? Start with water, several gallons per person. Non-perishable food items and a manual can opener. Batteries of all sizes, battery-operate radio, blankets, first aid kit, a whistle (to signal for help), face masks to help filter con-

taminated air, plastic sheeting and duct tape, tools such as a wrench or pliers, warm clothing and footwear, candles and matches.

It is a long list but it will help people to survive on their own in case help is not immediately on the way. An emergency kit is a necessity along with a plan for one's family. Some families hold fire drills in their house; families can also design and hold earthquake drills. The fire district is a source of information for these kinds of drills.

We do not want to live in fear for what may not happen in our lifetimes. Being prepared is being smart. One thing that can make a disaster worse is not knowing what to do. Learning what needs to be done if a catastrophe strikes should be a top priority for every household. Neighboring households can team up to stock kits and have a plan to look after each other.

A power outage can be fixed; destroyed infrastructure is a challenge most of us are unprepared for.

—LAZ

editorial

other voices

Rush Limbaugh's success

By DEBRA J. SAUNDERS

I met Rush Limbaugh before he became a god.

It was the mid-1980s. Our careers had begun but had not taken off. Rush had a radio talk show on Sacramento station KFBK-AM 1530. I worked in the California legislature.

Later he moved to New York for the syndicated talk show that put him in car radios, as he would say, "across the fruited plain."

More than once, Rush told me that his show would never fall out of favor, as so many other shows did, and that he expected to broadcast until the end. Turns out, he was right.

You can't defy gravity, I responded at the time, TV and radio shows rise and fall. Rush believed that he would be different. And he was.

Rush, 70, never lost his audience.

He put a premium on being entertaining and it paid off. Limbaugh ditched the standard talk show formula of hosts talking to a series of tap-dancing guests. Limbaugh made the show about himself, his shtick, his pet issues and conservative ideas.

We remained friends over the years. After his syndication, we'd get together for an adult beverage or a meal if we happened to be in the same town. Later we'd communicate over the phone or by email.

We disagreed on a number of issues and his language choices, but this is not the time to rake up dead leaves.

Now it's hard to imagine politics

before Limbaugh.

Republicans credited the bombastic host for their victorious take-back of the House in 1994, which had been under Democratic control since 1952. That shift of power was followed by then-President Bill Clinton's decision to sign a GOP welfare reform bill with a work requirement.

Since those heady days, the left has complained that Limbaugh—one man—had outside influence in the news media. Liberals spoke as if Rush owned all of talk radio, against which TV news networks and newspapers couldn't possibly compete. It just wasn't fair, they argued.

Few realized that Rush was able to amass that kind of power precisely because he offered something big media could not provide—balance. No, not in his show, which was unapologetically conservative, but by presenting arguments that were not treated as credible by the media establishment.

"Dittoheads" often thank Rush for giving them the ingredients to make arguments that were missing from their pre-Rush news diet. If big media had been more balanced,

Rush Limbaugh would not have become a GOP deity.

Pundits have commented on Limbaugh's ties to former President Donald Trump, who awarded Limbaugh with the Medal of Freedom during the State of the Union address in 2020.

Trump was not the first Republican president to honor the college dropout. President George H.W. Bush invited Limbaugh for dinner and an overnight stay in the Lincoln Bedroom. Rush was tickled that the patrician president carried his luggage.

Former President George W. Bush, who released a statement Wednesday calling Limbaugh a friend, phoned Rush for his 20th anniversary show in 2008—and George H.W. Bush called in as well. So, it's a mistake to see Limbaugh as a GOP disrupter.

As Trey Bohn, White House director of radio media under the junior Bush, noted: Limbaugh was buoyed by "an unwavering belief in American Exceptionalism."

Rush didn't bristle at disagreement. I took him to task more than once and found that he enjoyed the give-and-take. Of course he did, he was at the center of the action.

(Creators Syndicate)

Is there a future for birds?

By JIM PARR

Since the mid-1970s, approximately 3 billion or roughly 29% of the North American bird population has disappeared. More recently the 2019 national annual bird survey counted about 6 million fewer birds than was expected. There are numerous suspected and known reasons for this decline.

It is known that industrial operations kill millions of birds each year. Add to that, the unexpected losses of birds. For example, over several days this past September, approximately 200,000 migrating birds mysteriously dropped dead from the air over New Mexico. Examinations by federal wildlife laboratories found the birds to be in very poor condition, as if starved. Like they just ran out of energy and fell from the sky. There are other suggested causes that may have contributed to the die off but it appears that starvation is the main cause. These migrating birds just simply ran out of energy and died during their flight south. Birds are also killed by crashes into tall buildings and wind turbines and cell towers.

In another blow to birds, in the last days of the Trump administration, rules that required industry to minimize or eliminate accidental and/or incidental harm to birds as a result of their operations were removed. Industry of course does not set out to kill birds. Before the rule change, provisions of the North America Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, required industry to minimize or prevent incidental harm to birds as a result of their operations. Examples of accidental or incidental harm include such things as

oil spills, exposure to toxins at waste treatment and storage basins and lagoons, habitat destruction, etc. (Maybe this provision of the treaty will be restored by the Biden administration.)

What are some suggested large scale actions that can be taken to slow and hopefully stop the loss of bird populations? During fall and spring migration times, reduce night time lighting of tall buildings. Reduce or stop some

wind turbine operation during the dark hours. Many birds fly at night and can be disoriented by lights and sounds leading to fatal crashes. A reduction in large scale insecticide use can help. Most song birds are insect eaters and require insects in their diet to maintain condition and to feed their young. Minimizing the population of feral cats will reduce bird kills.

What can a homeowner do? Create and maintain a bird friendly backyard. Make your yard a refuge for birds by planting shrubs for cover. Provide food during the winter months and water for drinking and bathing during the summer. In general, creating and maintaining quality bird habitat, along with a good measure of interest and a caring attitude, is a great long term strategy.

These are tough and challenging times. We need the simple joys that birds bring to our daily life. Imagine a day or evening without the songs and chatter of your favorite birds. Modern life and our modern world is hard on birds. Their populations are plummeting. When was the last time you saw a Rufus-Sided (aka Spotted) Towhee scratching around under your shrubs? (Jim Parr lives in Keizer.)

guest column

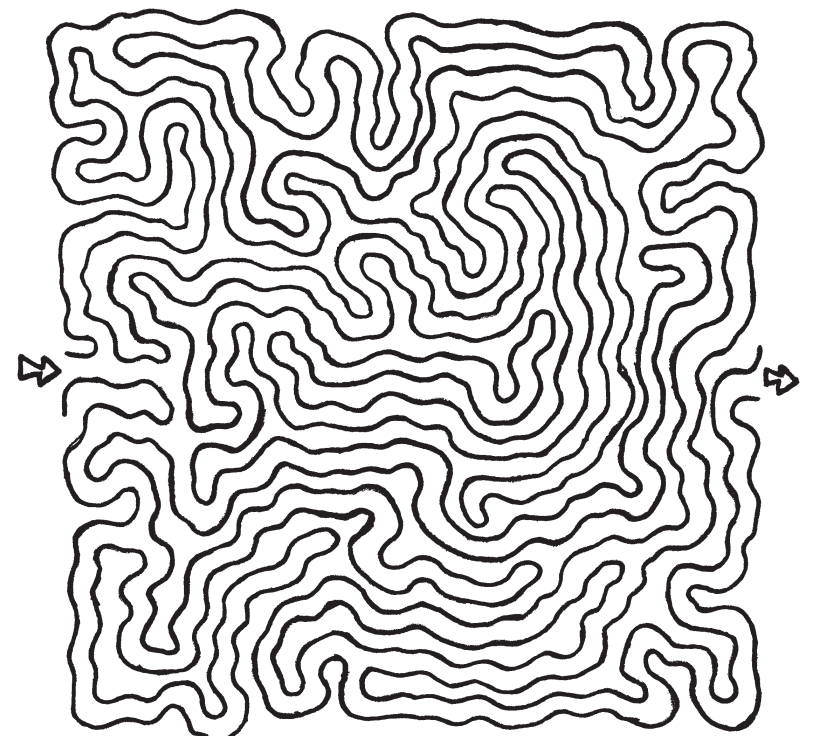


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maze



Maze by Jonathan Graf of Keizer

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