

KeizerCommunity

KEIZERTIMES.COM

Local birds need our help to stay healthy

Unfortunately, it means taking down feeders

By **BROOKLYN FLINT**
Of the Keizertimes

Since the beginning of December, a salmonella outbreak has wreaked havoc on one local bird population on the west coast.

As a result, wildlife officials are urging all Oregon residents to take down their feeders for the time being.

Pine siskins and a few other species are the primary carriers of the disease. Tim Johnson, president of the Salem Audubon Society, joined the chorus in asking local residents to take part in preventative measures. He said the pine siskins appeared in the area with greater abundance this year than they have in others.

“We think that [the siskins] were driven south because of a problem with food source for them up north. So it’s exacerbated the problem

because they are susceptible to this salmonella outbreak,” Johnson said.

Congregations of birds at feeders increase the chances of spreading the disease.

It is fairly common for some birds to carry diseases but Johnson hasn’t heard of anything to this extent. He said it is hard to tell if things have gotten better or worse in the past two months.

Recent research determined that the disease is being spread through bird feeders. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, as well as the Salem Audubon Society, advises people to clean their bird feeders regularly or to simply take them down.

“People should really take them down all together,” Johnson said. “But, even when it is safe to put feeders back up, everything should be

“Even when it is safe to put feeders back up, everything should be cleaned regularly.”

— Tim Johnson
Salem Audubon Society



LEFT: A healthy, female pine siskin.



BELOW: Pine siskins that contracted salmonella will appear puffed up and more lethargic. They may not move when approached.

cleaned regularly.”

When cleaning bird feeders, wash them with soap and water. Johnson advised soaking them in a bleach solution. A 10% bleach solution should be enough to wipe out salmonella. Let the bird feeders dry completely and then refill with fresh seed that was purchased recently. Before putting bird feeders back up, the ground below the feeder should be swept and discarded.

Aside from feeders, bird baths should also be cleaned regularly.

It is also important to wash your hands before and after cleaning the bird feeder, said Johnson.

For people that choose to keep their feeders up, there are physical and behavioral indications when a bird is carrying the salmonella disease. Pine siskins that are sick tend to have puffed up feathers. Another huge sign is lethargy, such as not flying away when

approached.

“They don’t seem to even recognize your presence. If they’re just not acting like a normal bird that’s a good sign that they’re not feeling well,” said Johnson.

It is still uncertain if the outbreak has an effect on humans or other animals, but it is good to take precautions. Report dead birds, take down feeders and clean them, wash

hands and stay updated on news related to the outbreak.

Problems and concerns can be reported by calling 866-968-2600 or emailing Wildlife.Health@state.or.us.

Johnson suggests that people who want to stay updated on the outbreak and other wildlife concerns should check with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife at www.dfw.state.or.us.

Join forum on changing SKPS board elections

The Salem-Keizer NAACP is hosting an online forum on potential changes to the way school board directors are elected.

Current SKPS Director Jesse Lippold recently proposed changing the election process to allow only voters within a given zone to elect their representative. Lippold will discuss his

proposal and the reasons he brought it forward.

The local NAACP is supporting the change as a way to introduce more equity into school board representation, and to give people of color more chances to earn a spot on the board. Additional information can be found at www.sknaacp1166.org/zones-boards-and-votes.

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