



BS Pollard/Gettyimages.com

An American robin snatches suet from a backyard feeder.

Wild SIDE

American robin

By LYNETTE RAE
McADAMS
FOR COAST WEEKEND



Gettyimages.com

A robin nest with three eggs.

One of the most familiar and abundant birds on our continent and a universal symbol for the season of spring, the American robin ranges from the northern climes of Canada all the way to southern Mexico. Light and quick and in tune to the gathering length of day, it runs, hops and stops its way across lawns and grassy meadows, its famous red breast bobbing constantly for worms beneath the surface of a sea of green.

Sentimentally named after the European robin — an Old World Flycatcher and biologically unre-

lated — the American species of robin belongs to the thrush family, specifically the songbirds called “Turridae.” Like most songbirds, robins have a specialized dual voice box, the syrinx, which allows the bird to produce two notes at once, thereby increasing the ease of its repertoire.

Often the first to sing at dawn and the last to quiet down at night, male robins are the music makers, offering a lighthearted melody composed of about 10 whistles in a row. Phonetically, its sound is most often described as, “cheer-

ily, cheer up, cheer up, cheerily, cheer up.” They also employ a special call that can sound like a laugh or a quick chuckle.

Male robins use their voices to proclaim territory, announce predators and, most importantly, attract a mate. Birds pair off for the breeding season with both partners contributing to nest building and the care of chicks, though the bulk of the domestic work falls to the female.

One of the first breeds to nest in the spring, if conditions are right, a mother robin can bear two, some-

times three sets of young in a year, with each brood of two to four birds taking only one month to move from fertile eggs, to fledgling chicks, then back to empty nest.

The signature color of the American robin’s egg — that unmistakable bright blue-green — is achieved when biliverdin, a bile pigment, is added to the shell in the final stage of egg production; the deeper the hue, the more likely the father will be to take an interest in his offspring. Since 1993, “robin egg blue” has been an official color of the Crayola crayon collection.

Culturally, robins have figured prominently in poetry and mythology for hundreds of years, frequently portrayed as guardians (or thieves) of fire and light. An age-old icon of the vernal equinox, one medieval Celtic legend predicts that the person who sees the first spring robin will have good luck and prosperity throughout the year. **cw**

Sage advice

With new book, former Peninsula writer Anne Nixon reaches out to younger generations

By PATRICK WEBB
FOR COAST WEEKEND

Anne Nixon has published another book.

Her latest is targeted at young people, designed to help them through the pitfalls in choosing their life’s path.

She writes: “Take care, and think of your life as an adventure full of experimentation and learning, be it professional or labor. It makes no difference.”

Nixon is a 84-year-old Petaluma, Calif., resident. Her new book is called “To Inspire the Young: Life Goals,” written using her full name, Anne Elizabeth Nixon, and available from Amazon.com.

Her motivation was simple.

“I decided to write the book because so many people I hear about think it’s a must to go to college, but either haven’t got the money or don’t have any idea what they’d study there,” she said. “Also, what would they do for a job if they don’t go to college, they wonder.”

Before their move to California, the couple spent 32 years in Surfside, living on 310th. Nixon’s world travel adventures were published in the Chinook Observer some years ago.

She was in the news



The cover of ‘To Inspire the Young: Life Goals,’ by former Surfside, Wash., resident Anne Nixon.

in December with a book titled “How I Survived:

Alzheimer’s, Cancer, Polio.” It chronicled her experiences with polio, two types of colon cancer and coping with her late husband Don’s Alzheimer’s. The former medical secretary wrote

that book to help others cope with serious health issues.

Her new book focuses on choices for young people. She seeks to encourage high school students to make a plan and find ways to boost their self-esteem.

She writes: “With your entire life before you, what would you choose to do with it — computer science, nurse, truck driver, scientist, carpenter, salesperson, doctor, farmer, television, teacher, musician, sports player, driver — taxi, chauffeur?”

“The only thing that matters is that you are doing what interests you. Some people are at jobs they don’t like. Don’t let that happen to you.” **cw**



Anne
Nixon