



ANDREW CLARK



BARBARA CLARK

A SLICE OF LIFE

## Bird-watching, it's fun, cheap and available

What is it about watching birds that so many people enjoy? For starters, birds are found just about anywhere. In each different ecosystem there is a great deal of variety. Big ones like eagles and swans. Little ones like finches, warblers, and hummingbirds. Pretty ones like painted buntings and blue jays. Plain ones like some of the sparrows. Different ones eat bugs, or fish or seeds. Some eat small animals or other birds.

Throughout the avian kingdom there is something for everybody, predator and prey alike. As a birdwatcher you always are looking for small movement — in the bushes and trees, or on the ground — and because of that broad awareness you also see lots of bugs, beetles, spiders, snails, small mammals, reptiles, amphibians, tiny flowers and all sorts of other living things.

Different places in the world have different birds, always interesting and joyful. In our traveling (Barbara 56 nations, Andrew a puny 32 nations) bird-watching weaves our adventures together and part of the fun is meeting other birders. In Kruger Park, South Africa, we met a birder couple at a picnic area having their tea. We had a conversation and they invited us to their place in Capetown when there. We were going that way, stayed overnight at their place, and next morning they took us to see blue cranes and rockjumpers, species that we never would have seen by ourselves.

And what a fairy-tale career that guy had. Since childhood he loved flying things, thus the bird-watching. He got a degree in microbiology, went to the U.K. for work, was taking test samples of beans in a field near a RAF base when there was a roar and a Harrier jump-jet took off straight up into the air. "I've got to do that," so he went to enlist in the Harrier program. "Your chances of being in that program are somewhere between nil and nonexistent, son" was the recruiter's reply.

Well, he got into the program and eventually became the director. When he retired and returned to South Africa, Nelson Mandela himself appointed him as commandant of the South African Air Force — he showed us a photo in his home office of himself and Mandela.

Another fun event was along a small gravel road in South African ranching country. A special bird we had never seen — a bald ibis — was beside the road in a pasture and behind was a large farmhouse surrounded by lovely trees.

Barbara said, "Wouldn't it be interesting to see inside that old house?"

In another mile or so we stopped to look at a small herd of beautiful red cattle and a pickup driven by an older man came along and stopped.

He asked, "What are you doing?" "We're looking at those beautiful cattle — they're really nice." "They're mine," he said.

We chatted a bit more. We mentioned seeing the bald ibis in the pasture. He said "that's my place, and on the backside of that hill over there is a cliff that is the only bald ibis nesting site in southern Africa. C'mon to the house and we'll go see it."

What a treat for birdwatchers, and then we were invited to have supper and stay the night in the house Barbara had wondered about. In his office he had a large collection of miniature cars with three standing apart, including a Gull-Wing Mercedes.

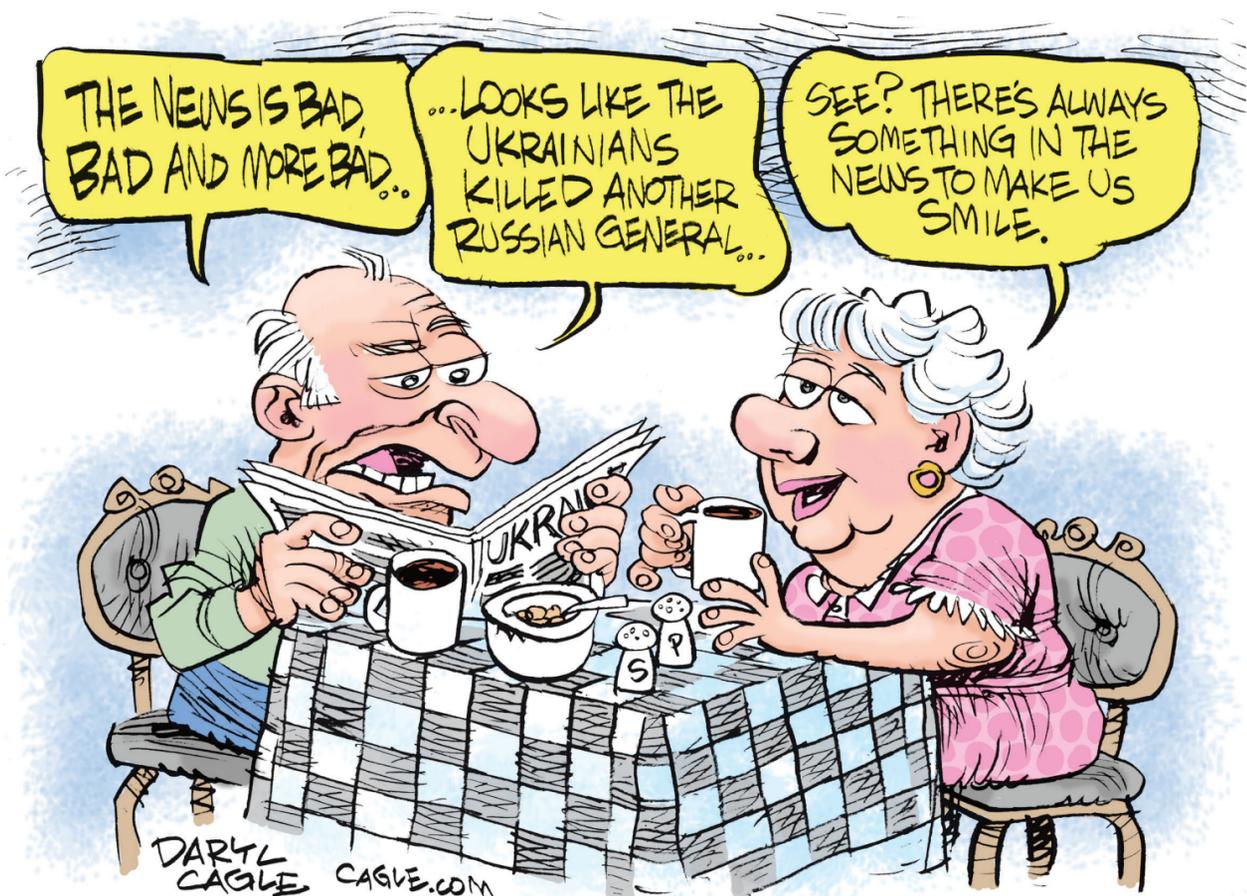
"What about them?" "Oh, those are models of cars that I have on another ranch in a climate-controlled building," he said.

Online today a Gull-Wing Mercedes is \$6.8 million.

Bird-watching is rapidly expanding in the U.S., especially with older people, because it is a gentle "sport" that can be done anywhere — you need only binoculars. It also has significant economic implications. In 2016, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reported 16.3 million people did bird-watching trips that accounted for \$42 billion of economic activity.

Our cold spring weather in Pendleton this year has slowed normal migration, but finches, blackbirds, thrush family birds and towhees are coming through. Hummingbirds are arriving, so get out your feeders — or if you don't have one, they're easy to buy in town — and enjoy seeing these wonderful, beautiful creatures all around us.

*Dr. Andrew Clark is a livestock veterinarian with both domestic and international work experience who lives in Pendleton. Barbara Clark is a teacher with a broad variety of experience internationally and domestically at primary and secondary levels, Blue Mountain Community College and Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution.*



## Logging and carbon — another viewpoint



BRUCE WILCOX

OTHER VIEWS

As a young adult out hunting, I still can remember the sounds of chainsaws and timber falling in my favorite hunting area. I was upset, why was my spot being logged. 45 years later I can walk through this area to a healthy stand of fire-resistant timber.

In January, I read an opinion column by George Wuerthner, in the East Oregonian. I felt it was necessary to provide the other side of the story on logging and carbon. I reached out to Healthy Forests-Healthy Communities, for help in writing my column. This organization promotes healthy timber management and through their articles, people are educated so they can develop their own opinions.

George Wuerthner should really see the forest for the trees. Researchers have consistently found that the use of active forest management helps reduce the intensity of wildfires. It also gives firefighters better and safer opportunities to contain fires before they gain strength and destroy our forests and communities.

Thinning is a key management tool, because reducing stand densities to sustainable levels helps promote the health and resiliency of our forests, so they can better withstand fires when they inevitably ignite.

The problem with such agenda-driven "research" that Wuerthner shares is that it fails to account for the carbon losses and emissions that occur from the lack of active forest management, and when

we choose not to plant, grow, harvest and manufacture wood products here at home.

For example, the study cited by Wuerthner doesn't account for carbon emissions that occur when we outsource our timber harvesting and wood products to other countries that don't share our high environmental standards. Would we really reduce our carbon footprint by importing wood from Brazil or Russia, rather than Oregon?

According to the University of Washington's Forest Carbon Study, Washington's private forests and forestry sector are a "Below Net Zero" carbon emitter. Although the processes associated with manufacturing wood and paper products emit some greenhouse gasses, growing trees and using wood products store more carbon than is emitted, reducing Washington's carbon footprint by 12%. Forestry's carbon footprint is further reduced when we convert low-value woody material into renewable energy.

Our western forests are facing what one scientist calls an "epidemic of trees," where we have more trees than the landscape can support. The intense competition for sunlight and nutrients can weaken trees and reduce their ability to withstand severe wildfires. It can also result in insect attacks and disease, which contributes to high tree mortality and more fuel for severe wildfires.

Thinning forests — yes that means removing some trees — contributes to the growth and vitality for remaining trees and enables them to sequester and store more carbon. When it comes to thinning forests the only question is why we're not doing more of it.

Research also shows that trees are dying at alarming rates, due to wild-

fires, insects, disease, drought and other impacts of climate change. Dead trees do not sequester carbon, they only emit carbon and other greenhouse gasses over time. Walking away from our forests only serves to continue that trend.

One researcher found that wildfires emit greenhouse gasses at a rate equivalent to 48 cars per acre. In this scenario, the researcher suggested we'd need to park 1 million cars for an entire year to account for greenhouse gasses from a 21,000-acre fire. Interestingly, the decay of the dead trees following a wildfire is more significant in affecting the climate than the fire itself.

If we choose not to manage our forests, we may lose 100% of the trees to stand-replacing wildfires, and then we will lose all of that stored carbon over time as trees rot and decompose. The problem is made worse when forests fail to naturally regenerate after a severe wildfire, and instead convert to shrublands that do not sequester carbon at the same rates. Dead trees don't sequester carbon, only vigorously growing trees do. Dead trees and sterilized soils from severe wildfires only serve to release carbon over time.

We have tried passive forest management for the past 30 years, and it has resulted in more severe wildfires, unhealthy forests and more carbon emissions. There is only one "guarantee" walking away from our forests and choosing not to manage them, will only result in more of the same.

*Bruce Wilcox was raised in Eastern Oregon and he has enjoyed recreating in the Blue Mountain Forests, near Heppner, for more than 60 years. He is very concerned about the future of these forests, hoping they will be around for several generations to follow.*

## Now is the time to promote growth at BMCC



CLARK HILDEN

OTHER VIEWS

I am very upset and sad at the direction President Mark Browning is taking Blue Mountain Community College.

I came to the college in 1969 and taught geography and anthropology full time for 30 years and have lived in Pendleton since. President Browning, who has been here eight months, is seeking to terminate the employment of 10 full-time faculty members who have a collective total of 152 years of service to the college.

These people have professional-level jobs. They purchase homes here, pay taxes here, buy goods and services in the community, serve on local boards and are active in the community in many other ways. Their children attend our schools, and many go on to the college, where they and other students have, at minimal cost, been able to complete the first two years of a college transfer degree or to seek training in a variety of vocations.

Browning intends to terminate my successor, Linc DeBunce, who has taught at BMCC for more than 20 years. According to the schedule for the spring term, Linc's five classes are full, with 123 students occupying a possible 125 spaces.

Also slated for termination is Margaret Mayer whose three music history classes are full, offers private music lessons to students as well as provides music for college events.

Another termination is full-time

instructor Ann Marie Hardin, one of the most versatile faculty members. She is teaching three math classes and one physics class while serving as department chair. Some of her classes have lower enrollments but that is because she was assigned higher level math classes that have fewer students.

Other faculty positions at the college being marked for elimination include faculty in writing, chemistry, business, criminal justice, industrial maintenance technology and college prep. The termination of these 10 full-time instructors is our loss, the community college district's loss.

When I came to BMCC, my social science department had six full-time instructors. Browning's plan will decimate that department, leaving only one.

"We're not actually offering fewer classes," Browning says. "We're having fewer people offer the classes that we do currently have."

Not true. DeBunce offers five classes. His five classes are full, all other social science classes are nearly full. Fewer classes will be offered. Where will these students go?

Over the years since I retired, the social science department has lost full-time positions in history, economics and political science. Recently, the full-time sociology instructor was not replaced upon her retirement. Over the past few years, the humanities department has lost full-time positions in Spanish, art and theater. These losses will further impact the college's ability to provide courses to transfer students and to provide the enrichment that such classes offer to all who take them.

Additionally, if higher level math and science are cut, students interested in STEM fields no longer will be able to attend their first two years at home. Browning's plan may be to seek part-time instructors from other areas to teach online, Portland perhaps. This already has happened in political science and economics. Is that what's slated for anthropology, geography, music, chemistry and calculus?

That, of course, means the money spent on their salaries will be leaving our area. I have heard the administration feels that the Associate of Arts Oregon Transfer Degree has been "privileged." That contention certainly doesn't stand up to these facts.

I fear that Browning is seeking to turn our comprehensive community college, one that has been supported by our district for 60 years, into a trade school. Rather than seek ways to bring more students to college, he is giving students more reasons not to attend BMCC. I haven't yet seen a plan by President Browning to bring more students to the college. What a sad time this is for our communities and to the instructors who have contributed so much to the teaching of our people and to the well-being of our district.

I encourage the members of the college's board of directors to refuse to allow this to happen. It's time to begin to look for positive ways to promote the growth of the college rather than to oversee the demise of the wonderful place Blue Mountain Community College has been for so long.

*Clark Hilden, of Pendleton, is a retired geography and anthropology faculty member at Blue Mountain Community College.*