

Pigeon not always a pest

The common pigeon is one of the most versatile birds I can think of in that they have been used for centuries for food, messages, racing and hobbies.

Almost every large city has pigeons that inhabit its parks, bridges and tall buildings. These are domestic pigeons, but are not owned by anyone. The truly wild ones are called rock doves and are aptly named as they seem to prefer rocky cliffs where they make their nests on the ledges and cracks of the rocks. Their plumage is the same as most of the city-dwelling pigeons. Domestic pigeons come in various sizes and colors, however.

The large white ones are raised for food where their squabs are sold as a delicacy in the most fashionable restaurants. Other pigeons have been used in wartime to carry messages across battlefields. Some breeds are raised as hobbies for their ability to tumble and roll as acrobats in the sky. I had a flock of these rollers



Courtesy photo

The common pigeon is versatile and can serve a variety of uses.

when I was a teenager and I had to protect them from hawks and the neighbors' cats. I sold several of my best performers to adults who paid me as much as 5 dollars for a pair of them. That was a lot of money back in the 1930s. I had to sell them all when I left home to take a job in Alaska after high school.

The big city pigeons got most of their food from people at the parks who fed



BIRD-WATCHING

EH Van Blaricom

them peanuts and bread crumbs. The ones in the country, including the wild rock doves, got their food from the spillage at grain elevators and along railroad tracks. Quite often, both wild and domestic pigeons will take up living in the rafters of large hay barns where they are considered a nuisance bird just as many of the city pigeons are.

One thing of interest is that the formerly endangered peregrine falcons have started making their nests under the large bridges in the cities. And guess what their main food source is? You guessed it ... they are feeding their nestlings on a diet of pigeon meat. So the balance of nature can even occur in non-natural habitats.

CANNING: Williams strives for perfect salsa

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Casey has to think awhile to come up with the words to explain it, and in the end she has to tell the story: "I like to make salsa because me and my grandma made it together," she begins. And then she goes on: it came out of Grandma's own garden, she loves chopping vegetables, they experimented and it wasn't all Casey learning from Grandma, it was Casey learning with Grandma; and "I feel very proud of myself when I look at all the jars."

And that's the beauty of canning: when you go down into the pantry, it's not all gone in five minutes like supper. The jars stand there, gleaming in the half-light of a single bulb,

and tell a volume of stories.

There are the stories of generations of Williamses and Melvilles, both men and women. Of ancient family recipes that begin "take 100 pounds of tomatoes," of a dad and granddad and the building of greenhouses and cultivation of gardens, of little sisters who helped pick and plant, cousins that helped weed, special spaghetti sauce made for that picnic, peach upside down cake made for that baby shower ... even Dad's hunting stories are down here — over there are his jars of elk, bear, venison and kokanee.

"When you go down and look at it, rows of it, you feel so good," said Alita.

It's an art installation.

Woodwinds @ Wallowa Lake continue to wow

By Kathleen Ellyn
Wallowa County Chieftain

The Woodwinds @ Wallowa Lake Camp, just a few hundred yards from the lake, is a musical oasis.

Walk down the road toward the lake and you'll hear the buzz of hundreds of visitors to the popular camping area. A veritable city of tourists are playing mini-golf, strolling to the restaurants, riding their bikes, hiking, boating, fishing, camping, cook-

ing, playing dominoes and cards and visiting with old friends and new.

It's a whole other world, though, at the Wallowa Lake Camp site. Here, in the warmth of the sun and the shade of the firs, all you hear are flutes, oboes, clarinets, saxophones, bassoons, and French Horns.

The approximately 86 young musicians finishing up their week of music camp are performing an unusual exercise — that of turning inward while

enjoying the beauty that is outward.

Woodwinds @ Wallowa Lake Camp enjoyed its ninth year last week, culminating, as usual, with a free community concert. Fifteen flautists, 21 clarinetists, 14 bassoonists, 15 French horn players, nine oboists and 12 saxophonists presented a nearly three-hour performance at Joseph High School Saturday night.

Some of those players played in ensembles for the first time in their life just a few days before the performance. Their progression from no-experience to polished performance is one of the miracles of the camp.

"The transformations we see over the week are pretty phenomenal," said senior counselor Seth Goldman of Lake Oswego. Goldman, who plays with the Vancouver Symphony, started as a camper, became a junior counselor and teacher at the camp for three years, was a



Second-year camper Erin Tanaka plays her French horn as junior counselor/instructor Naomi Smith checks the tricky musical score during a one-on-one instruction period at the Woodwinds @ Wallowa Lake camp.

Kathleen Ellyn
Chieftain

featured artist on bassoon last year, and is overseeing the junior counselors this year.

"You'll meet someone (a camper) on Sunday that you won't even recognize as a musician on the following Saturday. Maybe not even as a person!" Goldman said.

According to campers, the setting is partly responsible for that transformation. Technically speaking, the outdoor space doesn't capture the music, so musicians have to listen better.

"The sound goes everywhere," said Erin Tanaka, a second-year camper and recent graduate of Ontario High School, headed for Oregon State University. "When you're outside you really have to listen. You have to key in."

But it's not all technique. "I think the setting connects us more," added sixth year camper Grace Hardy of Baker City. "It gives you the chance to become one with nature and sharing that with other campers helps you make friends."

That combination of

friend-making and technical challenge is part of the ensemble experience as well.

"Creating small groups — we don't get to do that at home where we usually just play in band," said Allysa Nelson, a senior at West Albany High School. "I used to have a fear of playing on my own. My first year here I was just shaking. But this is my third year and my confidence has really grown."

"You don't just follow a conductor — you have to watch each other and listening is a lot more focused," said Valarie Milbrath, a junior at Hanford High in Richland, Wash.

"It teaches you to make adjustments at the drop of a hat, to work with others, and to persevere," Hardy said.

All of that challenge, that focus, and that reliance on others, not to mention the consistency created when campers turn into teachers, when top-quality musicians give campers one-on-one instruction, when excellent food (campers were in agreement on that) combine with free time to play music with your new buddies, and more challenging musical literature is faced in the company of good friends — all of that makes for a one-of-a-kind experience; one of life lessons and music lessons.

Only a labor of love could create such an experience. And that's what it is, said Larry Johnson, president and founder of the non-profit Music Camps @ Wallowa Lake.

"The board is all volunteer," he said. "The councilors are paid a pittance — and they love it and come back every year."

Music Camps @ Wallowa Lake puts on two camps per year: the Brass Camp in June and the Woodwinds camp in July. Visit musiccampsatwallowalake.com for more information.

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