

**Siuslaw News**  
 P.O. Box 10  
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# Opinion

**The First Amendment**  
 Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

## VIEW FROM UPRIVER



## Sitting in the catbird seat

WESLEY VOTH  
 For the Siuslaw News

ony — such as in the bayous of Louisiana or along the Gulf shore wetlands. And although many individual birds sang quite beautifully, there wasn't that musical chorus heard throughout the northwest that I so treasure; a sound anchored by such species as the winter wren, Swainson's thrush and western meadowlark.

Ithaca is home to Cornell University, the country's premier place in the world of bird study. Their Lab of Ornithology has the best facility devoted to birds and biodiversity, and especially the recording of birdsong and animal sound. If you love birds like I do, and ever have the chance to visit their large bird-friendly Sapsucker Woods Sanctuary in the spring or early summer when birdsong is at its most wondrous, do so.

I have mentioned here before that their website is very useful in identifying birds by appearance, but also by their songs and calls and other sounds.

Two experiences visiting Sapsucker Woods have stuck in my mind as we've traveled on: the sound of a frog new to me, and experiencing a particularly splendid catbird performance.

One type of bird not well distributed in our part of the country is the mimic, such as mockingbirds, brown thrashers and catbirds. When I

was growing up, my grandparents' house next door had a window seat that was referred to as the "catbird seat." The name had little meaning for me as I did not know what a catbird was.

There was room for only one person there, and it had a wonderful view out a large window toward the garden; by closing the curtain you could be in this wondrous little space that was almost like being outside.

As I walked along a trail through the bird sanctuary, I heard a bird that was an especially gifted mimic. Mockingbirds are well named because their songs often sound like a sarcastically sped up or taunting version of the originals. While I admit some I've heard are slower and more lyrical — several in Joshua Tree were quite lovely — mostly it sounds like they rip through as many successive calls as possible without pause.

This bird in Sapsucker Woods was different, and I kept creeping closer, trying to get a look at the singer through dense foliage. For 20 or more minutes, this bird carefully sang songs both familiar to me and strange, with slight pauses between. All had the same careful loveliness as the originals — the exquisite wood thrush, red-winged blackbird, song sparrow, northern cardinal, Veery and the frog I had heard nearby but didn't know — which sounded like a dropped microphone rolling down steps.

Finally I could see the artist, a gray catbird. But just when my eye met its eye, it was gone.

Where it had chosen to sit for the performance was a secretive little bower; two intertwined vines formed a little "seat" surrounded by a small canopy of leaves. I wondered if this perch was just found, or if leaves had been removed to form it. On closer inspection, it looked like the latter — maybe catbirds in part — create these little performance venues.

Hence the idiom. I asked in the gift store about the frog I heard, and was given a species name. Later, listening to sound recordings, I discovered this to be wrong. The frog that makes that sound is the uninterestingly named "green" frog, but its name is the only boring thing about it. I am sitting watching about 10 of them from a catbird seat in a country home of relatives.

Here in Climax, Mich., I can write and observe simultaneously, like I can from my office window at home. I can see a garden pond where green frogs leap two feet into the air to catch bumblebees and other insect visitors to the colorful peonies.

Out across the cornfield, two greater sandhill cranes stride steadily while their small scampering chick, barely taller than the corn, feeds alongside. I read on the Cornell site that these chicks increase their weight exponentially 20 percent per day. Their clacking calls sound prehistoric, and I wonder if somewhere a catbird is listening like I am, thinking about how it might — from its perfect seat — make a sound that true and pure.

## Understanding the options of caregiving

### GUEST VIEWPOINT

BY STEVE BENSON  
 FLORENCE CAREGIVING COMMUNITY

According to Wikipedia, a caregiver is an unpaid or paid person who helps another individual suffering from an impairment to his or her activities of daily living.

Any person with a health impairment might use caregiving services to address their difficulties. Caregiving is most commonly used to address impairments related to old age, disability, a disease or a mental disorder.

In other countries, caregiving is defined differently. In many cases, it means families sticking together over generations, living together and supporting each other through shared resources; the very old taking care of the very young while the young adults earn a living.

Not too long ago, caregivers were paid the same as migrant workers. Meaning very low wage and no overtime.

As our culture has become more progressive and enlightened, so has the attitudes and laws protecting this very valuable and limited resource.

People who become caregivers do it for many reasons and require patience and a willingness to learn.

Caregiving is becoming more accepted as a career and the laws that protect caregivers are becoming more mainstream. In some situations, caregivers are offered health insurance, paid vacations and other incentives.

We have all seen the ads on TV. People want to keep their loved ones at home as long as possible.

But far too often there is the lone spouse doing everything he or she can to avoid losing their loved one to an institution or because they can't afford one; we all know someone in some sort of caregiving situation.

The 500-pound gorilla in the room is pay. In some cases, long term private insurance can pay some but rarely 100 percent of wages. If you have a state certified caregiver, he or she is receiving around \$15 an hour plus health insurance, which is good for them.

A caregiver working for a company, however, will generally get the lowest pay and gets no health insurance. The hourly charge to the employer (the person receiving the care) is the highest. They are usually backed up with an RN and liability insurance.

Both types have had a background check.

Private pay caregivers are usually referred by someone you trust. They will ask for a high wage because they have to pay for their own health insurance and their own taxes and social security. Also, there is a self-employment tax.

A private pay caregiver making \$20 an hour is



taking home about \$10 an hour.

One thing the person receiving care and the caregiver both need and expect is respect.

I remember one of my first assignments was to provide care for a man who did not have long to live. He was sitting on the edge of his bed when I walked in and said, "How are you today?"

I immediately knew I had stuck my foot in my mouth.

What an insensitive thing to say.

However, thanks to our shared patience and mutual respect, we eventually became good friends.

Every situation and person is different. But

with patience and a big heart, great things can happen as both parties learn and take care of each other.

With the help of many caregivers in Florence, we have started the Florence Caregiving Community, offering support to caregivers, those persons receiving care and their families.

Monthly meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month, beginning at 5:30 p.m., at the Shorewood.

I wrote this article to start a conversation; let me hear from you. Join us at our meeting.

— Steve Benson

Florence Caregiving Community

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