

Saturday count brings eagles in focus

BY JON STINNETT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

Much ado has been made of Oregon's Ducks lately, but a group that gathered together Saturday morning had a different type of bird on its mind.

Alison Center, a former biologist with the Bureau of Land Management, led a group of about eight interested "birders" on an annual midwinter eagle count. The tally was made on behalf of the Oregon Eagle Foundation, a Klamath Falls-based organization that tracks numbers of bald and golden eagles statewide — with the help of volunteers, that is.

Center began counting eagles 22 years ago with the BLM, which charged her to keep track of the birds that spend time at Dorena and Cottage Grove Reservoirs. On Saturday, she had a good idea of how many eagles to expect to see there — there are two known roosting pairs of bald eagles that call Dorena home and one pair at Cottage Grove Reservoir — though it was believed that migratory birds may be spotted and push the total higher. Center said as many as a half-dozen eagles have been catalogued during the midwinter count, which was organized through the Coast Fork Willamette Watershed Council.

Golden eagles are rarely glimpsed in our area, Center said, as they prefer to nest atop high, sheer cliff-sides. Bald eagles, however, can be glimpsed in many places throughout the area, especially around mountain lakes. The birds have been known to roost near Coburg



photo by Jon Stinnett

Jan Wellman and Ed Gore scan the skies behind Dorena Dam for eagles during a count of the birds on Saturday morning.

and routinely feed on perished lambs and afterbirth during the lambing season, especially in the sheep-heavy fields further north in the Willamette Valley.

Life hasn't always been rosy for the bald eagle, and Center said that DDT, or dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane, an odorless chemical once used as an insecticide, caused the birds' eggshells to be perilously thin and few of its offspring to survive, which led in large part to the eagles' appearance on the Endangered Species List. Rebounding numbers, however, found the bald eagle removed from Oregon's endangered species list in 2012 and from the federal list in 2007.

On Saturday, the eagle aficionados gathered below the dam at Dorena, where one eagle was

spotted in a tree on the western edge of the reservoir. Center said low water levels there tend to concentrate fish near the dam, a tempting situation for eagles seeking to feed on them.

The group didn't concentrate solely on eagles, however; birder Grace Fowler also carried a checklist of other species to identify, and Saturday's sightings included pie-billed and western grebes, coots, herons, a kingfisher and other birds.

As is likely the case with any group hoping to spot animals over long distances, the conversation turned often to binoculars and their importance in the endeavor.

"I used to think I wasn't very observant," said Fran Johnson. "But then I got a good pair of binoculars."

FLU

Continued from page 6A

that's not necessarily true. Minimally, though, people raise their own chickens so they know what they're being fed. They want to feed them specific things of their own choosing."

However, Hermes warns backyard enthusiasts not to get off-base with what they feed their flock. Though they've been described as quasi garbage disposals, chickens need a balanced diet for maximum egg production. Some table scraps are OK; just don't overdo it. If they clean it up in about 20 minutes, that's about right.

"Get what they have at the feed store," Hermes said. "That sack of feed has everything they

need."

Be sure to get the right mix for their age, too. Starter diets are formulated for chicks from hatch to a few weeks old. Grower feed is for adolescent birds. And layer feed, which has the important addition of calcium, is for egg-producing chickens.

Some people like to offer supplements such as grit, which helps them grind their food, or oyster shell, which has calcium. The birds will take these supplements if needed.

When choosing chickens to start your flock, Hermes suggests buying four to six good producers and staying away from exotic breeds, which don't lay as many eggs. Feed stores sell young birds in the spring,

usually from March to May. You can expect pullets (young females) to begin laying eggs at 18 to 20 weeks and produce seven to eight per hen over a 10-day period.

Don't be surprised when your hens stop laying eggs in the winter.

"Decreased daylight causes hens to molt and cease egg production, a process that may take several months," Hermes said. Artificial lighting, however, can keep hens laying. See "Why Did My Chickens Stop Laying" at the OSU Extension website, for more information on artificial lighting.

Any structure that provides protection from the weather and predators will do for a chicken

coop. It needn't be big. Before you begin building, get detailed advice from the Extension's audio-visual guide called "Backyard Chicken Coop Design." Keeping your birds inside won't distress them.

"You can give chickens access to the outside through a door, but they'll usually choose to stay put in inclement weather," Hermes said. "They don't use large areas well. They like to be in groups. One chicken is a lonely bird."

Provide nesting places that are a foot or more above the ground. Hens feel much safer when laying eggs in a protected space. Roosts or perching areas are also important because hens prefer not to sleep on the ground.

Roosts also concentrate nighttime manure for easy cleaning. Fencing can be a valuable addition, sometimes electric fencing, as protection against dogs, raccoons and other predators. Wire netting or some other barrier over top of the coop is needed if birds such as hawks, eagles and owls decide chickens are their preferred meal.

There are a few drawbacks to raising chickens, including odor and the flies it draws. But good management and keeping the manure dry will reduce these problems.

And rodents are a given.

"Wherever you have chicken feed, you have rodents," Hermes said. "The best solution is rodent-resistant feeders, covered

food storage such as a trash can and cleaning up any spilled feed immediately."

Cleaning the coop once a week helps, Hermes said, and the chicken manure — which is high in nitrogen — is a welcome addition to the compost pile. Washing down the coop isn't necessary unless there's been an illness in your flock or the possibility of exposure to the avian flu is high.

Waterfowl go north for winter, he added, so the threat of the virus is greatly diminished.

"If there's another outbreak," he said, "you'll know about it."

Learn more about keeping chickens in OSU Extension's handout called "Raising Chickens in Urban Environments."

STILL RUNNING OUT TO FETCH THE PAPER?



Subscribe to home delivery, and we'll deliver it to your mailbox!

Save up to
64% OFF
the newsstand price

Cottage Grove Sentinel

541-942-3325
www.cgsentinel.com

SENIOR
Subscription Special
ONE YEAR \$25.00*
NEW SUBSCRIBERS ONLY

Subscribe before
January 26, 2015 to take
advantage of this special rate!

*Must be a new subscriber to the Cottage Grove Sentinel or not had a subscription since 1/1/2014. Must be 60 years old or older. Excludes out of state subscribers. Subscription must be paid in full prior to start of subscription and no refunds will be given.

LORANE COUNTRY NEWS

BY LIL THOMPSON
For the Sentinel

This week brings Winter Homecoming for Crow Middle/High School. The theme of dress for tomorrow, Thursday, is "zombie day" for middle school and formal for the high school with Friday as Spirit Day for everyone. The middle-school dance is from 1:30-3 p.m. Friday, Jan. 16 and 9 p.m.-midnight for the high school. Everyone is asked to wear their "Cougars for the Cure" T-shirts at the basketball game this Friday, Jan. 16.

Remember, there will be NO school on Monday, Jan. 19 for Martin Luther King Day.

The Booster Club would like to thank everyone who participated in the 2014 Tom Page Basketball Tournament. Also, thanks to all the fans and supporters. It was a great event.

Our Crow High Principal is looking for a professional artist, student or adult, to paint a mural in her large office. She has ideas, so please contact her at 541-686-5024 for more information.

A big "Thank You" is due to Lane Electric for their generous check helping offset the lighting improvement costs in the elementary and Crow Middle/High School. Plus, special thanks to maintenance director, Bryan Wood, for finding the incentive grants making it possible, and to John Murry of Lane Electric for his valuable assistance.

Crow High School now has an Automated External Defibrillator thanks to the David Heller Foundation.

Lorane Grange meets this Thursday, Jan. 15 at 7:30 p.m. It looks like there will be spaghetti dinner and bingo on Saturday, Jan. 24 at the Grange. Hope to see everyone out for the fun.

The next CAL School Board meeting should be Jan. 19 at Lorane Grange starting at 7 p.m. after executive session.



Find Local Businesses.

Introducing the newest way to find the businesses that mean the most to you.

www.shoppelocal.biz

Find **GREAT**
MONEY SAVING COUPONS
from local businesses



shoppe™
Keep it local.

Cottage Grove
Sentinel

Shoppelocal.biz is a trademark of News Media Corp.