

Nesting boxes invite birds to hatch

It would be nice to say, "Hang a birdhouse and they will come," but attracting wild birds to nest in your yard isn't quite so easy.

Don't get discouraged if your nesting box doesn't draw birds the first year, said Dana Sanchez, wildlife specialist for Oregon State University Extension Service. Move it to a new spot and put up more than one to give birds a choice.

It's most important to get the size of the entrance hole correct, she added.

"The entrance diameter is really crucial so that target species can get in, but also to diminish the opportunity for birds to be attacked by predators and competitors," Sanchez said. "Non-native birds such as house sparrows and starlings are notorious for taking up residence in nest boxes intended for native birds. And some native birds will bully out other native birds."

Don't hang it and forget it. Check the box regularly to see if birds are being stalked by predators. If so, you can add a block of wood with the same size hole at the entrance to create a tunnel that makes it difficult for other birds, squirrels, rats and cats to reach the babies. Other discouragements include a metal collar around the tree or post where the box is affixed or any number of baffles that you can buy or build. As always, the advice for cats is to keep them inside.

In addition to the simple



KYM POKORNY
Your Garden

enjoyment of watching mom and dad wing back and forth with food and nesting material and baby birds emerge from the nest, birdhouses are critical for mitigating habitat loss, said Nicole Strong, an Extension forestry and natural resources agent. Birds prefer dead or dying trees — called snags — but not many urban or suburban homeowners want a dead tree in their yard for safety or aesthetic reasons.

"If it's not a hazard, leaving up dead trees gives great habitat for wildlife," Strong said. "As they decay they provide cavities for birds. And once the trees crumble and become downed logs, they provide food for insects, grubs and other wildlife. Sick and dead trees are healthy for the forest; they're part of the ecosystem."

For those willing to host a dead tree in their yard, cutting off most of the branches and topping it will reduce the possibility of damage if it falls. For others, hanging birdhouses is a good alternative, Strong said. And now's the time to get them up. Nesting time for most birds is primarily from mid-April to the end of July.

In the Extension guide



FLIC.KR/P/SNJZCY

Build or buy appropriate nesting boxes to draw the birds you prefer to your garden.

"The Wildlife Garden: Build Nest Boxes for Wild Birds," you'll find instructions on how to build a simple birdhouse, placement recommendations and box dimensions for about 18 species of cavity-nesting birds, including house wrens, chickadees, woodpeckers, northern flickers, purple martins, barn owls, nuthatches and western bluebird.

If you choose to make or buy a birdhouse for one of the 45 Oregon species that build their nests in cavities, avoid those with perches, which provide purchase for predators. Though it's fun to hang colorfully painted boxes, Sanchez recommends plain ones, which birds seem to favor. For longevity, choose untreated cedar or redwood. Metal can get too hot.

It's not necessary, but you can line the box with wood shavings or chips. Some

birds will use the material for nesting but most will build on top of it. Be sure not to use sawdust, which soaks up water and gets matted down. Clean birdhouses in fall or winter with warm water to loosen droppings. Buy or build a house made with screws so they're easy to partially dismantle when it comes time for cleaning.

"Remember that a nesting box is just one piece of habitat," Strong said. "They need safe access and food and water nearby. Bird feeders can be a wonderful aid, but they must be maintained. Be consistent. Don't put them out and then take them away."

Adding bird-friendly plants to your garden and providing a variety of shrubs in different heights for shelter will help, too. Be sure to use bird baths to offer water.

MI TOWN

We turned the calendar page to the month of April last Saturday and everyone has high hopes that we will indeed not see many April showers — as the old song promised — but more sunny and blue-sky days. After going through a winter with snow and ice, as well as recent record-breaking rain, let's all wish that Mother Nature will give us some kinder, gentler weather so we can battle the latest crop of weeds and dandelions and get the garden beds planted.

A sure sign that Old Man Winter has moved to another hemisphere and spring has arrived was last Saturday, when two farmers markets opened in Independence — at the Umpqua Bank parking lot and Riverview Park. Early ar-



PATTY TAYLOR DUTCHER
Columnist

rivals at the Umpqua Bank lot were treated to free cinnamon rolls courtesy of Ovenbird Bakery, which is getting to be a most welcome tradition. It was somewhat early in the season to find many fruits and vegetables, but there were lots of flowers, crafts and clothing items available, as well as plant starts for backyard gardens. The markets just get better and better as the season goes on, and it's fun to see friends and neighbors as we're all out enjoying the day.

In a perfect world, the month of April would be all things good — all the colorful daffodils and tulips and hyacinths, the flowering trees everywhere, and even the occasional shower to bring about even more flowers in May. In the real world, however, April is designated as National Child Abuse Prevention month and National Sexual Assault Awareness month, something we'd rather not even think about. There are articles and books and TV programs dealing with those issues that affect more people — especially children — than we can imagine. What we can do as individuals is to be aware of things that are going on around us — with our families, neighbors and people we see out and about. Many programs are available for people who

need help, some free or for very little cost.

Most of us love animals — and enjoy family pets such as a dog (or two) or cat (or two), and realize how much we enjoy walks and playing fetch, reading with a warm cat in a lap, perhaps watching pets and kids as they play together. Sometimes people love animals so much that they have more than they are able to care for, and good hearted actions become overwhelming. Those cute little kittens that nobody wants, the sweet puppy that isn't cared for, and the next one and the next one cause more expense and responsibility. There are professional organizations who have the expertise and experience to better care for animals in need.

LIBRARY CALENDAR

DALLAS
950 Main St.
503-623-2633
www.ci.dallas.or.us/library

- Thursday, April 6, 11:15 a.m. — Children's story time.
- Thursday, April 6, noon — Adult book discussion: The Warmth of Other Suns.
- Thursday, April 6, 2:30 p.m. — Lego building for children.
- Thursday, April 6, 7 p.m. — Author visit: Tina Connolly.
- Friday, April 7, 3 p.m. — Friends of the Dallas Public Library book sale (at Civic Center).
- Saturday, April 8, 10 a.m. — Friends of the Dallas Public Library book sale (at Civic Center).
- Monday, April 10 — Food for Fines starts today.
- Tuesday, April 11, 10:30 a.m. — Children's story time.

- Wednesday, April 12, 3:45 p.m. — TAB: Teen Advisory Board
- Wednesday, April 12, 4:30 p.m. — Teen Book Club, Pagemasters. "To Kill a Mockingbird"

INDEPENDENCE
175 Monmouth St.
503-838-1811
www.ci.independence.or.us/library

- Wednesday, April 5, 10:30 a.m. — Story time.
- Wednesday, April 5, 1 p.m. — Scrabble with Betty.
- Thursday, April 6, 4:30 p.m. — Chess Club.
- Friday, April 7, 4 p.m. — Japanese Folklore.
- Saturday, April 8, 3:30 p.m. — Cuentos en Español.
- Monday, April 10, 7 p.m. — Author visit: Steve Arndt.

- Tuesday, April 11, 2 p.m. — Tiny Tots.
- Wednesday, April 12, 10:30 a.m. — Story time.

MONMOUTH
168 S. Ecols St.
503-751-0182
www.ci.monmouth.or.us/library

- Thursday, April 6, 10:15 a.m. — Pre-school Explorers.
- Saturday, April 8 — Volunteer recognition.
- Tuesday, April 11, 10:15 a.m. — Tales for Tots.

WAGNER COMMUNITY LIBRARY
111 N. Main St., Falls City
503-787-3521, ext. 319
www.facebook.com/WagnerCommunityLibrary/timeline

- See the library's Facebook page for upcoming events.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

These Polk County groups would welcome individuals who have time or expertise to volunteer. Organizations that would like to be added to this list should call 503-623-2373 or email IONews@polkio.com.

- AARP Foundation Tax-Aide — 503-930-7636
- After DARC — 503-623-9501
- Arc of Polk County — 541-223-3261
- Central School District — 503-838-0030
- City of Dallas — 503-831-3502
- City of Independence — 503-838-1212
- City of Monmouth — 503-751-0145
- Crime Victims Assistance Program — 503-623-9268
- Dallas Area Chamber of Commerce — 503-623-2564
- Dallas Fire Department — 503-831-3532
- Dallas Food Bank — 503-623-3578
- Dallas Kids, Inc. — 503-623-6419
- Dallas Police Department — 503-831-3582
- Dallas Public Library — 503-623-2633
- Dallas Retirement Village — 503-623-5581
- Dallas School District — 503-623-5594
- Delbert Hunter Arboretum — 503-623-7359
- Girl Scouts of Southwest Washington and Oregon — 1-800-338-5248
- Ella Curran Food Bank — 503-917-1681
- Falls City Arts Center — 503-559-6291
- Falls City School District — 503-787-3531
- Family Building Blocks — 503-566-2132, ext. 308.
- Friends of the Dallas Library — 503-559-3830
- H-2-O — 503-831-4736
- HART (Horses Adaptive Riding and Therapy) — 971-301-4278
- HandsOn Mid-Willamette Valley — 503-363-1651
- Heron Pointe Assisted Living — 503-838-6850
- Independence Health and Rehabilitation — 503-838-0001
- Independence Public Library — 503-838-1811
- Kings Valley Charter School — 541-929-2134
- Luckiamute Watershed Council — 503-837-0237
- Luckiamute Valley Charter School — 503-623-4837
- Meals on Wheels — 503-838-2084
- Monmouth-Independence Chamber of Commerce — 503-838-4268
- Monmouth-Independence YMCA — 503-838-4042
- Monmouth Public Library — 503-838-1932
- Northwest Human Services — 503-588-5828
- Oregon Child Development Coalition — 503-838-2745
- OSU Extension Service - Polk County — 503-623-8395
- Perrydale School District — 503-623-2040
- Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Polk County Inc. — 503-623-8473
- Polk Community Development Corporation — 503-831-3173
- Polk County Community Emergency Response Team — 503-623-9396
- Polk County Museum — 503-623-6251
- Polk County Public Health — 503-623-8175
- Polk County Resource Center — 503-623-8429
- Polk Soil and Water Conservation District — 503-623-9680
- Relief Nursery Classroom — 503-566-2132
- Rickreall Watershed Council — 503-623-9680
- SABLE House — 503-623-6703
- SALT (Senior and law enforcement together) — 503-851-9366
- Salvation Army — 503-798-4783
- SMART (Start Making A Reader Today) — 503-391-8423
- Salem Health West Valley Hospital — 503-623-8301
- Victim Assistance Program-Polk Co. District Attorney's Office 503-623-9268 x1444
- Willamette Valley Hospice — 503-588-3600

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Continued from page 8A

TUESDAY, APRIL 11

- **Take Off Pounds Sensibly (TOPS) Club** — 6 to 7 p.m. weigh-in, 7 to 8 p.m. meeting, First Christian Church basement, 1079 SE Jefferson St., Dallas. Meetings offer programs and activities aimed at losing weight. Open to anyone. First meeting is free.
- **Overeaters Anonymous** — Noon to 1 p.m., Salem Health West Valley, 525 SE Washington St., Dallas. Support group meets in the quiet room/chapel immediately inside the emergency entrance on Clay Street. Dee Ann White, 971-718-6444.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 12

- **Helping Hands Emergency Food Bank** — 10 a.m. to noon, Monmouth Christian Church, 959 Church St. W., Monmouth. For eligible community members; available every Wednesday. 541-404-6517.
- **Polk County Republican Women** — 11:30 a.m., Murphy's Restaurant, 288 E. Ellendale Ave., Dallas. No-host lunch available; everyone welcome. 503-623-5759.
- **Respite care** — 1 to 3 p.m., 182 SW Academy St., Suite 216, Dallas. Free child care for parents who need time to run errands, pay bills, etc. Free. Open for children ages 6 weeks to 5 years. 503-877-8473 to reserve space. Diapers are provided.
- **Willamette Valley Food Assistance Program Food Bank** — 1:30 to 6:30 p.m., 888 Monmouth Cutoff Road, Building E, Dallas. Weekly distribution for eligible community members. 503-831-5634.
- **Free Blood Pressure Check Clinic** — 2 to 3 p.m., Salem Health West Valley (surgery admitting area), 525 SE Washington St., Dallas. 503-623-7323.
- **Monmouth Senior Center Music Jam** — 6:30 p.m., Monmouth Senior Center, 180 S. Warren St., Monmouth. Open to the public; musicians of all types welcome. 503-838-5678.
- **Dallas American Legion Post No. 20** — 7 p.m., Academy Building, Room 108, 182 SW Academy St., Dallas. 503-831-3971.

West Valley Housing Authority will hold a Special Board Meeting on Thursday, April 6, 2017 beginning at 2:00 p.m. at 204 SW Walnut in Dallas, Oregon via conference call with regular attendees. An Executive Session pursuant to ORS 192.660 will be held immediately following the Regular Meeting.

Agenda for the meeting is posted on the Housing Authority website at www.wvpha.org. The location for the meeting is handicapped accessible. Please advise the West Valley Housing Authority if you need any special accommodations to attend the meeting. For information, please call 503-623-8387, TDD 1-800-735-2900.

Visit our website, www.polkio.com

...for local news, sports and community events.

Follow us on

Itemizer-Observer



We're on a hunt for local Easter Egg Hunt events!

Send us an email with information about the event to: ionews@polkio.com by 4pm on Thursday, April 6th.

Itemizer-Observer 147 SE Court St., Dallas
503-623-2373 • www.polkio.com



You're the Difference

- Reduce
- Reuse
- Recycle