

BIRDMAN

Summer delights

BY TED A. GLOVER



It may look like there are four different species of birds in these photos but there are really only two—the spotted towhee and the black-headed grosbeak. Can you tell who's related to who? Clockwise from top left: Adult male spotted towhee; adult male black-headed grosbeak; juvenile spotted towhee; and adult female black-headed grosbeak. All photos © Joseph V. Higbee.

With summer upon us, the birds in our area are busy raising their young. The bird boxes have been used by tree swallows, western bluebirds, chickadees and nuthatches. Now the youngsters (or fledglings as they are called) are putting in an appearance and can be quite confusing, and they often look very different from the adult birds.

The juvenile spotted towhee, for example, is very different from his adult parent. He is streaked brown and has a brown iris while the adult has the distinctive black hood, rufous sides and a red iris. Also, the young western bluebird has lots of spots on his chest and not much blue yet in his wings. The black-headed grosbeak can be a challenge too as the fledglings of both sexes look alike and resemble the female with clear, buffy breasts and a striped head.

The young hummingbirds are prevalent all around, especially at the feeders. It's not easy to tell the youngsters apart here either, but the adult male Rufous and Anna's are a pleasure to see and easy to identify.

When the days are long and hot and the price of gasoline makes you feel even hotter, it's time to think about day-tripping. Around this neck of the woods, planning a short one-day trip is easy and can cover some beautiful countryside.

A trip to Squaw Lakes is one such trip. Go up to Applegate Lake, cross over the dam and follow the road about eight miles to the lakes. What I really like about this area is that all camping and boating must be done by walking in. This keeps the number of people to a minimum and increases the pleasure of a nice walk between Squaw Lake and Little Squaw Lake. All the usual mountain birds are present, including jays, juncos, chickadees, robins and flickers. The big pileated woodpecker nests here and ospreys are present at Applegate Lake. The highlight of our walk was finding the elusive MacGillivray's warbler. This little guy hops instead of walking and prefers dense thickets, usually near water. We saw the male with his beautiful gray hood and broken white eye-ring.

Another great day trip is over to Oregon Caves National Monument. We made this a round trip taking Highway 199 to Cave Junction, Highway 46 to the caves and then returning to Williams via Grayback Creek. The caves are spectacular and worth the trip and the bird life is abundant. While having lunch at a picnic table we were bombarded by Steller's jays trying to help themselves to our lunch.

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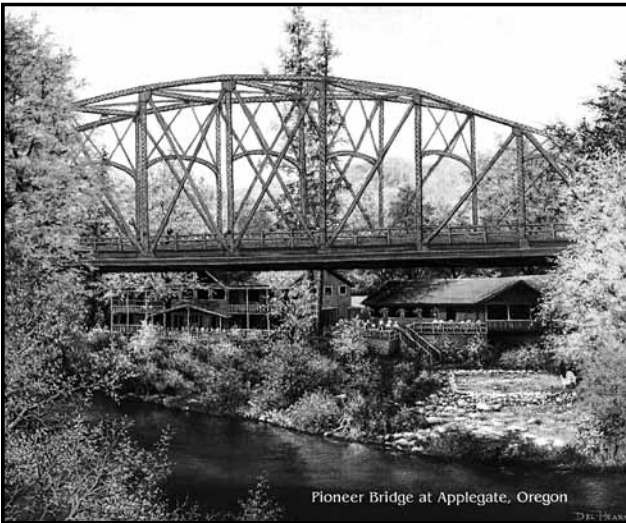
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