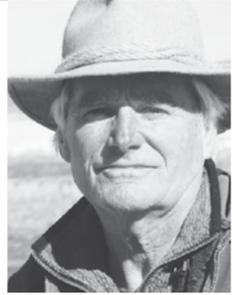


BIRD EXPLORER

Chestnut-backed Chickadees are new to the Applegate

BY PETER J. THIEMANN



Peter J. Thiemann

Having lived in the Applegate for 17 years, I regularly observe two Chickadee species: the common Black-capped and the not so common Mountain Chickadee. Now there is a recent addition to our Chickadee tribes, the Chestnut-backed. Usually ranging more to the south, in California, the Chestnut-backed is now observed

A bird feeder for Chickadees.



at our feeder all year. Often very tame, this species can be approached closely and appears curious of its new environment.

This permanent move to northern habitat for the

Chestnut-backed may be related to climate change, as we see in many other bird species. Only time will tell if this trend will continue and how the environment will change.

For us here in the Applegate, the Chestnut-backed Chickadee is a welcome new species. It is an attractive bird, with beautiful colors, and seems to associate well with other songbirds like Warblers and Kinglets.

For the first time this year I am using a new type of bird feeder specifically designed for Chickadees. It is advertised as a partial solution to the squirrel problem at bird feeders. Our Gray Squirrels here in the Applegate are quite aggressive around bird feeders and can be destructive when out-competing birds. So, a solution may be "if you can't keep the squirrels away, feed them." This feeder has a feature to mount corncocks in a vertical position next to the

regular seed window. The seed window has been reduced in size to slow access by birds. Now comes the most interesting feature of this feeder: a round 2¼-inch hole in the opposite side of the feeder box. The Chickadees learned in no time at all to enter the feeder box with all of the seeds through that hole, which does not allow larger, dominant birds, such as the Steller's Jays, or the Gray Squirrel to enter.



A Chestnut-backed Chickadee.

And here is another interesting observation: The Chestnut-backed Chickadees were the most frequent users

of that special hole entrance, often remaining in the box to eat and staying out of the rain.

But, of course, as with all nature, the Gray Squirrels did not like this new feeder box after having eaten the offered corncocks. With the reduced-size seed window often not providing enough seeds, the squirrels started to chew the wooden feeder box to break it open, knowing that the Chickadees had entered through the special hole. There were wood splinters all over. So far the squirrels have not attempted to enlarge the side hole. If that happens, I can install a metal ring. Stay tuned.

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Photos courtesy of peterjthiemann flickr photo stream.

Bee Project seeks help mapping Applegate bees

BY JUDI MAXWELL, PHD

Bee scientists at Oregon State University and the Oregon Department of Agriculture estimate that Oregon has 500-800 species of bees, but there has never been a concerted survey of the state's



The Oregon Bee Project logo

bees. Thus, it is very difficult to know whether the health of Oregon bees is improving or declining. The Oregon Bee Atlas represents the first steps towards addressing this gulf in our knowledge about the native (wild) bees of Oregon. The new Master Melittologist (Native Bee Scientist) Program (similar to the Master Gardener Program) trains motivated people like you to assist in this effort. For more information and an application form, visit extension.oregonstate.edu/bee-atlas/becoming-certified-master-melittologist.

So, if you see people wielding insect nets, with most of us looking spryer than our gray hair might suggest, you have

probably encountered an Oregon Bee Atlas team. Our team, comprised of 12 people from Josephine, Jackson, and Curry counties, has visited many areas within the Applegate Valley over the last two years, finding a number of "hot spots" that we visit regularly. These areas are characterized by high plant diversity and often include quality nesting habitat.

One such area is Fish Hatchery Park. Its floodplains, forests, wet meadows, and "climax" grasslands are always yielding surprises, such as bees in the Colletidae family, also called "cellophane" bees because the female lines her nest with a waterproof barrier. This way she can nest in areas prone to flooding.

Another hot spot is the Carberry Creek campsite, just south of Steamboat Ranch. This beautiful meadow provides a season-long buffet of pollen and nectar,

as well as the sandy soil favored by the ground-nesting Andrenidae, or mining bee. These bees nest in dense aggregations resulting in a cacophony as hundreds of females attempt to provision their nests while parasitic bees, who don't bother to build their own nests, try to sneak in and lay their eggs.

Another "gem" in the Applegate Valley is the Herb Pharm in Williams, which was designated as a Flagship Farm by the Oregon Bee Project because it is a showcase of pollinator-friendly practices. These include a beautiful garden that

welcomes you when you arrive at the Pharm. It was created by and is cared for by Sayaka Lean, a Bee Atlas member.

The garden provides a rich brew of plants offering pollen and nectar, and fuzzy plants, such

as lamb's ears. Female Anthidium, or wool carder bees, harvest the fuzz, which they use to line their nest cells. Herb Pharm is the venue for our annual Bee Atlas celebration. Visit the Herb Pharm website at herb-pharm.com to find out more about the event and when it will be held (late spring or early summer).

We are always looking for new areas, so if you know of a potential hot spot please contact me. We are particularly interested in meadows in the Mt. Isabelle area.

Whether the Applegate Valley will continue to be a haven for pollinators is not a sure thing. My personal opinion is that the production of hemp is of particular concern as flower-studded pastures and meadows are converted into barren landscapes that are the antithesis of pollinator habitat. Even if these fields are abandoned, they will not readily revert to their former state unless costly and time-consuming restoration practices are employed. Particularly disturbing is the amount of weed barriers used, which are likely to be left in the field when these areas come out of production.

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Sayaka Lean explores the Herb Pharm in Williams.



A Bee Atlas team in Fish Hatchery Park.

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