

BIRDMAN

Summer visitors move on

BY TED A. GLOVER

As the fall season arrives, birds are on the move again. Many birds have left already, especially the beautiful rufous hummingbirds, and others will follow soon, including the Western tanager, the black-headed grosbeak, most of the swallows, the strikingly handsome lazuli bunting, most of the wood warblers, and almost all of the flycatchers, including the ash-throated flycatcher.

We have seen, or mostly heard, the crested species of the tyrant flycatcher family around our house all summer. The

ash-throated flycatcher is a mostly brown bird above with a whitish-gray throat and chest and very pale yellow on his belly. While they dwell mostly along forest edges or in open habitats, they can be spotted as they fly from their perch to catch any flying insect. But what we recognize first is their unusual call, which reminds us of a police whistle!

This summer we had most of the woodpeckers that inhabit our area right in our own yard, visiting our sunflower feeders and helping themselves to our

supply of suet. (Interestingly, woodpeckers do not rely solely on insects they find on trees, they also catch flies and eat fruits and seeds.) We had a chance to watch some of the newborns as well. The most common woodpecker in this area is the acorn woodpecker with its clear black back and vibrant red on its crown. It also has a white forehead and cheek, with a hint of yellow on its throat, giving it a somewhat clownish look. In fact, it's very vocal and its loud call seems almost like it is laughing. Of course, its favorite food is the acorn and it can be seen and heard drilling holes in trees, utility poles and even structures to store the acorns and other nuts for later use. We were visited regularly by a family

of hairy woodpeckers along with their smaller cousins, the downy woodpeckers. Both of these woodpeckers have a white patch in the middle of their back and unmarked whitish flanks.

The woodpeckers are year-round residents in our area—watch for them as they climb trees using their sharp bills to hammer and chisel beneath the bark for various bugs.

Ted A. Glover • 541-846-0681
tedglover9@gmail.com



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Photos clockwise: **Western tanager**, a medium-sized American songbird, was formerly placed in the tanager family, but it and other members of this genus are now classified in the cardinal family (Gary Kramer, fws.org); **black-headed grosbeak** (Dave Menke, fws.org); **lazuli buntings**, named after the gemstone lapis lazuli, migrate to southeastern Arizona and Mexico (fws.org); **ash-throated flycatcher** (Gary Kramer, fws.org); **downy woodpecker**, the smallest of North America's woodpeckers (David Brezinski, fws.org); **acorn woodpecker** (Gary Kramer, fws.org).

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Fourth annual AAUW fall garden tour

The American Association of University Women (AAUW) Medford will hold its fourth annual fall garden tour, "Garden Inspirations," from 11 am to 4 pm, Sunday, September 16. The tour includes six gardens varying in size and type from small lots to large estates. Visitors will see water-wise, deer-resistant, and low-maintenance gardens; water features including fountains and koi ponds; vegetables, herbs, perennials, and aquatic plants; woodland and view settings, greenhouses and birdhouses; and much more. One of the gardens is actually multiple gardens in the Rogue Valley Manor (RVM) Resident Garden Area off Mira Mar Avenue.

Garden tour signs at RVM will direct you there. Tickets and maps to the gardens will be available at RVM and at all the gardens the day of the tour. Proceeds will fund local scholarships for women and girls. Cost is \$12 per person, free for children. Advance tickets are available at all Grange Co-ops and Wild Birds Unlimited. For more information and maps, go to <http://www.aauwmedford.org> or call Barbara Basden at 541-772-0579 or 541-499-8586.



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Windermere REAL ESTATE
Windermere Van Vleet Jacksonville, LLC
505 North 5th Street
Jacksonville, OR 97530

Frank D'Antonio, Principal Broker
Cell: 541.499.2233 ♦ Office: 541.899.2000
Email: frankd@windermere.com