

for attendance at the meetings in the study room. Drop in and find out what's happening.

Take advantage of free math tutoring with *AfterMath* on Mondays from 3:30 to 7. Experienced adult tutors will help students at any level. No appointment required. *AfterMath* follows the D-38 schedule and will not be offered on Monday, Jan. 21 when the library is closed for Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

The *All Ages Knitting Group* meets each Wednesday from 3 to 5 in the study room. Practice materials are provided and you are encouraged to bring your own project.

The *Paper Tiger Origami Club* meets on the third Friday of each month (Jan.18) from 4:30 to 5:30. Open to teens, tweens and adults, the group learns to make new projects each month. All materials are provided. Registration is encouraged but not required.

The *Teen Arts and Crafts* program in January is *Marshmallow Wars*. We'll be waging war with one another with marshmallow-launching catapults. All materials provided and registration is required. The program is open to ages 9 to 18.

The *Monument Library Anime Club* will meet from 5 to 6:30 on Jan. 31. Share anime with others who love it. We will watch videos—nothing rated above TV-14—and enjoy tasty snacks. This program is recommended for those 13-14 and up. No registration required.

Adult programs

Regularly occurring adult programs are:

- *Socrates Café* discussion group on Tuesdays from 1 to 3.
- *Senior Chats* on Wednesdays from 10 to noon.
- Beginner yoga class on Thursdays from noon to 1.

See the above for descriptions of *Coloring for Everyone*, *All Ages Knitting*, and the *Paper Tiger Origami Club*.

Life Circles is a group devoted to writing memories of life experiences. This supportive group provides discipline, inspiration and structure to help you meet your writing goals. Normally meeting on the first and third Monday of the month, this month's meeting will be on Jan. 7.

The *Monumental Bookworms* will meet on Jan. 8 from 7 to 8:30 to discuss *The Tea Girl of Hummingbird Lane* by Lisa See. All are welcome to attend this group sponsored by the Tri-Lakes Friends of the Library.

The *Second Thursday Craft* for January is *No-Sew Fleece Scarves*. We'll be making fleece scarves to get us through the winter with no sewing required! All supplies are provided and registration is required. Registration opens two weeks before craft day.

In collaboration with the *Who Gives a Scrap Creative Reuse Center*, we are hosting an arts, crafts, and hobby material exchange. Bring in your new, clean/gently used and unwanted materials and exchange them for "tickets" to "purchase/exchange" new-to-you craft supplies. Please only bring items in good condition and not those considered trash. We will

also have an up-cycling craft going on so you can take your time and check for new inventory. No registration required.

The *Monumental Readers* will meet from 10 to noon on Friday, Jan. 18 to discuss *The Diary of Mattie Spenser* by Sandra Dallas. All are welcome to attend this monthly book club and no registration is required.

History Buffs will meet from 1:30 to 3:30 on Wednesday, Jan. 23. Discuss history with other buffs! This year's discussion topic is *Origins of Modern Europe (500 to c. 1500)*. No registration required.

The *Monument Library Spinning* group will meet from 1:30 to 3:45 on Thursday, Jan. 24.

Palmer Lake Library Events

Palmer Lake Family Story Time is each Wednesday at 10:30.

Palmer Lake Toddler Time is on Fridays at 10:30.

Lego Build at Palmer Lake is at 4 p.m. on Thursday, Jan 17.

The *Third Saturday at Palmer Lake Library*, at 10:30 on Jan. 19, is a yoga class for children. Space is limited so please register early at 481-2587.

Please note that all Pikes Peak Library facilities will be closed on Monday, Jan. 21 in observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

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Bird Watch on the Palmer Divide

Spotted towhee (*Pipilo maculatus*)

By Elizabeth Hacker

As I walk along a trail in the Pike National Forest, I hear scratching in the underbrush. At first all I see is movement in the leaves but then I see it: a spotted towhee!

The spotted towhee is a striking sparrow found in thickets and sunbaked landscapes of the Western United States. It nests in El Paso County and although it doesn't frequent bird feeders, it isn't unusual to see one at a bird bath or on the ground under a feeder. Spotted towhees will be attracted to and nest in yards with scrub oak and overgrown grasses. Often, when I'm hiking, I observe them among flocks of dark-eyed juncos in long grasses at the edge of a trail.

Description

Slightly smaller than a robin, the spotted towhee is larger and more colorful than the other 15 sparrow species found in North America. It has a black head and back, its wings are black with white spots, and its tail is long and black with white outer feathers. Its breast is white in the center with distinctive rufus-colored sides. Its eyes are a dark red that really stand out against the black feathers on its head.

Nesting

Towhees are ground nesters, but they occasional will nest in the lower branches of a shrub. They begin their courtship in late March to mid-April when the males aggressively begin to defend their territories and often will fight with their own reflection.

The female builds a nest in the ground by scratching out a depression so the rim will be slightly above the ground concealing the eggs. In late April to mid-May, she will lay two to five eggs and brood them for up to 15 days while the male feeds her. Both parents forage to bring back food for their hungry hatchlings. Chicks will fledge the nest in about 15 days. Depend-



Above: Spotted towhee in the underbrush.
Illustration by Elizabeth Hacker.

ing on conditions and length of the season, towhees may nest more than once.

Interesting facts

When a towhee flies, it spreads its tail and the outer tail feathers flash white. When a hawk gives chase, the white tail feathers draw the predator's attention and while the hawk is momentarily distracted, the towhee may escape into the underbrush, possibly missing a few tail feathers.

Early in the breeding season, male spotted towhees spend their mornings singing their hearts out, trying to attract a mate. Male towhees have been recorded spending 70 percent to 90 percent of their mornings singing. Once a mate is attracted, the male's attention shifts to defending its territory, and they spend very little time singing.

The spotted towhee and the very similar Eastern

towhee used to be considered the same species and were referred to as the rufus-sided towhee. The two forms still occur together in the Great Plains, where they sometimes interbreed. This is a common evolutionary pattern in North American birds, a holdover from the time when the great ice sheets split the continent down the middle, isolating birds into eastern and western populations that then evolved separately.

Fun bird book:

Birding Is My Favorite Video Game

I've been told I'm a difficult person to give a gift to and while there may be an element of truth to that sentiment, I enjoy all the bird socks and T-shirts, the latest bird feeder, suet cakes, bird books, and other bird gifts I receive each year.

This year my son won the "best gift award" for Rosemary Mosco's *Birding Is My Favorite Video Game*. This book is a delightful collection of comics combining weird science facts, funny cartoons of odd little animals, sharp wit, and a strong environmental message. Apparently, he's followed her cartoons for a number of years on Facebook and knew that I would enjoy this book.

Mosco is a science writer and cartoonist, skills she combines into a unique style to inform and humor both young and old readers alike. This book is irresistible, and I highly recommend it. I plan to read her other books and email her to see if she has a speaking engagement in Colorado in 2019.

Elizabeth Hacker can be reached at elizabethhacker@ocn.me.



High Altitude Nature and Gardening (HANG)

Forest bathing, space travel, and indoor air

By Janet Sellers

Forest bathing as a practice is usually a slow and mindful walk in the forest habitat of leaves, soil, and roots that clean the air and help us stay well. In olden days, we absorbed this by being out in nature most of the time, but now we madly search for ways to feel better while indoors.

In studying the benefits of plants and indoor air as ecological life-support systems for space travel, NASA research scientist Bill Wolverton measured the filtering capacity of specific plants in the 1980s and 1990s. "We found that the most effective plants had a high transpiration rate—that is, they emit more moisture into the environment This is the result of a natural pumping action. As plants pull air down to their roots, they pump moisture out." His rule of thumb was

two or three house plants in 8- or 10-inch pots for every 100 square feet of floor space. Anecdotal evidence suggests health improvement for sufferers of asthma and "sick building syndrome" such as headache and sore throat.

We have a primordial relationship to being with nature. A wilderness vision quest to intuit one's life purpose is a rite of passage since ancient times, relating not only to intuition but also to health and well-being in strengthening the brain, body, and mind. Our ability to balance our nervous system in the presence of trees and plants may be related to experiences that begin at the microbial level and act optimally with our immune system to become resilient facing nature's complexities. Our immersion in the forest along with the root and soil microbes is key, and indoor plants

offer similar benefits.

Forest immersion and house plants can also make us smarter because they allow us to stay alert and reduce mental fatigue. Indoors, we are the hapless recipients of toxins from carpet, inks, plastics, and more. House plants help clean indoor air and improve well-being. The plants take in carbon dioxide and particulates, and through photosynthesis release oxygen back into the air and to us.

Some easy-care houseplants are superb at cleaning the air, but toxic to pets if ingested. Garden mums are tops at cleaning up ammonia, benzene, formaldehyde, and xylene. Peace lily and pothos remove ammonia, benzene, formaldehyde, and trichloroethylene (TCE), commonly found in craft paints, aerosols, cleaners, vinyl, and more.