

The Burgess Boys

By Elizabeth Strout (Random House) \$26

Haunted by the freak accident that killed their father when they were children, Jim and Bob Burgess escaped from their Maine hometown and found success as New York City attorneys. When their sister, Susan—the Burgess sibling who stayed behind—desperately needs their help, the brothers return to the landscape of their childhood where long-buried tensions surface in unexpected ways that will change them forever. Strout won the Pulitzer Prize for her earlier book, *Olive Kitteridge*.

Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead

By Sheryl Sandberg (Alfred A. Knopf) \$24.95

Why do men still hold the vast majority of leadership roles in government and industry? Sandberg suggests that women unintentionally hold themselves back in their careers and encourages them to “sit at the table,” seek challenges, take risks, and pursue their goals with gusto. Written with both humor and wisdom, Sandberg’s book is an inspiring call to action and a blueprint for individual growth, destined to change the conversation from what

women can’t do to what they can.

Where’d You Go, Bernadette

By Maria Semple (Little, Brown and Company) \$14.99

Worn down by years of trying to live the Seattle life she never wanted, Bernadette is on the brink of a meltdown. As disaster follows disaster, she disappears, leaving her family to pick up the pieces—which is exactly what her 15-year-old daughter Bee does. Weaving together emails, invoices, and school memos, she reveals the secret past that Bernadette has been hiding for decades.

Salt, Sugar, Fat: How the Food Giants Hooked Us

By Michael Moss (Random House) \$28

With the obesity epidemic reaching a total economic cost approaching \$300 billion a year, Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative reporter Michael Moss shows how we got here. Featuring examples from some of the most recognizable (and profitable) companies and brands of the last half-century, Moss’s explosive, empowering narrative is grounded in meticulous, eye-opening research.

The Orphan Master’s Son

By Adam Johnson (Random House) \$15

In Johnson’s Pulitzer Prize-winning book, Pak Jun Do is the haunted son of a “lost” mother and an influential father. As he rises in the ranks of the North Korean state, he navigates the shifting rules, arbitrary violence, and baffling demands of his overlords in order to stay alive. Driven to the absolute limit of what any human could endure, Pak boldly takes on the treacherous role of rival to Kim Jong Il in an attempt to save the woman he loves. This is a riveting portrait of a world rife with hunger, corruption, and casual cruelty but also camaraderie, stolen moments of beauty, and love.

Why not take a look at a new bestseller? It may be interesting to see if you can spot the treasures that make these books appeal to so many. Until next month, happy reading.

The staff at Covered Treasures Bookstore can be contacted at books@ocn.me.

Bird Watch on the Palmer Divide**Northern flicker: *Colaptes auratus***

By Elizabeth Hacker

It’s that time of the year when northern flickers are looking for a mate, and don’t we know it! April’s unusually cool, wet weather may have delayed the flickers’ quest a week or two, but if they haven’t yet been drumming, it won’t be long.

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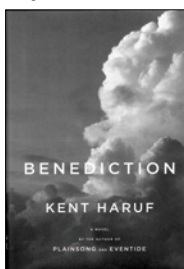
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**Identification**

Of the four woodpecker species found on the Palmer Divide, the flicker is the one most often seen and heard. The male and female look similar. The flicker is a medium-size bird about 12 inches long with a 15-inch wingspan. It is a handsome bird that is grayish-brown in color with horizontal barring across its back. It has a distinctive black bib or crest on its upper chest. Its breast is a lighter tan with small dark spots. The adult male has a red malar stripe, or mustache, that extends from the base of its beak to its cheek. Its beak is slightly curved. Even from a great distance it’s easy to spot the flicker’s conspicuous white rump patch.

Habitat and range

Five species of northern flicker can be found across much of North America in a variety of woodlands. The flickers that reside on the Divide are the red shafted species. A salmon-red tint appears on the under wings and tail of flickers here. Occasionally, a yellow-shafted flicker is reported in El Paso County, but it’s rare. In bordering states like Nebraska, both the red- and yellow-shafted flickers are common and interbreeding occurs.

Northern flickers have adapted well to human habitation and can be found in urban, suburban, and rural areas. Their numbers are decreasing, probably due to reduction in habitat and poisons used to kill ants, their favorite food.

Diet

The northern flicker’s favorite food is ants. It is the only woodpecker that hunts for food on the ground. It uses its beak and long tongue to probe for tasty morsels in trees and on the ground. It is an insectivore but will sometimes eat nuts, seeds, and berries, and in the winter it is attracted to suet cakes.

Woodpeckers have exceptionally long tongues that when retracted, wrap around the inside of its skull. When extended, the tongue will reach a few inches. The tip of a woodpecker’s tongue is barbed and coated with sticky saliva.

Nesting

During courtship, flickers hammer on dead, hollowed-out tree limbs or anything that will make noise. When drumming, the flicker makes the loudest noise possible to attract a mate or warn other flickers to stay away from its territory. Flickers look for surfaces that generate a loud noise. I once observed one hammering on a metal stop sign. It’s hard to imagine that drumming doesn’t harm the bird, but they have strong necks and can hammer away for hours at a time.

Once a pair bonds, they work together to build a nest in a dead or dying tree, telephone post, or birdhouse. The birds will pound on a tree and carve out a cavity about 15 inches deep. Wood chips from the excavation are used to line the nest. The female lays about eight eggs over a two-week period. Both parents brood the eggs for about two weeks. Often only two to four eggs hatch.

When the chicks hatch, the parents brood and feed them. Chicks fledge in about 18 days. For about a month, the parents continue to feed and teach them



Above: Illustration by Elizabeth Hacker of a Northern Flicker. A color version is posted at www.ocn.me/v13n5bird.htm.

how to forage for food. Even before the chicks leave the nest they are probing around the nest with their long tongues for insects and larvae.

Juvenile birds must leave the adults’ territory and establish their own. The red-shafted northern flicker does not migrate long distances. Many do not leave and stay to defend their territory. Due to limited food supply, not all flickers can remain in their territories during the winter. Some must leave the region to survive.

Friend or foe?

I think the northern flicker is a most interesting and beautiful bird. I’m often told that people don’t like the fact that flickers pound holes in their cedar siding. I understand that flickers are hard on siding, but living in the woods means sharing the habitat with the creatures that live there. Generally, flickers only peck holes in rotten wood. Most siding that is pecked on is old and worn. Flickers eat large quantities of ants and termites that can damage houses, so in some cases they may alert the homeowner that there is a problem.

Several years ago we re-sided our house with stucco because our cedar siding had weathered and the flickers and nuthatches were attacking it. Stucco was slightly more expensive than repairing and painting the wood siding, but it updated the look of our house and meant we would never have to paint again!

Pine Forest Antique and Garden Show

I enjoyed meeting many readers and birders at this year’s 37th annual Pine Forest Antique and Garden show. I would like to thank the people that stopped by my booth and all the incredible volunteers that worked to host this fabulous event. I had so much fun that I want to do it again next year.

Elizabeth Hacker is a writer and artist. Email her at elizabethhacker@ocn.me to share bird pictures and stories.