

Happy Independence Day Johnson County!

Lindsey GRIFFITH
CLERK OF DISTRICT COURT



Make the "Wise" Choice

Please join me for a meet and greet,
July 11 from 5-7 p.m.
at the Poolside Park Pavilion.

Paid for by Lloyd and Gay Wise



Bulletin courtesy photo by Brady Godwin
Researchers from the University of Wyoming spent a week in Johnson County studying local hummingbird populations. The Broad-tailed hummingbird is one of the most common species in the area.

Hummingbird health

By **JEN SIEVE-HICKS**
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Weighing in at about half of what a nickel weighs, the diminutive Broad-tailed hummingbird annually migrates more than 1,000 miles from Wyoming and the Rocky Mountain west all the way to middle Mexico, some stopping in the Bighorn Mountains to start a nest.

Despite its small stature, the Broad-tailed, along with other hummingbird species, are more important to a healthy ecosystem than most people realize.

That's because in addition to pollinating the food we eat, a hummingbird may eat 1,000 tiny insects a day – including mosquitos, gnats and spiders. They are also ecosystem sentinels – providing early warnings of natural or human-caused environmental change – sort of a canary in a coal mine.

Despite the birds' importance, though, North American hummingbirds remain one of the least-studied bird groups.

But with the help of a group of researchers from the University of Wyoming, that's about to change.

Last month, those researchers – Holly Ernest, a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine who also holds a Ph.D. in ecology and teaches in UW's department of veterinary sciences, along with Ph.D. candidate Brady Godwin, and Ernest's son and researcher Graeme Ernest-Hoar – spent time at two sites in Johnson County examining the birds and collecting samples to test for DNA and disease status from hummingbirds that they hope will unlock some of the birds' mysteries.

"We need established feeders; most of them are at private residences," said Godwin of the locations chosen for studying the birds. "In a lot of ways, this project is run by the kindness of strangers."

To study the birds, Ernest and Godwin have a specially designed net that is fitted over hummingbird feeders so that the birds can be gently and

carefully caught.

"When the bird flies in, we let the nets down," Ernest said.

The team then collects a DNA sample, a blood sample that is studied for blood parasites and "bands" each bird by placing a tiny federal band around its ankle so other scientists can identify the birds on their migratory routes.

Ernest is one of only 150 or so federally permitted hummingbird banders – a permit that can only be earned after years of practice and a supervised apprenticeship. Godwin is in training and expects to secure his Master Bander Permit soon.

"It's important that people know that no hummingbirds are hurt in this process," Ernest said.

The safety of the birds is the team's No. 1 concern.

When Ernest began the Hummingbird Health Project more than a decade ago at the University of California, Davis, very little was known about the birds' health or habits.

"There was basically no health information about hummingbirds and very little was known about genetic diversity," she said.

Genetic testing can tell researchers a lot about the health and habits of the species, Godwin said.

Scientists believe – but so far have little data on which to base the belief – that hummingbirds return to the same area to breed each year.

"One way to figure that out," Godwin said, "is to study genetics to see if they're migrating and returning to the same point."

After the "fun part" of collecting data this summer, Godwin will spend hundreds of hours processing the samples and analyzing the data in the lab at UW. It's too early to know what the study will yield, but Godwin hopes that the results will give a better understanding of hummingbird ecology in Wyoming.

"What I love about hummingbirds," Ernest said, "is that they're ambassadors for wildlife conservation. Everyone enjoys watching hummingbirds at a feeder."

Hummingbird tidbits

- There are approximately 340 species of hummingbirds found in the Americas.

- Four species of hummingbirds can be found in the Bighorn Mountains – Calliope, Ruby-throated hummingbird, Broad-tailed hummingbird, Rufous hummingbird. The Broad-tailed and Rufous are the most common.

- In addition to their fondness for sweet nectar, female hummingbirds in particular require a lot of protein to produce eggs. That protein comes in the form of small insects.

- Female hummingbirds gather spider webs to help build their nests.

- Hummingbirds are the only birds known to fly backward.

Affordable Housing in Buffalo

Applications for a Habitat home will be available from **Mon., July 9 through Fri., August 17th.**

To find out if your family qualifies, please attend the **Kick-Off Event, Mon., July 9 at 7pm at the ANB Bank conference room, 99 S. Main St. in Buffalo** or contact

Habitat for Humanity of Johnson Co.
310 Williams St.—684-5220.

Applications will be available at the Habitat office, JC Library, and Chamber of Commerce.



All applicants are considered regardless of religious beliefs, race, color, sex or national origin.



SHOWCASE OF HOMES

Friday, July 6th



420 S Cummings Avenue:
4:00 to 5:00 p.m.
2 BD/1.75 BA
1 Car Detached Garage
\$195,000
With Wendy Greenough



505 Sourdough Street:
4:30 to 5:30 p.m.
3 BD/2 BA
1 Car Attached Garage
\$247,000
With Cristy Kinghorn



457 N Adams Avenue:
5:00 to 6:00 p.m.
3 BD/1 BA
1 Car Attached Garage
\$214,900
With Wendy Greenough



104 Blackfoot Lane:
5:45 to 6:45 p.m.
4 BD/2.75 BA
3 Car Attached Garage
.99 Acre Lot
\$579,900
With Cristy Kinghorn

Come by and take a tour of these homes and all they have to offer.
Call Cristy Kinghorn, 307-620-0037 or Wendy Greenough, 307-217-1451 for more information.

Upcoming Showcase of Homes

Thursday, July 13th
220 Aspen Drive - 4 BD/3 BA - \$299,500
8929 US Highway 16 West - 5 BD/4 BA - \$383,500



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Learning to strike a chord

By **FLOYD WHITING**
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Learning to play an instrument is difficult. It requires concentration, discipline and talent and, if you're lucky, a little coaching and tips from a professional.

That's where the Bighorn

Bluegrass Camp comes in. The camp provides seasoned musicians to teach budding musicians more about music and their respective instruments. The camp is set for July 16-20.

"It's 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. every day," Karen Blaney, one of the camp organizers, said.

The camp will take place at the Johnson County Fairgrounds and will include teachers from the band Horseshoes and Hand Grenades, Prairie Wildfire, David Huebner of Two Tracks, Tessa Taylor and more.

"We're going to have some new things this year," Blaney said. "We will have a cello, which we haven't had before. David Huebner of Two Tracks teaches cello in a lot of ways, but he will be teaching bluegrass cello. So that will be fun."

Other classes will include beginning, intermediate and advanced lessons on the mandolin, guitar, banjo, bass and more.

There will also be group lessons on jamming and how to form and manage a band, Blaney said. This year also adds a few days to the camp.

"This year we will have five days; last year we only had three days," Blaney said.

Students from the camp will perform at 3 p.m. July 20 during the Big Horn Mountain Festival.

The camp will loan instruments to those who need them, and Blaney advises that no heirlooms should be brought to the camp and that jewelry be limited to allow for ease of playing.

Blaney said she could take about 10 more musicians. To get involved in the camp, email Blaney at karenblaneyeventcoordinator@gmail.com.

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