



It's a matter of survival.

Animal adaptation

Birds modify behavior as circumstances change

Through time, animals have adapted to particular places or habitats. Their physical features and behavior have been modified so they can sustain life within the limitations set forth by the habitat. Bill length or song frequency, for example, are best suited for where they live.

By traveling trails and watching wildlife over the years, one becomes familiar with the habits of animals. Eventually one can predict how they will behave and where they can be found. So when an animal behaves in an unpredictable manner, it attracts one's attention.

Tree sparrows that come south in the winter from their northern Cana-



nature
Timothy Nowicki

da nesting grounds are one of the most predictable ground feeders I know. If they are not feeding on the ground, they are only a few feet above the ground on a platform feeder, or so I thought.

Just the other day I was watching the feeders here at the Independence Oaks Nature Center, and to my

surprise I saw a tree sparrow perched on a tube feeder pecking at sunflower seeds. Not only was it unusual to see it perched on such a feeder, but they do not frequently eat sunflower seeds, either.

Downy woodpeckers that come to the feeders eat suet, but they also eat sunflower seeds from the tube

feeders. In order to extract the kernel from the husk, they wedge the seed in a cracked log and break the shell with their bill. They are using the log just like we use a vice.

Both these birds are exhibiting behavior that I consider atypical, and it makes me wonder. Maybe my conceptions of their behavior is incomplete, or maybe their behavior is changing.

Birds are very visual animals and watch other birds feeding at bird feeders. It seems very plausible to me that tree sparrows and downy woodpeckers would investigate to see what other birds are eating. They would even try to eat what other birds find acceptable.

'They are using the log just like we use a vice.'
— Timothy Nowicki on Downy woodpeckers

Sunflower seeds are a good source of energy in winter and are commonly used at many feeding stations. Because they are eaten by so many different birds, any bird at a feeding station could not help but be attracted to them. Though these birds have only recently been exposed to this rich source of food, their behavior is adaptable enough for exploitation.

Alaskans visit area to curb drilling

Two Alaskan residents will visit the Detroit area next week to raise support for two wilderness bills now in Congress that would prevent oil drilling on the northeast shore of Alaska.

The visit is sponsored by the Sierra Club of Southeast Michigan, which is based in Southfield. Glendon Brunk, a wildlife manager in Alaska for 21 years, will show a multi-projector slide presentation he has produced, "The Last Great Wilderness."

Before the slide show, Susan Stoltz, a singer and songwriter, will sing folk songs pertaining to wilderness and environmental issues.

The slide show and song fest takes place twice: at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 31, in the Sterling Heights Public Library, 40255 Dodge Park Road; and at 7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 1, in the Henry Ford Centennial Library, 16300 Michigan Avenue, Dearborn.

The Sterling Heights show is free; admission to the Dearborn show is \$2 to cover the cost of the auditorium rental.

THE SLIDE show alone will be shown at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 30, in the Smith Auditorium of the Orchard Ridge Campus of Oakland Community College. The show is free.

An expanded version of the song fest will take place 4-8 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 4, in the Old Shillelagh, 349 Monroe in Detroit's Greektown.

Stoltz, Larry Larson, Mick Gavin and Carl Caballero will perform folk songs, Irish songs and songs of the north, with proceeds going to the Sierra Club. Admission is \$3.

BOTH Brunk and Stoltz are touring the United States to raise support for two bills now in Congress, said Sierra Club spokesman Ed McArdle. The bills are HB39 and SB39.

"We would like Michigan's congressmen to co-sponsor these bills," McArdle said.

Both bills would give wilderness status to the northeast Alaska coastline and prevent the land from being drilled for oil.

Other bills are pending in Congress that would allow oil drilling on the northeast slope, in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

THE MULTI-PROJECTOR slide show combines the work of 12 photographers and gives a close-up look at the refuge, often called the "Serengeti of the North."

The refuge is home to grizzly and polar bears, more than 165,000 caribou, snowy owls and tundra swans.

The northeast coast is the last 125 miles of Alaskan coastline not yet opened to oil development.

Brunk produced the show to inspire Americans to ask questions about their own future as well as the future of the planet, he said.

56 auction needs help

Volunteers are needed by Channel 56 to give a few hours of their time for its annual fund-raising auction.

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