

# • Natural

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Red fruits on a crabapple tree in her yard draw flocks of birds every year in late fall and winter.

Besides photographing birds, Hoopes just likes watching their quirky habits.

From her living room window she has watched a robin toss a berry in the air and then catch it in its mouth.

Another time she caught a chickadee playing peek-a-boo with her. It was on a tree limb peering at her through its legs.

She has watched a hummingbird bathe in the light sprinkle of a garden hose and once had a hummingbird briefly sit on her shoulder.

Hoopes wasn't sure how close it got until she saw the evidence while doing laundry.

She participates in Project FeederWatch through the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. The program is in its 20th year of collecting bird counts to monitor the migration of birds in Canada and the United States.

Since it started, the program has demonstrated how temperature changes have influenced bird migration.

"I saw five robins in my back yard today, and it's January," she said recently. "It used to be that robins came in spring."

Next to a crabapple tree is a feeder stocked with sunflower and safflower seeds that draws chickadees, goldfinches, cardinals, blue jays, titmice and downy woodpeckers.

She wears a hat while filling the thistle tube if chickadees are near, or she'll find sunflower seed shells in her hair.

Hoopes has been fascinated with photography since she was 16 but never had the time to pursue it until she retired two years ago from the Agency on Aging in Columbus.

Summer, winter, rain or snow, she can be found outdoors shooting photos.

She once lay on the ground to get a close-up shot of a spider web with a spider on a plant in the background. The photograph was published in Shutterbug magazine.

She has caught two house wrens feeding their babies, a hummingbird preening on a tree limb, a male cardinal feeding a female cardinal and a Cooper's hawk eating a sparrow that died after flying into a window.

Last summer, she concentrated on catching butterflies in flight. This year, her goal is to photograph birds in flight.

Several of her nature photographs appeared in the 2006 Greenwood planning calendar. This year, one of her pictures is on the cover, and others are inside.

"The gift of photography is what God gave me," she said. "This is what he wants done to show people the beauty of nature."

"Beauty is everywhere if we take time to look at it."



STAFF PHOTO BY AIMEE SHATTO



Linda Hoopes, above, waits to take a shot of birds that frequent her Greenwood yard. After becoming interested in photography as a teenager, she took up the hobby with a passion after retirement two years ago.



Among the many birds she has photographed include a male sparrow, top left, and a male rose breasted grosbeak, bottom left. A female grosbeak looks nothing like a male, Hoopes says. Female birds of the species are brown with beautiful patterns on their bodies, she says.



A house finch cocks its head while posing for the camera of Greenwood resident Linda Hoopes. The bird is known for red feathers on its head.

# • Thank

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So, how to go about this?

Use stationery or a card. A fountain pen is ideal, but Davis knows this is asking a lot. Ballpoint will do. But save the spiral-bound lined paper for schoolwork.

Write conversationally. Sometimes, when we're trying to sound polite, we sound robotic.

No: I have always wanted to own a Lava Lamp.

Yes: I've always thought Lava Lamps were cool.

"If someone writes, 'You rock!' that's perfect," Davis said, because it's the way that person really talks. Having said that, "awesome" is overused. Even in conversation.

Get it in the mail today. It's never too late to express thanks, but an immediate response reinforces the gratitude in the message, as if wild horses couldn't keep you from penning this note.

And yes, this even goes for less-than-thrilling gifts. If honest enthusiasm lags, you can always say how fun it is to get a package in the mail, or to be surrounded by well-wishing friends.

And yes, even if you thanked someone in person, a follow-up note, while technically redundant, always is appreciated.

You're welcome.

# • January

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Read a classic

Most any one will do: Jane Austen, the Bronte sisters, F. Scott Fitzgerald. The slower, more deliberate pace of faraway times suits winter's chill.

And somehow, the winters centuries ago always seem colder (recall carriages traveling through the snow from a dinner party in "Emma"). So bring an afghan to your favorite reading chair.

Write something

Not on the computer. Grab one of the dozens of blank journals or stationery for sale in any book store. Write a letter to your college best friend. Write down something funny today. Write a

poem, rhyming not required.

You may be surprised at what flows from your pen; life is sometimes more interesting when committed to paper.

Bake bread

Yes, it can take all afternoon. Yes, it's a little intimidating. But what a way to pass a long, cold Sunday.

Try a traditional recipe that requires your hands; or just use the one that came with your electric mixer. The magic moment is when it emerges from the oven.

Take comfort in friends

You just sent them a holiday card, but wouldn't getting together be much nicer? Invite them to dinner. Not a fancy holiday dinner, just some meat or vegetables that can cook almost all day.

Put away the carols and play some jazz. Drink an inexpensive shiraz. Toast to the spring that is to come.

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