

Wild Wednesday. 23 December 2020, by Walt Anderson

As Christmas is upon us, I feel it is time for a little levity, as gravity is a downer. Here are a little wordplay and some critter pics to try to bring some smiles to your lips. Or grimaces, if need be.

Let's not reflect too deeply on the past year, as hindsight is 2020.

Even the birds have had a tough year: feathers are down, and bills are up.

What's the big deal about the Saturn and Jupiter conjunction? It's simply "and."

Riddle: Why would you ask a Russian Commie named Rudolf for a weather report? *Answer after first photo.*



Answer: Because Rudolf the Red knows rain, Dear. [paraphrased from something I heard years ago]

Reindeer are domesticated Caribou. In Arizona, we have Mule Deer and White-tailed Deer, also in the family Cervidae. At this time of year, you may see camouflaged hunters driving massive pickups on traditional slay rides.



Arizona is the wrong habitat for Elves, which prefer higher latitudes, but the pine forests are good for Pygmies. They often dance to the Nuthatcher Suite.



Rabbit wearing furry snowshoes on the left; Bobcat in its stalking feet on the right.



The Loggerhead Shrike comes Covid-prepared, with built-in mask and a liking for social distancing. Insects are fine food in the summer, but in the winter, he would not spare a sparrow.



The Christmas Story tells of three kings that came from the Orient, drawn by the bright star in the heavens. We know that many birds use celestial navigation, and there is a certain indication of royalty in all that are named for their specific crowns: White-crowned and Rufous-crowned Sparrows, Orange-crowned Warbler, and Black-crowned Night-Heron, for example. The Ruby-crowned Kinglet incorporates a regal title in its very name, which also points out its crown jewel. The kingbirds (true tyrants) have migrated south in our winter months, but they'll be back in the summer to harass other birds that fail to recognize their royal authority.



A sure-fire cure for the winter blahs is a bluebird. "Zip-a-dee-doo-dah! ... Mr. Bluebird's on my shoulder; it's the truth, it's actual. Everything is satisfactory." Cheery song, for sure, but maybe not so "satisfactory" anymore, as the 1946 Disney movie, *Song of the South*, has lately been criticized for its depiction of plantation life. Nevertheless, in the winter, some of our bluebirds do move south, but you won't hear them whistling Dixie.



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Step out at night and listen for the Christmas carols of the coyotes, song dogs of the West. In places where wolves and mountain lions have been killed off, bobcats and coyotes have become the reigning cats and dogs.

Happy Holidays!