

"H Is for Hawk: A New Chapter," by author and falconer Helen Macdonald, which aired in the fall of 2017. It is a powerful and gripping story about Helen training her goshawk named Lupin.

#### Watch for snowy owls

This year there was a big irruption (an irregular migration of large numbers of birds to areas where they

aren't typically found) of snowy owls born in the arctic. Large numbers of juvenile snowy owls have been reported in northern states across the Midwest, but they have also been seen in Texas. Sadly, many will not survive to adulthood due to the stress of their long flight, scarcity of food and habitat, and collisions with vehicles. If you are fortunate enough to see them, they

are a truly a sight to behold. I would implore viewers to keep a good distance so as not to add additional stress on this already stressed-out species.

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### High Altitude Nature and Gardening (HANG)

## Of singing forests and thriving gardens

By Janet Sellers

Since the 1970s, the ecovillage community of Damenhur, Italy, has been researching the connection between people, plants, and their environment, and plants' reactivity and ability to learn and even to communicate via electronic potential using a specially outfitted midi (musical instrument digital interface) music device. The plants appear to learn with the midi and make responses to human-generated sounds such as singing and playing stringed instruments.

When the midi device is set to audible frequencies humans can hear, the plants interact with humans and the device and actually "learn" to make the frequencies that generate sound on the device that we can hear. The researchers use a variation of the Wheatstone bridge, an electrical circuit used to measure electrical resistance, and provides extremely accurate measurements. One of the Wheatstone bridge's initial uses was for soil analysis and comparison.

Plants adapt and make choices in their environment in order to thrive—they send out signals to beneficial insects to remove predators. Our local ponderosas send out essential oils to bathe themselves and the forest in protections from harmful microbes and bugs, and their roots seek out nutrients in the soil via cell growth and direct the growth to water and nu-

trients. Ecologist Susan Simard's 30 years of research shows plants and trees even have a mother tree or plant that guides, teaches, leads, and feeds their offspring and fellow forest plants to sugars and nutrients, and the communication is called the "Wood Wide Web."

I suspect many of us hear, in some way, the ponderosa's song when we are in the woods with them and somehow we are able to have a feeling or a sense of connectedness. But I did not realize that plants can make beautiful music with people! And it is beautiful music, too.

Plants are complex, and they have complex feeding behaviors. Just like animals, plants are on a constant hunt for food, in ways aggressive or passive, any way they can get it. Just like foraging animals, the roots will seek out nutrients like an animal walking along to get its food, but the plant actually develops growth cells to move along and get its fill of nutrients instead of locomotion.

While our winter is a rest time for the garden, it is planning time for us, and we can easily optimize our potted and garden plants, even in January. After learning about how trees and plants think, communicate, and even sing, it seems natural that we help them out with some of their needs, especially if we've plopped

them into a pot indoors away from their habitat.

#### Handy garden hints and news

**Cloche (mini-greenhouse):** Cut off the bottom of a soda bottle, tent baby plants in soil or pot.

**Banana-rama tea:** Banana peels offer nutrients your plants need: Potassium, phosphorus, calcium, and other minerals. Put banana peels in a large jar, fill with water, let brew for two days. Use this tea to water your plants indoors or out; place peels under the garden soil.

**Treecycle:** Christmas trees are chipped up into free, helpful garden mulch. Get yours this month!

**Monument Community Garden:** For 2018, it will be a demonstration garden with tours, so check out the Facebook page for handy hints and local events: [facebook.com/monumentcommunitygarden](https://www.facebook.com/monumentcommunitygarden)

**Free gardening courses:** Contact the Monument town gardener at [COLgren@tomgov.org](mailto:COLgren@tomgov.org) or (719) 884-8026. Begins Jan. 30.

Janet Sellers is an avid lazy gardener (aka leave-it-natural) and active ethnobotanist promoting the dynamic relationships between people, biota, and environments from the cultures of the past and immediate present. She can be reached at [JanetSellers@ocn.me](mailto:JanetSellers@ocn.me).

### Art Matters

## All in good spirits for 2018



By Janet Sellers

A new sparkle for the old bubbly: Southwinds Fine Art Gallery will start 2018 with its *Celebration Art! Champagne Tour* weekends. The monthly events will offer a Second Friday artist salon from 4 to 9 p.m. with an art talk at 7 p.m., and continue the weekend fun with a next-day (Saturday) spotlight on a guest artist with a reception from 1 to 4 p.m.

The new programming is in addition to the weekly Saturday studio time for (costumed) figure drawing. The gallery group will be preparing to increase its events for its spring/summer extravaganzas that will include art shows, plein air events, an art with organic farmers market, and more in its inimitable and beautiful forest setting.

I spoke with gallery Director Thia Lynn and gallery Manager Marlene Brown about the direction the programming will be taking this year. Lynn said they look to include more guest artists each month as well as showcase their member artists. The lineup has some familiar names coming in for the monthly Second Friday/Second Saturday events, and they are calling on the fun of champagne bubbles for a sense of lively inspiration for its Champagne Tour weekends. Sounds good to me!

Mid-winter, Southwinds will seek to develop its warm

community rapport with exceptional art shows and open studio times. The figure drawing Saturdays with costumed models have been popular since it started up last summer, and the new Second Friday art talks and salon style conviviality will include Saturday afternoon tea and more with the spotlighted artists.

As the weather warms up, and especially on those random but much anticipated warmer days of winter and spring, they can add in some ad hoc outdoor art events such as plein air days and hikes, and look to have plein air "paint outs" with endgame shows that are so popular nationwide. The gallery is nestled in the ponderosa forest, so visitors can be indoors or outdoors to enjoy some art time.

#### Art events

**Bella Art and Frame Gallery**—showcasing member artists, 183 Washington St., Monument.

**Clay n Colors artist coop**—Open to the public Fridays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and "when the flag is out!" 251 Front St., Suite 1, Monument.

**Gallery 132**—Local artisan co-op. Jewelry trunk show Jan. 27 all day. 251 Front St., Suite 8, Monument.

**Southwinds Fine Art Gallery**—*Celebration Art! Champagne Tour weekends*. Kickoff is Jan.12 and 13. Janu-

ary speaker is Atomic Brunette, aka artist Thia Lynn; January featured artist is Janet Sellers' "Spirit Trees and Animals of Our Local Forests" including Spirit Trees from her recent show at the Air Force Academy's Permanent Professors' Gallery. Southwinds Fine Art Gallery, 16575 Rollercoaster Road at Baptist Road.

**Open Studio Saturdays**—Southwinds' weekly costumed figure drawing studio sessions 10 a.m. to noon, \$10/session, (open studio, no instruction). Southwinds Fine Art Gallery, 16575 Roller Coaster Road at Baptist Road. 719- 481-6157.

**Tri-Lakes Center for the Arts**—Annual member and resident artist show through Jan. 26. 304 Highway 105, Palmer Lake. The next call for Artists: Visions of Light photography show, early deadline is Jan. 15. View website for details: [www.TriLakesArts.org](http://www.TriLakesArts.org).

Janet Sellers is an award-winning artist, writer, and speaker. She teaches art and creative writing in the studio, on location, and in local college classes. Contact her at [janetsellers@ocn.me](mailto:janetsellers@ocn.me).

## Snapshots of Our Community

### Palmer Lake Star shines brightly



Above: with the festively lit Rockhouse in the foreground, the Palmer Lake Star shines brightly for the holiday season. Photo by David Futey

### Handbell Choir concert, Dec. 9



Above: The Tri-Lakes Community Handbell Choir performed on Saturday, Dec. 9 at the Monument Community Presbyterian Church. The nave of the church was filled with attentive listeners as the handbells chimed out numerous Christmas songs and hymns as well as other holiday songs. Photo by John Howe.