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Trinity Musings #40: from Rev Brian Goodings [trinityminister@bmts.com](mailto:trinityminister@bmts.com)  
Serving Trinity United Church: Collingwood

Hey....if you're sick of watching and hearing news that gives us all the details about stuff like the Hirsute-Duck-Dynasty-Mob storming the Capitol building in Washington, how about this news.

(Pay attention to your blood pressure and heart rate as you read the next couple of paragraphs.)

There was a snowy owl sitting on a fence post outside of Thornbury yesterday. It has likely come down from the far north and is here just for a few weeks before it heads back to the James Bay lowlands or maybe even further. It was stunningly beautiful in all of its whiteness as it sat and surveyed the fields, and me, almost completely still and unhurried.

The day before that, I saw a bald eagle soaring over the Silver Creek forest. Eagles are always a harbinger of good luck for me. That day was no exception and a lot of joy came my way after seeing it.

I don't keep life-lists or belong to any birding club, but I love watching birds. They remind me that there are many other histories and stories unfolding in creation that are not all ours.

I have eleven bird feeders in my backyard and a resident flock of around thirty goldfinches feed there all day. There's also a large number of mourning doves, juncos, purple finches, cardinals, crows, chickadees, nuthatches, downy and hairy woodpeckers, and the coolest of all, is a red-bellied woodpecker.

I sit watching them with a coffee and my binoculars, as often as I can. I'm training for retirement and I think I'm going to be good at it.

I even feed eleven or twelve squirrels and actually like watching them too. I spent most of last year cursing and trying to chase them away but my daughter Hannah, who is one of the kindest people I know, told me I should just accept them as neighbours, and let them have feeders too. She reminded me that when I offer communion at church I always say everyone is welcome at the table.

Although I go through a lot more seed now, I'm a lot happier and a lot less grumpy and frustrated as a result of simply accepting them. Much to my chagrin, over the years I have learned that a squirrel, with a peanut sized brain, is really a lot smarter than me. I am no match for their cleverness and athleticism. Admirable beasts in their dogged determination and persistence.

(As an aside...I did find the story of the so-called-raccoon-proof garbage boxes invented in Toronto very amusing. After the grand announcement by Mayor John Tory, the racoons heard the claims by the oh-so-clever engineers as a challenge. Like a Rubik's cube, they cracked the code to the boxes in hours. Apparently racoons know something about the power of gravity and drop zones.)

Now and then, the calm pastoral scene in my back yard is suddenly interrupted by a very beautiful, but deadly sharp shinned hawk that swoops in and picks off one of the smaller birds.

I have mixed emotions about these attacks because I am attracting the small birds to my feeders and the hawk is taking advantage of this concentration of prey. However, even though I feel guilty, it's really quite natural and actually an awesome display of power and speed.

A puff of feathers from the unlucky victim blows across the snow under the suddenly empty feeders...but within an hour or so, the small birds return and life at my feeders resumes.

(So how's your blood pressure and heart rate?)

Is this better news than you are used to sharing and thinking about 24/7? Have you checked your email or phone in the last three minutes?

I'm not suggesting we bury our heads in the sand and quit listening to the news altogether, but what I have just shared is legitimate news of what's going on in the world as well.

Take note that what is often being reported by our media is not the news of what has happened as much as it is making shrill and extremely alarming predictions about the worst things that might happen.

No wonder we find ourselves living in a state of fear and anxiety. Most of what is being reported is outside of our direct influence...and most of what is being predicted doesn't happen.

I'm not suggesting we check out and quit caring or being involved in ways that are important. I'm just saying that we also need to pay attention to the interesting and beautiful things going on around us too.

There are snowy owls in our midst right now...isn't that the best news you've heard today? Hope you see one too.