

The Chat

Number 396
April, 2013

A voice for education and conservation in the natural world

Rogue Valley Audubon Society

www.roguevalleyaudubon.org

Deadline for submissions is the 20th of each month



CHAPTER PROGRAM MEETING TUESDAY, APRIL 23 - 7:00 PM Featuring a presentation by ERIC SETTERBERG on THE AMERICAN DIPPER and the "LITHIA DIPPER WATCH"

Eric is one of several participants in this local project, which is in its 4th season of year-round study of the fascinating and unusual American dipper. Photos and anecdotes from several years of close observation provide an inside look at dipper life, including breeding and nesting habits along Ashland Creek, the installation of nest boxes, and the challenging process of banding these small creek-dwelling birds.

Eric Setterberg has been birding in the Rogue Valley for more than 30 years. His birding and photography enthusiasm began in Ashland while working for the Parks Department near Ashland Creek, and continues today in his extensive travels throughout the U.S. Eric is a former RVAS board member and past president ('90-'91).



Interested in attending an Audubon chapter program meeting and would like to carpool from Ashland? Ride-sharing may be available. Reducing greenhouse gases, saving money and meeting new people are just a few of the reasons to consider carpooling. If you are interested in a carpool arrangement please contact Sooney Viani at sooneyviani@gmail.com and ride-sharing can happen.

Chapter meetings are held at 7:00 PM on the fourth Tuesday of the month at the Medford Congregational Church meeting hall, 1801 E. Jackson Street in East Medford. The meeting hall is located north of East Jackson Street between North Berkeley Way and North Barneburg Rd. It is most easily accessed from North Barneburg Rd. Just make a left turn into the church parking lot at the tree in the middle of the road.

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President's Column

Many of you have not participated in a Birdathon. Please consider giving it a try this year (on Saturday, May 4th). This is a very important activity for Rogue Valley Audubon, and it's a lot of fun. You can compare your birding results with others on the same day, and RVAS gets important financial support for our programs. Participation can range from individual members observing for a few hours in their yards and neighborhoods to competitive teams checking every known birding spot in Jackson County. The idea is to have fun, and to enlist family and friends to support your effort with a donation for each species you identify. There will be a very casual dinner gathering that evening to compare sightings. Details and a donation form are in this issue. Just let Maggi Rackley or me know if you're interested and we will gladly answer questions and help you join a team or get registered for your individual Birdathon day.

The National Audubon Society reports that Gina McCarthy, President Obama's nominee to head the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, is "exactly the kind of leader the country needs to make historic progress on climate change solutions." That's very good news. Climate change is already affecting the global environment, and it is beginning to get the attention it requires. But it's not nearly enough. All of us, every Audubon member, needs to speak out, send messages to Congress, and let them know that this is a huge concern, affecting everyone.

Finally, I want to urge you to attend our April 23rd Chapter meeting, which, in addition to the program, is our annual Business Meeting. We will elect new members of the RVAS Board of Directors, and hear from you about how well we are meeting our goals of member service, education and environmental protection. I hope to see you there! Good Birding! -- Bill Hering

Field Notes: The Changing Seasons

Compiled by Stewart Janes

I hope everybody is rested because it's about to become exciting. By next month at this time, a good share of the birds that have been sunning all winter in Mexico will be back.

March gives us more than a few flowers, but just a taste of migrants. **Turkey Vultures** once again fill our skies. Migrating flocks were passing through all month often pausing in the cottonwoods along Bear Creek to roost before continuing on. **Violet Green Swallows** have now joined the swelling numbers of **Tree Swallows**. The first reports were on 2/25 and 2/26 (AM,MM,LM). **Sandhill Cranes** pass over the county each spring, mostly through the northeast corner near Prospect. Flocks were also seen over the Siskiyou Summit and over Medford on 2/23 (FL,KM), and our resident cranes were at Howard Prairie on 3/19 (DA).

Rufous Hummingbirds returned right on cue. The first was on Sardine Creek on 3/1 (MR). They are always later to arrive in the Rogue Valley with the first noted on 3/13 (BH,SJ). I've been disappointed with only females at my feeder so far. The first **Osprey** was at Whetstone Pond on 3/15 rearranging sticks on the nest platform. They don't waste any time. **Band-tailed Pigeons** returned to Ashland on 3/19 (HF).

Waterfowl have been on the move all month. As the ponds thawed after the last hard freeze, they were on the way out. **Hooded Merganser**, **Common Merganser**, **Northern Shoveler**, **Bufflehead**, and **Ring-necked Duck** numbers are all down sharply. **Geese** have been moving too. The **Canada Geese** have moved in pairs to every pond and mud puddle in the valley. **Greater White-fronted Geese** have been dropping in for short stays.

Lone Snow Geese have tagged along with one at the Boise-Cascade pond in Medford beginning on 2/17 and continuing until at least 3/7 (SJ,GS). The other was in Ashland seen most often at Billings Pond beginning 3/12 (SJ,KM,DN).

The boreal bird invasion is finally abating. The **Red-breasted Nuthatches** cleared out in many places by the end of the first week in March. **Red Crossbill** numbers are down, but they haven't left completely. Small flocks were seen into the second week of March (FE,MP). The spring movement of **Evening Grosbeaks** that typically descend on Ashland started last month and is continuing. Sizeable flocks of up to 50 birds have been seen all month (FE,SV,SJ). The Ashland **Mountain Chickadee** was still with us as of 3/5 (ES).

Bald Eagles are settling down on nests. One is at the junction of Highway 234 and Old Agate Road (DF). The Emigrant Lake pair was seen carrying nesting material on 3/14 (FL). I understand the nest is above I-5.

Red-shouldered Hawks have been vocally announcing the coming of spring. Just to be clear, they vocally announce every other season as well. Still, their calls are a little more earnest this month. The pair in my neighborhood is just about ready to initiate incubation. **Red-tailed Hawks** appear to be heading for another dismal breeding season. I have seen only a few pairs upgrading their nests. There is still time, but I am not hopeful.

On the rare bird front, the **Rusty Blackbird** is still in the vicinity of Ashland High School in the company of a sizable flock of Brewer's Blackbirds (KC-S,GR,LN). One of the big surprises this month was the **Vaux's Swift** in Ashland.

Continued on page 6

The Conservation Column

By Conservation Co-Chair Robert Mumby

Shade and Food Trees for Whetstone Pond

In February, Robert Mumby led a team of volunteers, Kathy Kudo, George Peterson, Sooney Viani, Carol Palmer, Marjorie Neal, Stan McIntosh, G-O Digilio, her friend Mel with assistance from the Denman Wildlife Management Area Supervisor Clayton Barber to plant twenty seven trees along the southern side and northwest corner of Whetstone Pond. The Denman staff used an auger to dig the holes although the ground is soft and the water table is high next to the pond.

The trees will provide shade for visitors, wildlife and the pond itself plus provide food and habitat for birds and other wildlife.

The project was funded (less than \$500) by the Rogue Valley Audubon Society and was initiated by the Society's Conservation Committee. The pond is a favorite and easily accessible site for birders and fishermen. Local duck hunter groups have built duck nests in the pond for the many resident Mallards and other ducks. However, there are almost no trees except for a large dying willow and some shrubs around the pond. The pond gets very hot in the summer and there is almost no shade for visitors. The new trees along the south side of the pond will alleviate this problem and provide more food and habitat for the many birds that live or winter in this area.

Carol Palmer will coordinate monitoring and watering the trees this summer as needed. If you would like to help, contact her at carol_p@charter.net. The trees are close to the pond so all you will need to water them is a bucket with a length of rope attached to dip water from the pond.

Four Big Leaf Maples were planted near benches and fishing/observation spots for shade but have other benefits: The seeds provide food for

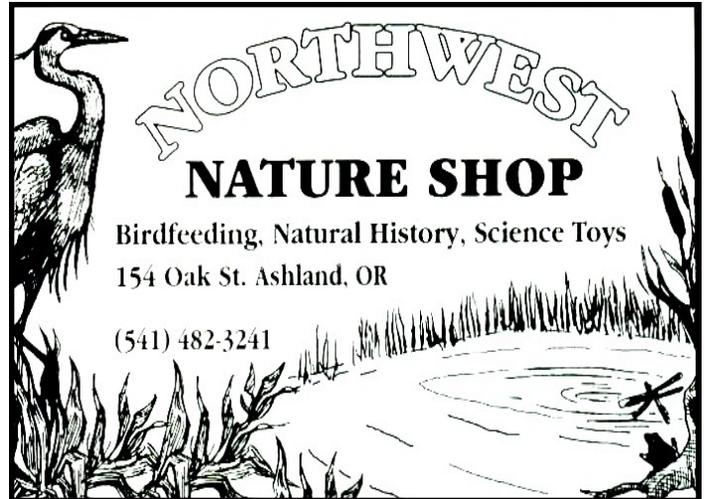
Squirrels, evening grosbeaks, chipmunks, mice, and a variety of birds. The trees can also accelerate nutrient cycling, site productivity, re-vegetate disturbed riparian areas, and contribute to long-term sustainability.

Big Leaf Maple is native to the west side of the cascades from northern California to British Columbia, a long-lived deciduous tree that often grows to eighty feet tall. The leaves are very large between six to twelve inches wide and almost as long. The flowers are yellow, fragrant, with the leaves appearing in April or May. The fruit is and brown with stiff yellowish hair.

Three cottonwoods were planted at the northwest corner of the pond with some ash trees to form a small grove. Black Cottonwood is a fast-growing and potentially large tree, easy to establish, and useful for shade and nesting sites for herons and hawks. The aggressive root systems are effective soil stabilizers useful in restoration of riparian areas, where it also provides protection for the aquatic environment, especially in helping to maintain low water temperatures through shading. The high nitrate uptake and extensive rooting of these trees make them an effective buffer or "filter" planting along streams in agricultural areas. These are native trees up to 90-180 feet tall, usually with a straight, branch-free trunk for more than half its length, forming a broad, open crown in open sites; the gray to gray-brown bark on mature trees may be deeply furrowed into flat ridges.

Oregon Ash grows in wet places along streams and rivers. You will find it along most rivers and creeks in the greater Rogue Valley. It grows rapidly to 40-60 feet and has pinnately compound leaves, bright green in spring and yellow in the fall. Its seeds attract birds, including Evening and Pine Grosbeaks, Cedar Waxwings and Sapsuckers.

Whetstone Pond, part of the Denman Wildlife Management Area is on East Gregory Road with a small parking lot and boat ramp next to the host trailer. The Regional Headquarters of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife



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G-O Digilio and George Peterson planting an Oregon Ash at Whetstone Pond.

Field Notes continued from page 3

A lone bird passed over Dick Ashford's house on 3/17. This is very early. I am not aware of another March record for Oregon. The other big surprise was a calling **Pacific Slope Flycatcher** in Lithia Park on 3/3 (LM,MM). On rare occasions other *Empidonax*'s over winter, but Pacific Slope Flycatchers seem to have better maps than the others, and there are very few winter records for the state. Their call is quite distinctive and hard to mistake.

Other sightings of note include a **Clark's Grebe** at Agate Lake on 3/12 (MM,LM), a calling **Sooty Grouse** on 3/19 (KH), and a calling **Mountain Quail** on 3/18 (FL).

Thanks to this month's contributors including Dick Ashford, Kate Cleland-Sipfle, Forrest English, Debbie Frierson, Bill Hering, Karen Hussey, Frank Lospalutto, Alex Maksymowicz, Kate McKenzie, Lisa Moore, Marjorie Moore, Denny Niebuhr, Liz Northrup, Michael Parker, Gwyneth Ragosine, Gary Shaffer, Eric Setterberg, and Sooney Viani. Deadline for contributions to the next edition is April 15.

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Attention Rogue Valley Birders (and enthusiasts of all living things that fly)

Check out the new website which features the work of local nature photographer and bird walk leader Norm Barrett. Norm is a Shady Cove resident and former Biologist with the National Forest Service. His featured photographs are of dragonflies and damselflies, birds, wildflowers and even a link to photos of grappletails (go ahead and look that one up!). The website, nmbnaturephotography.com is described as a work in progress, the best kind of website.

FIELD TRIP LEADERS NEEDED

Local birders are needed to lead field trips. Field Trip Chairman Maggi Rackley coordinates the events, but leaders have the option of choosing their destinations. Please contact Maggi at imabrrrder@yahoo.com to volunteer, or to get further information. Thank you.

Mark Your Calendar for Upcoming Field Trips

ALL-DAY TRIP TO KLAMATH BASIN

There will be an all-day field trip to the Klamath basin on *Sunday, April 7*. This is a good time to see large flocks of 'white' geese as well as eagles and migrating shorebirds. Meet at the dirt parking lot adjacent to Shop 'n Kart in Ashland. Arrive in time to leave at 8:00 AM. The group will be limited to 20 birders, and carpooling will be mandatory. Bad weather and/or unsafe driving conditions may necessitate a postponement. To register for this event, email leader Jeff Tufts at tallahto@aol.com.

BIRD WALK FOR BEGINNERS

Basic identification of local birds will be featured on a beginners' bird walk on Saturday, April 27. Gwyneth Ragosine will lead this two-hour informal walk on a paved trail along the Talent portion of the Bear Creek Greenway. We can expect chickadees, sparrows, goldfinches, woodpeckers, bushtits and possibly Yellow-breasted Chat. A few binoculars will be available for loan. Meet at 9:00 AM near the picnic area at Lynn Newbry Park in Talent, which is very close to I-5 Exit 21. Contact Gwyneth at 541-552-1945 or at gwynethr@mind.net.

COAST TRIP MAY 11 - 12

Veteran field trip leader Ron Ketchum will take a reservations-only group to the Oregon coast the weekend of May 11-12. Housing is available in Bandon, and optional dining arrangements will be available. To register and receive information regarding lodging and dining options as well as meeting times and places, contact either Bill Hering at bh@ashland.net, 541-488-5886 or Maggi Rackley at imabrrrder@yahoo.com, 541-855-7935. Participation is limited; please register before May 1.

CASCADE-SISKIYOU NATIONAL MONUMENT MAY 18

Pepper Trail will lead a birding trip to the Emigrant Creek Road area of the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument on Saturday, May 18. The group will stop at several locations, and although this will not be a strenuous event, some short hikes will be involved. Meeting time and place will be available in the May issue of *The Chat*.

Birdathon 2013

Birdathon 2013 will take place on Friday and Saturday, May 3 & 4. This is a very important fundraiser for Rogue Valley Audubon. Our goal is to encourage as many members as possible to participate, and to raise funds for RVAS outreach programs and Chapter operations. If you want to go out and have fun by seeing how many species you can spot (and how many pledges you can generate), you can do this by yourself, or RVAS will look for a team for you to join. Just e-mail or call Bill Hering: bh@ashlandnet.net 541-488-5886 or Maggi Rackley, imabrrrder@yahoo.com, 541-855-7935 to discuss logistics. If you can't or don't want to go out into the field, please consider pledging a certain amount of money per species observed to support your favorite team or making a cash donation to RVAS. A donation/pledge form is included in this issue of *The Chat*. An updated species list is available on the website.

There will be a gathering after the event, with a chance to compare results, share a meal with other participants, and possibly claim a prize. The highest counts by teams, individuals, individuals doing only backyard birding, individuals and teams with the highest number of pledged supporters, and possibly other categories will be recognized.

Team Categories

Competitive Birdathon Day count

Single-day count by a team of birders

Single day count by an all-ladies team

Single-day count by an individual, duo, couple, etc.

All teams must be registered no later than April 30th. Please contact Bill Hering or Maggi Rackley (above) to identify the name of your team, the names of probable team members, and the category in which you will compete. You may suggest a new category; just let the Birdathon organizers know. The victor/victors in each approved category will be acknowledged at the post-Birdathon dinner, in *The Chat*, and on the RVAS web site.

Fundraising

A Donation/Pledge form is in this issue of *The Chat*, and a return envelope is inserted. They can be given/sent to the team leaders or directly to RVAS.

Guidelines

- Anyone may participate, as an individual or as a member of a team. Both individuals and teams are expected to raise funds either by getting family and friends to pledge a set amount per species seen, or by making a lump sum donation.

Birathon Guidelines continued

- The Birdathon area is limited to Jackson County.
- The time frame is 24 hours, beginning Friday, May 3rd at 6:00 PM. Participants may report their observations for Friday evening session and Saturday, or bird only on Saturday.
- All team members do not need to participate the entire time.
- There is a no limit to team size, but all team members need to travel in the same vehicle. In practice, most teams are four people. Team members don't have to stay together but must stay in visual contact.
- Birds can be identified by sound or by sight.
- For competitive teams, at least two team members must confirm every identification.

FUNDRAISING DETAILS & DONATION FORM

Every participant is asked to make a donation in the amount of their choice. Donation options include making a pledge based on species seen, either by the individual or team, or of a set amount. All participants are encouraged to ask family and friends to pledge as well. Sponsors can also challenge a team or individual birder to accomplish a particular task, for example, to observe a particular species or set of species, etc. All who pledge will receive a results tally from the individual or team they are sponsoring to determine the amount of their donation.

Results of species tallies by the various teams will be published in the summer issue of *The Chat* and posted on the RVAS web site. Checks should be made out to RVAS or Rogue Valley Audubon Society and mailed directly to RVAS at P.O. Box 8597, Medford, OR 97501 You can also send a Birdathon donation to RVAS in lieu of pledging.

Name: _____

--My tax-deductible donation of \$_____ is enclosed.

--I pledge \$_____ per species.

--This pledge is for birds I will see myself.

--This pledge is for birds seen by _____
(name of Birdathon team or other birder).

Please mail your check to:

Rogue Valley Audubon Society
P.O. Box 8597, Medford, OR 97501

RVAS is a non-profit 501 (c) 3 organization; donations to RVAS are tax-deductible.

Join us at the Spring Fair

The year Spring Garden Fair (formerly named the Master Gardeners Fair) will be held May 4th (9-5) and 5th (10-4) at the Expo in Central Point. Stop by and say hello to our volunteers. We will be answering questions about birds, handing out information on Audubon, selling **Birds of Jackson County** and also displaying information. This is a fun event and a good outreach program.

Anyone interested in doing a two-hour shift at the booth or helping setup or tear down the booth display contact Robert Mumby at rdmumby@charter.net or a541-535-2934. There is an 11-1 opening on Saturday and 12-2 and 2-4 shifts available on Sunday.

As a side benefit, you get free admission to the fair.

Selected Ashland Parks & Recreation Department April Offerings

Contact: Ashland Parks & Recreation - North Mountain Park Nature Center 541-488-6606

www.NorthMountainPark.org

Lithia Park Wildflower Walk

Join Sasha Joachims of the Native Plant Society of Oregon for an easy-paced two to three-mile wildflower walk in Lithia Park. Learn to identify spring wildflowers along some of the trails. Bring hiking shoes, water and a snack or lunch. Instructor Sasha Joachims received a BS in Biology and a Botany Certificate from Southern Oregon University and is a member of the Native Plant Society of Oregon. As with most Ashland Parks & Recreation programs, pre-registration is required. Please register online at www.ashland.or.us/register or call the North Mountain Park Nature Center at 541-488-6606.

AGES	10 & up
DAY	Saturday
DATE	April 13
TIME	10am—12pm
PLACE	Meet in the parking area across from the intersection of Winburn Way and Granite St (near the Brinkworth area)
COST	\$7

Birding for Beginners

If you are a beginning birder and like being outside, learning about local birds and having fun, this class is a good fit. Even intermediate birders will learn a new bird or two, as participants visit Ashland locations to view local birds with binoculars in hand and their ears tuned to the sounds around them! If you have binoculars and a bird ID book, please bring them. If not, instructor Shannon Rio will provide one or both. Dress comfortably for this easy birding adventure. Shannon has been looking at, listening to, reading about and telling stories related to birds for more than 25 years. Please register online at www.ashland.or.us/register or call the North Mountain Park Nature Center at 541-488-6606.

AGES	10 & up
DAY	Saturday
DATE	April 20
TIME	8:30—10:30am
PLACE	North Mountain Park
COST	\$10

The Chat - April, 2013

Arbor Day Tree Walk

In preparation for Arbor Day, meet the trees of North Mountain Park! Focusing on native species, participants will learn to identify our woody neighbors and to notice important characteristics of leaves, bark and "fruit," and the environments where we can expect to find different species. Instructor Rachel Werling is a professional botanist at Oregon State University's Jackson County Extension. And instructor Anne Thayer is the horticulturist for Ashland Parks & Recreation. Please register online at www.ashland.or.us/register or call the North Mountain Park Nature Center at 541-488-6606.

AGES All ages welcome (children under 10 must be accompanied by an adult)
DAY Thursday
DATE April 25
TIME 6:30—7:30pm
PLACE North Mountain Park
COST \$5

Birds & Bird Nests

Join us for this fast-paced program that highlights local birds and how they live. The program includes examples of nests, feathers, bird calls and a take-home bird ID sheet as well as instructions for making various bird houses. Instructor John Jackson is an amateur naturalist and the owner of BUGS-R-US Educational Services. Please register online at www.ashland.or.us/register or call the North Mountain Park Nature Center at 541-488-6606.

AGES 3 & up (children under 7 must be accompanied by an adult)
DAY Saturday
DATE April 27
TIME 1—2pm
PLACE North Mountain Park
COST \$7 (no charge for adult accompanying child)

Edible & Medicinal Plant Walk in Lithia Park

Learn about our bioregion's medicinal and edible plants in idyllic Lithia Park. Instruction will include plant identification, medicine-making procedures, energetics, folklore, biochemistry, and traditional and modern uses. Bring comfortable walking shoes, note-taking materials, camera (if you like), and a sense of wonder. Instructor Jon Carlson is a clinical herbalist and the director of the Vitalist School of Herbiology in Ashland. Please register online at www.ashland.or.us/register or call the North Mountain Park Nature Center at 541-488-6606.

AGES 13 & up
DAY Saturday
DATE April 27
TIME 10am—12:30pm
PLACE Meet at the entrance to Lithia Park (front lawn, near the Plaza)
COST \$25

ROGUE VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

THE CHAT

Newsletter of the ROGUE VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

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MONTHLY BIRD WALK WITH MURRAY ORR

First Wednesday Each Month: Little Butte Creek Walk. Meet at entrance gate of the Denman Wildlife Area at 8:00 and the walk will start at 8:30. (The gate is open between 8 and 8:30 only.) Please contact **Murray Orr, 541-857-9050** for details and if you are willing to join him in organizing these bird walks. He needs volunteers to help him open and close the gate and record observed species when he is not available. Walks will continue through 2013.

Sign up to receive easy notification of Chapter activities

Your Audubon Chapter wants to be sure you are aware of upcoming field trips, chapter meetings, the most recent edition of *The Chat*, and other items we post on-line. Send an e-mail RogueValleyAudubon@gmail.com and ask to be added to the e-mail notification list. And be assured, we will never share your e-mail address with any other organizations.

