

The Chat

Number 440
March 2018

A voice for education and conservation in the natural world
Rogue Valley Audubon Society
www.roguevalleyaudubon.org
Deadline for the April issue is March 20.



RVAS MARCH PROGRAM
TUESDAY, MARCH 27 at 7:00 PM

"Our Public Forests, Then and Now"
Presented by GREG WALTER

Public lands are often said to be one of America's greatest ideas. But lately, the very concept of "public lands" has been made controversial by malevolent influences like the Bundy family and Koch brothers. To better understand our local public forests, come hear from historian Greg Walter about the history of our public lands, aka the public domain, beginning with the setting aside of "forest reserves" that would form the basis of our National Forests and National Parks. Greg will also provide some background on the railroad land grants and their relationship with today's BLM lands. KS Wild's Outreach Director will also provide brief updates about current issues facing our public forests today.



Greg Walter currently sits on the boards of The Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center and Crater Lake and Oregon Caves Natural History Association. He is an avid local historian specializing in the mapping and history of our most treasured assets: the public lands and how they came to be. Greg has lived and hiked throughout Southwest Oregon for the past 39 years.

****Chapter meetings are held at 1801 E. Jackson Street in Medford****
Lidgate Hall, Medford Congregational Church

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Letter from the Board

Birding in the Schools Update

As students are told to put on their raincoats, they look at their teacher, surprised: "We get to go outside!?" This is one of the many highlights our Birding in Schools interns experience when visiting classrooms to teach about birds and the environment. After a hands-on lesson of learning bird field marks through song and observing preserved bird specimens, students get to explore outside using their newly-gained skills. Students also learn how to use binoculars and field guides as they search for birds on their school grounds. They are empowered to use what they have learned, and identifying pigeons and Dark-eyed Juncos in the schoolyard has never been more exciting.

Currently, our interns have taught at schools in Gold Hill, Talent, and Medford. Through outreach efforts, more schools and interested teachers are signing up for spring lessons. To meet teachers' needs, our interns are currently tailoring and improving lessons to align with current education standards. Our interns are looking forward to working with new classrooms and sharing important lessons about birds and the environment.

Wanted: New RVAS Board Members!

Election of new board members will take place at the April 24 chapter meeting. If you would like to serve on our outstanding board, please contact Carol Mockridge at mockridge50@hotmail.com. Nominations will also be taken at the meeting.

Carol Mockridge

Chapter Program meetings are held on the fourth Tuesday of the month, September through April, at 7:00 pm. Meetings take place at 1801 E. Jackson St., Medford, in Lidgate Hall of the Medford Congregational Church.

RVAS Field Trip Re-Cap

By Nate Trimble

Here in the Rogue Valley, Audubon Society members know there is no better way to see the changing seasons than through observing changing bird communities and behavior. We have been getting out in the field this winter with many more opportunities coming up this spring. So far in 2018 there have been monthly visits to Denman Wildlife Area as well as a half-day birding blitz around the Ashland city limits.

On February 3, no less than 17 hardy birders met at 7:00 am in the chilly early morning light at North Mountain Park to begin a big morning in Ashland. The goal was to see as many species as possible before noon. In total we identified 52 species between North Mountain Park, the Imperatrice Property, and Lithia Park. Trip highlights included some early signs of spring at North Mountain Park such as Tree Swallows, singing Song Sparrows, and an active Red-shouldered Hawk nest. We also got great looks at a perched Rough-legged Hawk at the Imperatrice Property and



watched a Northern Harrier attacking a pair of coyotes! We ended the day with a dipper quest at Lithia Park and were treated to a pair of dippers singing and “dipping” right in front of us. We will be hosting more great trips going into spring and hope you all come out to join us.



Images from the Big Day in Ashland.
Photos by Carol Mockridge



Jackson County Field Notes: February 2018

By Frank Lospalluto

A cold snap interrupting a mild and dry winter is upon us. Imagine the six-gram kinglets huddling in the dark then tinkling in the trees with their cohort of chickadees and nuthatches in the early morning light. The days are growing longer, but the specter of drought is disconcerting.

The pastures near the big curve on Table Rock Road near Wheeler Road had counts of up to 25 **Tundra Swan** recently (JK, HS). **Sooty Grouse** have been heard advertising in the mountains the last few weeks, a bit earlier than usual (FL, TM). There have been a number of **Ruffed Grouse** sightings as well (KS, KM).

Turkey Vultures have begun to trickle in as singles, handfuls and larger groups. Eighteen were in Ashland Feb 21 (JH, PT).

Sandhill Cranes have begun their northward movement. Flocks were seen over the Colestin, Tolman Creek and Emigrant Lake Feb 10, 12, 18, 19, 20, and 21 (GP, NB, FL).

A flock of mostly **Least Sandpipers** with a dozen or so **Dunlin** has been at Kirtland Ponds the last few weeks (RB, BH).

Band-tailed Pigeons were observed in the Colestin Feb. 16 and up near Trail Feb. 19 (CP, FL). **Northern Saw-whet Owls** have been heard advertising in the hills during the dark hours and **Northern Pygmy-Owls** have started tooting at the edges of daylight and into some mornings. **Barred Owls** were noted up around the Howard Prairie area as well Shale City (KS, GS). A **Short-eared**

Owl was seen twice during January up in a far corner of the Imperatrice Property (FL, KM).

Lewis's Woodpeckers are still conspicuous in many locations. A **Williamson's Sapsucker** was near Howard Prairie Lake Feb. 13 (KS). One was reported on ebird from an out of area birder at Tou Velle Feb. 5. Unfortunately, no photo or written documentation on that sighting.

A **RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRD** showed up at a residence near Trail Feb. 14, a couple of weeks early (CP).

Tree Swallows have been observed by many this month. A **Barn Swallow** was seen with them at Ave. G ponds Jan 27 and a **Violet-green Swallow** was with them Jan 30 at the same location (FL, JK).

Rock Wrens have been seen and heard on both Table Rocks and out at Emigrant Lake (GP, KM, EL). A **Canyon Wren** was at Lower Table Rock and one was at Emigrant Lake Feb. 7 (GS, HS, FL). Another **Harris's Sparrow** was found at Ashland Pond Feb. 3 making it the third found in the valley this winter (KS).

A lone **Evening Grosbeak** was found south of Pilot Rock Feb. 10 (FL). A single **Red Crossbill** was observed at Thousands Springs Sno-Park Feb. 15 (BH).

Thanks to everyone who shared their observations including: Bob Hunter, Kristi Mergenthaler, Kate Sipfle, Howard Sands, Gary Shaffer, Karl Schneck, Pepper Trail, Noah Burg, Emily Lind, Tiffany Manger, Jeff Heglie, Janet Kelly and Ralph Browning.

All errors and omissions are my own.
Peace.

RVAS BIRDING FIELD TRIPS AND EVENTS

FIRST WEDNESDAY BIRD WALKS AT DENMAN WILDLIFE REFUGE

*****NOTE THE CHANGE IN VENUE!*****

Murray Orr will continue to lead his monthly bird walks, but at Denman Wildlife Refuge instead of Agate Lake. These walks take place on the first Wednesday of each month. In this ongoing citizen science project, the numbers of different species observed by walk participants are entered in the Cornell Ornithological Laboratory's eBird database. Birders wishing to join Murray should meet him at the parking area accessed from Agate Road in White City. Participants will need an ODWF parking permit. These can be purchased at the ODWF office, Bi-Mart, or Sportsman's Warehouse in Medford (Delta Waters and Highway 62). Walks begin at 8:30 am and end before noon.

March Walk: Wednesday, March 7

April Walk: Wednesday, April 4

May Walk: Wednesday, May 2

IMPERILED FORESTS BIRD WALK

Saturday, March 31

Leaders: Nathan Trimble (RVAS), Jeanine Moy (RVAS + KS Wild), George Sexton (KS Wild Conservation Director)

Join us on a collaborative hike hosted by RVAS and Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center. We will tour a couple of mature conifer forest locations adjacent to the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument. In known habitat for Great Grey Owl and Northern Spotted Owl, we'll search for nests and watch for songbirds in a couple of sites proposed for BLM logging: the Griffin Half Moon and North Landscape proposed timber sales. KS Wild will discuss the implications of the proposed timber sales, and how to get involved to protect owl habitat. Meet at Rite-Aid in Ashland at 8:00 am for carpool; we'll return by 2:00 pm. Expect moderate walking, walking off-trail on flat but uneven terrain. Make sure to bring layers of clothing, hiking boots, binoculars (we'll have a few to lend), snacks + lunch + water. Sign up for the hike at kswild.org

PROJECT FEEDERWATCH SCHEDULE

Coyote Trails (Medford) PFW

2931 S. Pacific Highway, Medford

Thursdays: open to the public

Mar 8 (11:00 am—12:00 pm), March 22 (12:00—1:00 pm)

Fridays: Noon – 1:00 pm; open to the public

Mar 9, Mar 23

North Mountain Park (Ashland) PFW

620 N. Mountain Ave., Ashland

Fridays: 9:00 – 10:00 am; counts done by one person; not advertised to the public

Mar 2, Mar 16

Saturdays: 9:00 – 10:00 am; open to the public

Mar 3, Mar 17

Sign up your 2018 Birdathon Team

Birdathon returns on **Friday, May 4**. There is still plenty of time to form your team and sign up.

Birdathon is an important fundraiser for RVAS. Sponsored teams count as many species as possible within a 24-hour period. Teams can range widely or stick close to home, so long as they stay in Jackson County. The event officially kicks off on Friday, May 4 at 6:00 p.m. A celebratory dinner on Saturday, May 5 allows teams to compare notes and determine who gets bragging rights for the next 12 months.

Most teams include two to five birders, although a single individual may also comprise a team. Check out the rules, sign-up sheet, checklists and tips on www.roguevalleyaudubon.org.

A task equally important as picking your all-star team is finding sponsors—that's the fundraiser part. A person can sponsor your team with either a fixed donation or an amount per species that your team sees.

To sign up your team or for more info, contact Carol Mockridge at mockridge50@hotmail.com.



(L-R) RVAS members Sandy Jilton and Carol Goldberg bird along Little Butte Creek during the February First Wednesday Bird Walk at Denman Wildlife Area.

Photo by Carol Mockridge

The Conservation Column

By Juliet Grable

Conservation Victory: Oregon Commission Uplists Marbled Murrelet to Endangered

On February 9, 2018, I attended a public hearing in Portland, during which the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission (OFWC) voted to approve a petition to uplist the Marbled Murrelet from Threatened to Endangered under the Oregon Endangered Species Act (OESA). The petition was brought forth by the Portland Audubon Society and four other conservation groups.

It was a dramatic end to a long day.

The morning was filled with presentations about the Marbled Murrelet, including an update about the research being conducted by Oregon State University (OSU). Public testimony took place in the afternoon, followed by deliberation among the commissioners. The room was packed with supporters, and most of the nearly 40 people who testified spoke in support of the uplisting. Even so, things looked grim by late afternoon. Commissioner Bruce Buckmaster made a motion to deny the uplisting but to create Survival Guidelines for the species. The motion was seconded, and a vote was called: three yays; three nays.

More debate followed. Commissioners Greg Wolley, Laura Anderson, and Holly Akenson stood firm in support of the uplisting.

"I'm erring on the side of caution on this," Commissioner Anderson said. "I'm weary of hearing that these things are out of our control. It puts the onus on us, as people in the position to make policies, to do the right thing."



Conservation Column continued on page 8

Conservation Column continued from page 7

After a long pause, Commissioner Buckmaster said he would rather vote for the uplisting than leave the room without “doing something to help the murrelet.” This left an opening for Commissioner Wolley to make a new motion, this time to approve the petition for uplisting. The motion was seconded, and the Commission approved it by a vote of 4 to 2.

I think it’s fair to say that almost everyone in that room was shocked, but happily so. If you have a moment, consider emailing the Commission at odfw.commission@state.or.us and thank them for doing the right thing.

I was proud to represent RVAS and provide public testimony, and grateful for the opportunity to meet some of the people who have devoted hundreds of hours to this effort. Several of them will likely be heading our way in the fall, as we host the annual conservation meeting.

The uplisting should result in some much-needed protections on state-owned lands. The rest of this column will focus on the current status of the Marbled Murrelet and the implications of the uplisting.

A Perfect Storm

The Marbled Murrelet (*Brachyramphus marmoratus*) is a small seabird that breeds along the Pacific Coast from Alaska to central California. The Marbled Murrelet spends most of its life at sea, where it forages for small fish and invertebrates, but nests in large trees with thick mossy branches—a specialized strategy that limits it to patches of old-growth coastal forest. Much of the habitat that remains is highly fragmented, and Murrelet eggs and chicks are more vulnerable to predation from ravens and jays at these forest edges. Climate change is worsening wildfires, which can damage habitat whether it’s protected or not, and warming seas, oil spills, and algae blooms impact both the Marbled Murrelet and the forage fish upon which it feeds.



Marbled Murrelets are federally listed as threatened under the U.S. Endangered Species Act and threatened under the Canadian Species at Risk Act. And now they are state-listed as endangered in Oregon, Washington, and California.

Loss and degradation of the Marbled Murrelet’s nesting habitat sparked the federal and state listings. Though the implementation of the Northwest Forest Plan has slowed down the rate of habitat loss on federal lands, that has not been the case on state lands here in Oregon. The status report on the Marbled Murrelet—a document prepared by the OFWC ahead of the hearing—estimates that over 21% of “higher-suitability habitat” was lost on non-federal lands between 1993 and 2012.

Conservation Column continued on page 9

Conservation Column continued from page 8

To justify the uplisting, the Commission had to determine that the “likelihood of survival of the species has diminished such that the species is in danger of extinction throughout any significant portion of its range within Oregon.” The status report includes some pretty grim figures about the Marbled Murrelet’s “extinction probability” in Oregon. Demographic models estimate that the probability of extinction is over 80% by 2060 for Conservation Zone 4 (the Siskiyou Coast Range) and over 80% by 2100 for Conservation Zone 3 (the Oregon Coast Range).

Looking Forward

The most direct effect of listing a species as threatened or endangered under the OESA is on state-owned or leased lands. The OESA requires relevant state agencies, including the Oregon Department of Forestry, “to develop plans for the management and protection of endangered species, and to comply with Survival Guidelines adopted by the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission for threatened species.”

The OFWC must immediately develop these guidelines, which will serve as interim protection until the relevant state agencies develop their plans. The Commission will also work with “state land owning and managing agencies” (including ODF) to determine if state lands can play a role in the conservation of the species.

In the meantime, OSU researchers will continue their efforts. Some of their goals include better understanding the many factors which determine whether the Marbled Murrelet successfully breeds in a given year. In practical terms, the research involves tagging up to 100 birds at sea, then following them (using a combination of radio telemetry and unmanned drones) to see where they go and what they do.

The project includes opportunities for citizen scientists to participate in Marbled Murrelet surveys. These two-day sessions will take place on Oregon’s central coast (near Yachats) on July 13-14 and July 19-20. Training is included. To RSVP visit <http://audubonportland.org/issues/species/murrelet/survey>

RVAS Membership Policy Change

By George Peterson, RVAS Membership Chair

A few years back, it was the policy of the Rogue Valley Audubon Society to renew memberships each September. This fall, RVAS will return to a similar procedure. Renewals for memberships will be in October. As always, the Rogue Valley Audubon Society’s membership form will be in most Chats, and enrolling as a new member is always encouraged at any time. October will be the preferred time for enrollment to promote efficiency and consistency.

In addition to the membership form in The Chat, members and ex-members will be notified by email or mail that it is time to renew their memberships. Renewing a membership and encouraging others to become members support the very worthwhile programs of the RVAS. The Chat will also contain a membership form for the National Audubon Society.

Bird-Centric Events from Around the Region

PRESENTATIONS AND WALKS WITH WILD BIRDS UNLIMITED

Nesting Season in Your Backyard

Erin Linton will introduce techniques and tips for drawing birds while you are in the field. This beginner level course will focus on bird drawing basics and tactics for nature journaling. Drawing birds is a great way to take birding a step further, familiarizing yourself with field marks and behaviors. Please come by the store or call 541-772-2107 to reserve your seat.

DATE: Wednesday, March 28
TIME: 6:00—7:00 pm
PLACE: Wild Birds Unlimited, 961 Medford Center, Medford
COST: Free

PRESENTER Erin Linton is a talented local artist whose work focuses on birds and wildlife. (Some of her art can be seen at Wild Birds Unlimited). She is also a part time WBU employee. She has wild bird feeding experience, endless energy and creativity, and a great knowledge and love of birds in general.

Bird Walk at Mingus Pond

Erin Linton will be our leader once again. We will meet at the store at 10:00 am and carpool to Mingus Pond in Central Point. Wear appropriate layered clothing and footwear that can go through mud and water. This is a wheelchair accessible walk. Registration is required, as space is limited to 15 participants. Please come by the store or call 541-772-2107 to reserve your space.

DATE: Wednesday, March 21
TIME: 10:00 am
PLACE: Wild Birds Unlimited, 961 Medford Center, Medford
COST: Free
LEADER Erin Linton

New Chickadee Chats at Wild Birds Unlimited

Calling all "bird nerds"! Join us for a bi-monthly get together to talk about birds! We'll drink some Bird Friendly coffee or tea, join with fellow birders, and "chat." We'll start with a discussion of a current event from Cornell Lab of Ornithology, or perhaps a good book we've just completed and then go in-depth and really learn about a particular species of bird. We will hold two chats a month: one on a Wednesday morning at 10:30 am and again on a different Wednesday afternoon at 3:30 pm. Come to share, learn and have fun with fellow bird nerds! This month we'll be discussing the finches; in particular, how to distinguish between the three red finches who often come to your feeders. No reservations required, just come to share, learn, and join the fun with fellow bird nerds!

DATE: Wednesday, March 14 and Wednesday, March 28th
TIME: 10:30 am (March 14) and 3:30 pm (March 28)
PLACE: Wild Birds Unlimited, 961 Medford Center, Medford
COST: Free
LEADER Laura Fleming

Bird-Centric Events from Around the Region

WILD BIRDS UNLIMITED, CONT.

Nest Box Building with Siskiyou Audubon

Calling all kids 6 years and up—that includes you, parents! Come build your very own birdhouse that you can put up in your yard this spring. The event will take place rain or shine.

DATE: Saturday, March 24

TIME: 10:00 am—2:00 pm

PLACE: Wild Birds Unlimited, 961 Medford Center, Medford

COST: Free

INSTRUCTORS Members of Siskiyou Audubon



BIRD BIOBLITZ IN THE CSNM

Friends of Cascade Siskiyou National Monument will be holding a Bird BioBlitz on May 26, 2018. It's a great chance to raise awareness for the monument, participate in Citizen Science AND see some of our mountain birds in the company of expert leaders! Stay informed on the latest BioBlitz details by signing up for the Friends' newsletter <http://www.cascadesiskiyou.org/subscribe>. See you in the monument on May 26th!

DATE: Saturday, May 26

TIME: TBA

PLACE: Details TBA

COST: Free

Rogue Valley Audubon Society Membership

If you are not an RVAS Member, we invite you to help support our local activities by becoming a member and participating in society activities. We hope you're aware of the many activities of the Audubon Society, both locally and nationally, that help to further the cause of bird conservation and public education in southern Oregon. Member dues, along with donations and income from local fund-raising events, support our activities and programs, such as:

Educational and social membership meetings (free and open to members and the public)

The Chat newsletter

Website (www.roguevalleyaudubon.org)

Birding forum for posting sightings and active locations

Monthly field trips and bird walks

Educational programs for students and adults

Monitoring of regional conservation issues

Work with local wildlife managers to improve access and bird habitats

Bird counts for national species censuses

Support for local research projects

A one-year family membership costs \$20. To become an RVAS member, please complete the form below and send with your check for \$20 or go to www.roguevalleyaudubon.org and sign up with your PayPal account.

RVAS Membership Form

Please fill in your information:

Name(s): _____

Street: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Email: _____ **Phone #** _____

Rogue Valley Audubon Society will not share your information with any other organization.

- ☐ *Include my email on the RVAS list for notification of activities and posting of The Chat newsletter.*
- ☐ *Send a monthly paper copy of The Chat newsletter (I don't have Internet access).*
- ☐ *Please contact me about volunteering for society activities (see RVAS website for list of opportunities).*

Donation

- ☐ *I am enclosing an additional donation of \$ ____.*
- ☐ *I wish my donation to be anonymous.*

Please mail this form with your \$20 check payable to Rogue Valley Audubon Society, along with any additional contribution you wish to make, to:

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2018 RVAS Program Schedule

March 27:
"Our Public Forests, Then and Now"
Presented by Greg Walter

April 24:
"Lake Abert: Its Salinity and the Effect on
Its Birds"
Presented by Ron Larson

May 22:
Annual Potluck at Tou Velle Park



20% OFF One Regularly-priced Item

*Valid 9/1/17 thru 3/31/18 at the Medford, OR WBU
store. One discount per purchase. Not valid on bird food,
previous purchases, optics, gift cards, DSC
memberships, or sale items.

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THE CHAT

Newsletter of the
ROGUE VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY
Post Office Box 8597
Medford, OR 97501

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



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. 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.

