

# The Chat

Number 386

March 2012

A voice for education and conservation in the natural world

Rogue Valley Audubon Society

[www.roguevalleyaudubon.org](http://www.roguevalleyaudubon.org)

*Deadline for submissions for the next month's issue is the 20th of each month*



**Tuesday, March 27, 7:00 pm**

**Program Meeting:**

**"North Coast Birding**

**Biogeography" by Jim Clark**

Birders more accustomed to inland birding can enhance their birding experience by a little basic knowledge of local coastal geography, as well as learning the hot spots. Coastal birding varies from inland birding in several ways, particularly north of Monterey Bay area in California. The Pacific Ocean influences the climate, which influences the vegetation, which influences the birds. Add two daily tide cycles to the mix and you have a complex environment that can change from cool and foggy to warm and sunny in moments. The birds change location just as fast as conditions change to take advantage of available food and cover. With a little local knowledge you can meet them there with greater certainty.

Jim will also provide a list of birding resources, some coastal hotspots, and amenities to make your coastal birding experience a memorable one.

Jim Clark is the current President of Redwood Region Audubon Society and pursues eco- and sustainable tourism as an avocation.



**Jim Clark, March program presenter, birding the Chiricahua National Forest.**

**Program meetings are held on the fourth Tuesday of January, February, March, April, September, October, November and December. Meetings are held at the Medford Congregational United Church of Christ at 1801 E. Jackson Street in Medford.**

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## President's Column

This month I am pleased to report that all RVAS committee chair positions have been filled. My thanks to Jeff Tufts for volunteering to become the field trip chair.

Each year we greet the spring migration into and through the Rogue Valley with Birdathon. We also make use of this fun event to raise funds for our conservation and education outreach programs. For most of us the emphasis is on fun rather than competition, so do consider forming or joining a team. Last year's non-competitive team participants said that they wished they had done it sooner. Details are given in a separate article.

The calendar of events in the February issue of The Chat showed Birdathon as occurring on Saturday, April 28. At the request of the competitive team leaders, this date has been changed to Saturday, May 5 to coincide with the expected peak period of bird migration. As a consequence, it overlaps the first day of another annual event, the Jackson County Master Gardener Fair (MGF), at which RVAS volunteers staff a joint RVAS/KBO booth to answer questions from and chat with community members about birds and birding. Just like Birdathon, it is a fun event. If you are not participating in Birdathon, please consider volunteering to staff the booth on Saturday, May 5, so that we are not caught shorthanded. Of course, we also need volunteers to staff the booth on Sunday, May 6, since the MGF is a two-day event.

Alex

**Field Notes: The Changing Seasons**  
*Compiled by Stewart Janes*

Stirrings. It may feel like winter, but the first hints of spring are there to be found. When the sun does break through the clouds, you might hear a feeble **House Finch** song or a **Collared Dove** droning on. The **House Sparrows** have been at it for several weeks now, but their chatter hardly seems like a song. Last week I heard the first convincing **Robin** song. And yes, the **Great Horned Owls** are calling and should be incubating by now. As of the first of February, the **Canada Goose** flocks started to break up with pairs claiming each pond and puddle in the valley. Before long, mini-flotillas of goslings will grace each. **Red Crossbills** are singing in the high country, but this doesn't really count. They will nest in any month of the year provided a good cone crop is available, snow or not.

**Tree Swallows** have been forcing their way north though I question their wisdom. The first were seen 1/16 both at Mace Lake in Central Point (SJ) and at Hyatt Lake (RB). This was followed by one along Kershaw Road on 2/6 (RB), 6 on Tou Velle Road on 2/14 (HS) and 7 at Agate Lake on 2/25 (JC). A very early **Violet-green Swallow** was with the Tree Swallows along Tou Velle Road on 2/14 (HS). Typically, Violet-green Swallows are first seen in early March though they may be overlooked among the Tree Swallows.

I've been waiting for the first **Turkey Vultures**, but apparently I've been looking in the wrong places. There have been a number of sightings. Not counting the bird seen in Prospect on 12/29, the first was reported on 2/1 in Ashland (KM). Six more were seen over Medford on 2/11 (AC), 12 over Medford on 2/14 (Big Al), and 5 more over Medford on 2/15 (AC). This movement is about a week or so earlier than normal.

Then there are the **Sandhill Cranes**. The first were reported over the Siskiyou Pass on 2/14 (FL), followed by 2 more on the Greensprings on 2/15 (DA). A flock of 200 or more was observed over Butler Creek Road in Ashland on 2/19 (KM). Most of these are headed for a layover on Sauvie Island near Portland before pressing north. These are the Lesser Sandhill cranes.

Several sightings this month caused a bit of excitement. One was the **Tufted Duck** just south of the Oregon border near Hilt in a pond along Ditch Creek Road between 2/3 and 2/6 (FL). The Tufted Duck is an old world species, similar to our Ring-necked Duck that is usually seen one or two places along the west coast each winter. Always a great bird, but this one didn't stay long.

Then there was a **Pacific Slope Flycatcher** that apparently missed his ride to Mexico. From 1/21 through today (2/20), one has been at North Mountain Park to have his picture taken (ML). Winter records of Empidonax flycatchers are extremely rare in Oregon.

The large flock of **Gray-crowned Rosy Finches** on Mount Ashland also caused quite a stir. Over 200 birds were feeding in the bare areas near the summit on 2/10 (FL). They are probably more common than we think along the ridges and summits of the region in winter. They breed at high points in the Cascades and Wallowas and possibly Mount McLoughlin. For much of the year the easiest place to locate these birds is along the rim at Crater Lake.

Raptors were barely in the news this month. A **Rough-legged Hawk** was along Ball/Brophy Road on 2/12 (NB), and a **Ferruginous Hawk** near Ashland on 1/31 (RB). A **Peregrine Falcon** was dining on some unfortunate bird at Mingus Pond on 2/12 (ST).

*Field Notes continued on page 7*

## The Conservation Column

### By Pepper Trail

I'm sorry to report that our elected representatives at both the state and federal levels have been busily pushing forward terrible environmental proposals over the past several weeks. Let's start with the always difficult issue of timber payments to counties.

**Bad solutions to the timber payments problem.** As most residents of southern Oregon know, many counties in our state have long made their budgets assuming major revenues from timber sales on national forest land within their boundaries. When those revenues dramatically declined following the drastic overcutting of the 1970s and 80s, Congress passed the Secure Rural Schools Act in 2000 to ease the transition from dependence on timber receipts. The county payments under that program expired this January. While a few counties, notably Jackson County, took this transition seriously and prepared for the loss of federal payments, others, including Josephine and Curry Counties, did not. Facing the arrival of long-predicted revenue shortfalls, these counties may be forced to make severe budget cuts to basic services.

In response to this situation, two proposals are currently under consideration in Congress. Both would mandate ecologically disastrous (and probably literally impossible) increased levels of logging in Oregon's public forests. H.R. 4019, the "Federal Forests County Revenue, Schools, and Jobs Act of 2012," is proposed by the Chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee, Rep. Doc Hastings (R-WA). It would mandate intensive logging, grazing, and oil and gas production in order to hit unrealistic revenue targets.

The logging provisions would require that the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) log no less than 33.2 billion board feet per year—15 times greater than 2010 levels—to generate funds to support county budgets. Environmental laws such as the Endangered Species Act and Clean Water Act would not apply to projects carried out under the legislation. Additionally, the right of American citizens to challenge the decisions of their government in court for these projects would be suspended.

The other proposal, which has not yet received a formal Congressional hearing, was developed by Oregon's Peter DeFazio, Kurt Schrader, and our own Greg Walden, and is entitled the "O&C Trust, Conservation, and Jobs Act." It would put approximately 1.2 million acres of publicly-owned BLM land into a dedicated logging "trust", where it would be managed for industrial logging to generate revenue for some western Oregon counties. According to an analysis by Oregon Wild, "To generate the money needed to bail out county budgets in western Oregon at current timber prices, Reps. DeFazio, Schrader, and Walden would need to increase logging on public BLM lands by 400 to 500 percent."

**A much better idea.** Fortunately, a much better proposal to the county funding problem was released in February by a consortium of seven environmental groups, including Ashland's Geos Institute and the Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center (KS Wild). Entitled "Shared Responsibility: The Conservation Community's Recommendations to Equitably Resolve the O&C County Funding Controversy," this plan would restore county funding through:

*The conservation column continues. on page 5*

- Administrative savings of over \$110 million secured through the transfer of Bureau of Land Management forestlands to the U.S. Forest Service
- A modest increase in the Oregon State Forest Products Harvest Tax given the windfall from increases in log prices and booming exports shipped to China.
- A small increase in local government property tax rates from existing but presently unused taxing authority. For example, Curry County could make up its 1/3 share of the shortfall by an estimated property tax increase of \$1.33 a week for a median priced home. Even at this increased rate, Curry County taxpayers would still pay approximately half of the Multnomah County property tax rate.
- Increased ecological restoration that will create jobs while restoring forests and watersheds.

I encourage all RVAS members to read the full *Shared Responsibility* proposal, which is available at: [http://www.geosinstitute.org/images/stories/pdfs/Publications/FederalLandsManagement/geos\\_sharedresponsibility\\_feb2012.pdf](http://www.geosinstitute.org/images/stories/pdfs/Publications/FederalLandsManagement/geos_sharedresponsibility_feb2012.pdf)

**Going Backward on Predator Management.** Two bills introduced during the current Oregon Legislature session would turn back the clock on the management of predators in our state. HB4119 would repeal Measure 18's ban on sport hound hunting cougars and allows counties to apply for cougar hounding seasons. Oregon voters have twice supported the ban on the sport hunters' use of dog packs to hunt down cougars, and current law allows the use of hounds to remove cougars that are preying on livestock, and to protect public safety.

Despite this, pro-hounding groups are trying yet again to play on public fears to declare an "emergency" when no justification exists. Fortunately, within the last few days, Governor Kitzhaber announced his intention to veto this bill should it be passed by the Legislature.

The other proposal, HB4158, is an extremely short and poorly written measure that would bypass the painstakingly developed Oregon wolf management plan to allow the killing of wolves "to address the depredation of livestock by wolves." The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife currently has the authority to kill wolves known to have depredated livestock, following procedures overseen by the state Endangered Species Act. Like HB4119, this bill would declare an "emergency" in order to sidestep the present legal structure that provides for the responsible management of endangered species. This bill passed the Oregon House on February 17, and will next move to the Oregon Senate.

**The Worst Transportation Bill Ever.** That's the only adequate description for the huge \$260 billion transportation bill put forward by the Republican majority in the U.S. House of Representatives. Among its many terrible provisions, it would:

- Open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and nearly all of America's coastal waters to oil and gas drilling.
- Fast-track the Keystone XL pipeline to send oil from Canadian tar sands to refineries in Louisiana, in the process threatening the Great Plains' Ogallala aquifer and the unique Nebraska sand hills ecosystem.

*The Conservation Column continues on page 6*



*The Conservation Column continued from page 5*

- Demolish significant environmental protections by imposing arbitrary deadlines on legally mandated environmental reviews of proposed road and highway projects, and by ceding to state highway agencies the authority to decide whether such reviews should occur.

Make financing for mass transit much less certain, and more vulnerable, by ending a 30-year agreement that guaranteed mass transit a one-fifth share of the fuel taxes and other user fees in the highway trust fund. Instead it would compete annually with other programs.

In short, this bill would be an unmitigated disaster for the environment, increasing our already catastrophic dependence on fossil fuels, and offering no forward-looking policies to address the problems of sprawl, traffic congestion, carbon dioxide emissions, or climate change.

President Obama has pledged to veto the bill if it comes to his desk with many of the provisions outlined above. We must hope that it doesn't get that far.

**What You Can Do:** I apologize that this month's column covers such an overwhelmingly negative list of proposals. Unfortunately, this is the situation we face (and there are plenty of other bad proposals that I lacked space to cover!).

I urge all RVAS to email - or even better, telephone or write a personal letter - to our elected representatives concerning these issues. To find all the contact information for your representatives at both state and federal levels, go to: <http://www.leg.state.or.us/findlegsltr/>.

Thanks for all you do!

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*March Field Notes continued from page 3*

**Black-crowned Night Herons**, more than a dozen, are now easily found at the pond on Grammercy and at Mingus Pond (KT,SJ). They first appeared 1/16. Now where do these birds go in the winter? A **Ross' Goose** was at the pond at the Fairgrounds on 2/4 (SJ). A **Greater Yellowlegs** was in White City on 2/8 (HF), and five more were at Denman on 2/9 (RB).

A **Loggerhead Shrike** was near Whetstone Pond on 1/11 (LM,MM). Loggerheads are rare in winter. Northern Shrikes are the normal visitors this time of year.

Other sightings of note include the **Orange-crowned Warblers** at the feeder of Alan Contreras in Medford and **White-headed Woodpeckers** on Mount Ashland (FL). We can now be sure they never leave. Also, there was an **Evening Grosbeak** at the feeder of Mo Lolandi in Prospect on 1/26. Winter sightings are not common.

Thanks to this month's contributors including Dick Ashford, Norm Barrett, Ralph Browning, Alan Contreras, Jenna Curtis, Harry Fuller, Marcus Larusso, Mo Lolandi, Frank Lospalutto, Kate McKenzie, Lisa Moore, Marjorie Moore, Howard Sands, Shelley Tanquary, and Keiko Thurston. Deadline for contributions to Field Notes in next month's edition of The Chat is March 15.

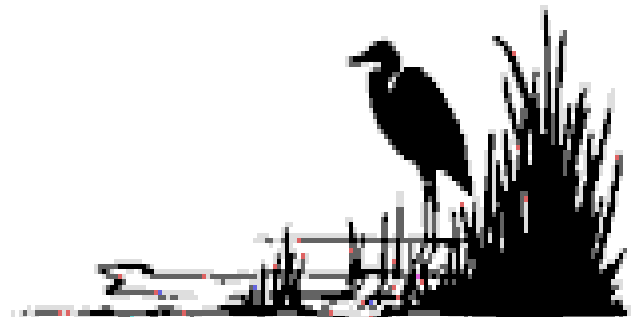
### RVAS Calendar of Events

- |                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| <b>March 7:</b>  | <b>Bird walk at Denman WMA</b>                          |
| <b>March 27:</b> | <b>Chapter Meeting</b>                                  |
| <b>April 4:</b>  | <b>Bird walk at Denman WMA</b>                          |
| <b>April 15:</b> | <b>Field trip to Grants Pass—Whitehorse County Park</b> |
| <b>April 24:</b> | <b>Chapter Meeting</b>                                  |
| <b>May 2:</b>    | <b>Bird walk at Denman WMA</b>                          |
| <b>May 5:</b>    | <b>Birdathon</b>  |
| <b>May 5/6:</b>  | <b>Master Gardener Fair</b>                             |

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### Upcoming Field Trips

**Sunday, April 15:** Whitehorse County Park (Grants Pass). Leaders Fran Taylor and Dennis Vroman. Meet at the park boat ramp. Early risers can come at 7 am and bird for an hour in the vicinity of the boat ramp; later arrivals should get to the boat ramp by 8 am to bird the rest of the park. Note: this trip is taking place on a Sunday, rather than the usual Saturday. **Directions to the park:** From Medford take I-5 north to exit 58. From the off-ramp turn left onto 6th Street, drive south to G Street, turn right on G Street and continue west until G Street becomes Upper River Road, continue west until the road merges into Lower River Road. Make a left into Whitehorse County Park. (Distance from I-5 exit approx. 9.5 miles) Fee to park (by picnic shelter) is \$4.00 per car. There is no fee if you park by the boat ramp as it is BLM property.

**The Klamath Bird Observatory offers a number of field trips throughout the Spring, throughout the Rogue Valley, including the following:**

March 10: TouVelle State Park and Denman WMA	May 2: Birding 101 at North Mountain Park
April 7: Biking and Birding the Greenway	May 12: Bird walk to Scott Valley, CA
April 14: Bird Walk to Lower Table Rock	May 12: International Migratory Bird Day

Contact KBO for details on these and other events at 541-201-0866

### Election for RVAS Board of Directors

Every year at the April chapter meeting RVAS holds its election for new members to serve on our board of directors. Our by-laws require us to elect at least three new directors each year to serve for a term of three years. Incumbent directors may be re-elected.

The board of directors (Board, for short) is the governing group for our chapter of the Audubon Society. The Board sets policy, draws up and monitors the budget, and oversees chapter operations and education and conservation programs. The Board ensures that we maintain the organizational framework that brings birders in Jackson County together and allows them to engage in communal activities.

Our nominating committee for board directors this year consists of Harry Fuller (chair), George Peterson, and Sooney Viani. They will be contacting prospective candidates during the coming six weeks. They may even contact you! Please do consider giving them a positive response if this happens.

The main qualification is a willingness to serve. The RVAS Board does not consist solely of experienced birders. Rather, we strive to choose directors who are representative of the entire Jackson County birding community. You will not be out of your depth just because your life list does not exceed the capacity of your computer hard drive. So don't be afraid to stand for election to the Board. The good news is that you will in all probability be unopposed.



### **Local Membership Renewals Are Due**

Most of you belong to the National Audubon Society, which automatically enrolled you as a member of Rogue Valley Audubon Society. Some of you prefer to only be members of RVAS, your local Audubon chapter. If you have a local membership, that membership expired on September 30<sup>th</sup>. This is true for all local Members except those who joined within the last six months.

Please keep your membership and your support of RVAS active by completing the application below and mailing it with your check for \$20. If you are uncertain of your membership status, or have any questions about membership, please send an e-mail to: [bh@ashlandnet.net](mailto:bh@ashlandnet.net), or call Bill Hering at 541-488-5886, or Stan McIntosh at 541-535-2053. Thanks very much!

## **ROGUE VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY**

### **MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/CHANGE OF ADDRESS**

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

Circle if this is for **NEW MEMBERSHIP** **RENEWING MEMBERSHIP** **CHANGE OF ADDRESS**

Would you like to receive a printed copy of The Chat, our newsletter, mailed to you (it is also available on line)? **YES** **NO**

Dues alone are not enough to support our many activities, environmental and education efforts. Please consider a contribution in addition to your **\$20** membership. Your additional contribution may be tax deductible as RVAS is a 501 (C) 3 organization.

\_\_\_\_\_ Please check here if you wish your contribution to be anonymous.

Mail this form with your check for **\$20** RVAS dues and any contribution you wish to make, to: Rogue Valley Audubon Society, P.O. Box 8597, Medford, OR 97501.

**Deadline for submission of articles to the next Chat is the 20th day of the month preceding publication date.**

## **Birdathon 2012**

Birdathon 2012 has been scheduled for **May 5**. This is an important fundraiser for Rogue Valley Audubon. If you can't or don't want to go out into the field yourself, please consider pledging a certain amount of money per species observed to support your favorite team or making a cash donation to RVAS. Pledge forms will be included in the April issue of *The Chat*.

The three competitive teams in 2011 were the Falcons, under the leadership of Pepper Trail, the Great Grays, under the leadership of Bob Hunter, and the Binosaurs, under the leadership of Jim Livauadais. Once again the Great Grays took top honors by observing 143 species. The total number of distinct species observed was 174.

And once again, our goal is to encourage people other than the competitive hard core birders to participate. If you just want to go out and have fun by seeing how many species you can spot, RVAS will try to find a team for you to join. Just e-mail or call one of the organizers: Alex Maksymowicz, maksbox1@gmail.com, 541-482-1964 and Maggi Rackley, imabrrrder@yahoo.com, 541-855-7935

A species checklist and a donation/pledge form will be included in the April issue of *The Chat*.

Meanwhile, for your guidance, here are Pepper Trail's rules for Birdathon.

1. The Birdathon area is limited to Jackson County.
2. There is no limit to team size, but all team members need to travel in the same vehicle. In practice, most teams are four persons. Team members don't have to stay together, but must stay in visual contact.
3. Birds can be identified by sight or by sound.
4. At least two team members must confirm each identification.
5. The time frame is 24 hours, and in most years has been 6 PM on Friday to 6 PM on Saturday. Teams may split their observations into a Friday evening session and a Saturday session. All team members need not participate in both sessions.

## RVAS to Offer Scholarships

RVAS is offering scholarships to Jackson County educators for the Siskiyou Field Institute for 2012.

The Siskiyou Field Institute's goal is to educate people about the Klamath-Siskiyou bioregion through field-based natural history classes.

Who is eligible? Any Jackson County educator including teachers, student teachers and group leaders.

What are your obligations? After your class, report back to RVAS either by writing an article for *The Chat* or by giving a short presentation at a monthly meeting about your experiences in the class.

To find a list of classes visit [www.thesfi.org](http://www.thesfi.org).

To apply for a scholarship, contact Karen Phillips at [programcoord@thesfi.org](mailto:programcoord@thesfi.org) or give her a call at (541) 597-8530.



### Olympic Birdfest 2012 March 30-April 1, In Sequim, WA

**A bird watching vacation** for beginners to experts, from leisurely strolls to active hikes. Bird for a few hours, or all day ... from the dawn chorus to the evening owl prowls.

**Enjoy the show** from guided birding trips, boat tours, a silent auction, banquet, totem tour, and many other events.

Our festival has a full slate of extraordinary offerings awaiting you.

**Also this year!** Stay on for a three-day, birding/sightseeing cruise of the San Juan Islands. Register separately at [www.pugetsoundexpress.com/audubon](http://www.pugetsoundexpress.com/audubon)

**BirdFest program information and registration can be found at**  
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For assistance contact  
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## CALIFORNIA'S NORTH COAST SPRING MIGRATION BIRD FESTIVAL APRIL 19-25, 2012; ARCATA, CALIFORNIA

The Marbled Godwit is a large shorebird with a long, slightly upturned bill. During Godwit Days, they are in Humboldt Bay by the thousands, before they head off to their nesting grounds in the central U.S. and Canadian prairies. Marbled Godwits winter on the Pacific Coast and a distinct population (the slightly smaller subspecies *beringiae*) winters predominately at the Arcata Marsh & Wildlife Sanctuary and on Humboldt Bay.

Godwit Days is a 3 day spring migration bird gathering toasting the Marbled Godwit along with all of the birds from the marshes, bays, coastal redwoods and mudflats on the Redwood Coast in California. Select from more than 100 lectures, field trips, boat excursions and workshops. Post-festival and pre-trip offers are available for a lengthy stay, giving you the chance to discover all of the birds from the Klamath Region and North Coast. **For details go to [godwitdays.com](http://godwitdays.com)**

### Feedback regarding Bob Black Awards

In the February issue of *The Chat*, Gwyneth Ragsine announced the initial awards from the Bob Black Fund that she and Denny Niebuhr are managing on behalf of RVAS. Two of these awards went to students of Professor Stewart Janes at SOU to help them complete bird-related research projects. Below is the letter that Dr. Janes sent to RVAS in response to these grants.

Dear Audubon,

I want to express my appreciation for the support you have given to two of my students: Sabra Comet an undergraduate student in Biology completing her capstone research and Theresa Wicks a graduate student in the Environmental Education master's program working on her thesis research.

Both of these students are pursuing careers in conservation working with bird populations. The grants from the Bob Black Research Fund will help these students achieve their goals. First, it allows them to complete their field work without sinking further in debt, and it helps them build their resume in an increasingly competitive field.

The work of both these students should be publishable assuming the outcome of the work. This will further help them along on their career path. I will make sure RVAS receives copies of any papers or publications resulting from this work, and RVAS will be properly acknowledged for their part in making this research possible.

Thanks again for the support you have awarded my students.

Gratefully,

Stewart Janes,  
Professor, Biology

For the record, Sabra Comet and Theresa Wicks both sent RVAS their own letter of thanks. Their letters will appear in the April issue of *The Chat*.

# ROGUE VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

## THE CHAT

### Newsletter of the ROGUE VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

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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](mailto: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.

## **MONTHLY BIRD WALK WITH MURRAY ORR**

**First Wednesday Each Month: Little Butte Creek Walk.** Meet at 8:30 a.m. on TouVelle Road in the northeast section of Denman Wildlife Area near White City. Leader: Murray Orr 857-9050. Please contact Murray 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.

Brian Barr, aquatic habitat restoration specialist with the Ashland-based GEOS Institute, will join us for the March walk. Brian played a key role in the recent project that restored the original meander in Little Butte Creek, and will be available to answer questions about the work while assisting us in our monthly count.