

# The Chat

Number 397  
May, 2013

A voice for education and conservation in the natural world

Rogue Valley Audubon Society

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

*Deadline for submissions is the 20th of each month*

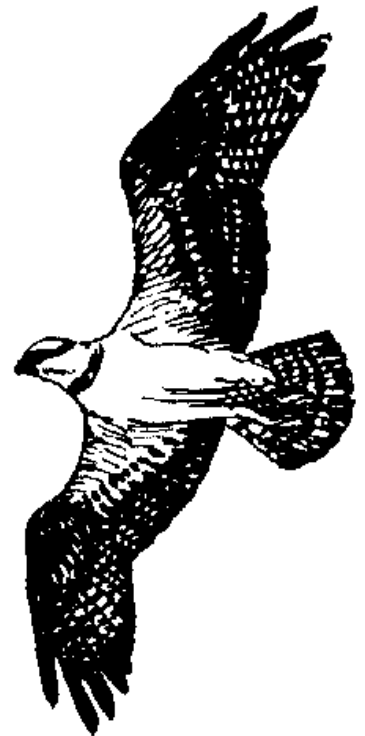
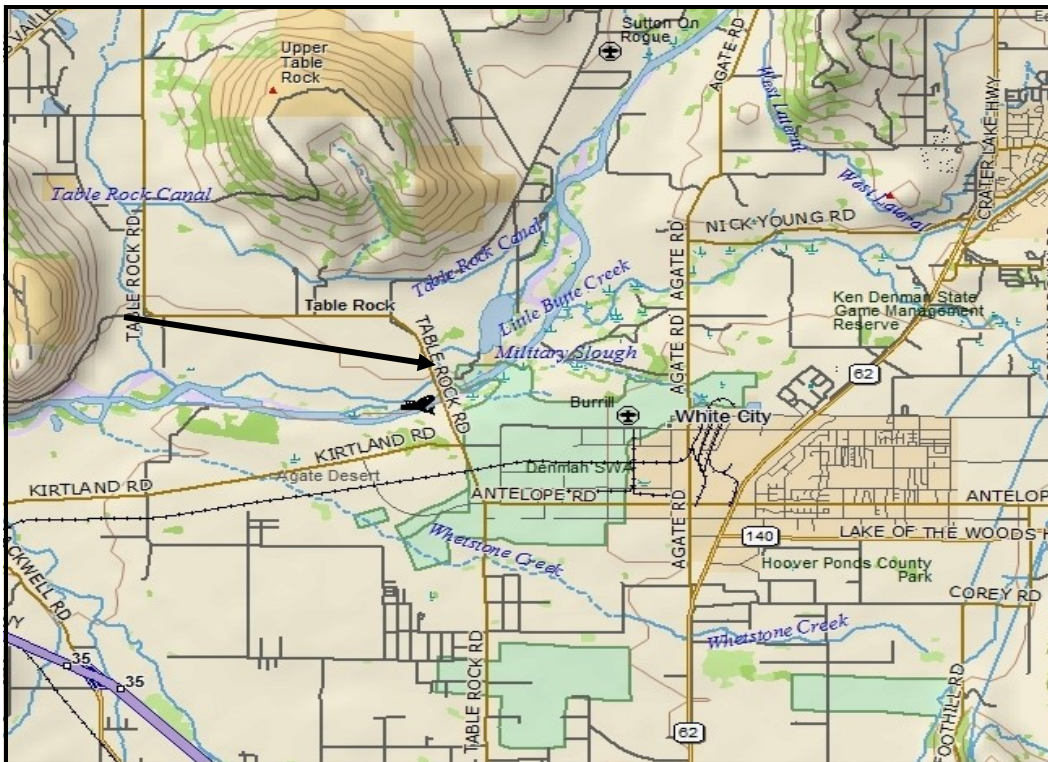


## ANNUAL CHAPTER PROGRAM POTLUCK—MAY 28—SITE A TOUVELLE STATE PARK.

The potluck begins at 6:00—Plan to bring a dish to share, your own plate, cup and utensils. Tea and Lemonade are provided.

JOIN GAYLENE AND JUDD HURLEY  
FOR THE ANNUAL SPRING POTLUCK  
AND BIRD WALK. The fun begins at  
5:00 pm sharp with a bird walk along the  
Rogue River with expert leaders.

TouVelle State Park is located on Table Rock Road, north of the intersection with Antelope Road and south of Modoc Road. There is a parking fee for the evening, or free if you have a state park pass.



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## President's Column

Thanks to everyone who participated in Birdathon 2013. The final tallies will be in the next issue of *The Chat*, and on our website. Please remember to follow up with pledged contributions from your team and from your friends. If you have any questions about the results or where to direct your contribution, call Maggi Rackley or me, or e-mail us (see listing on left).

Elsewhere in this issue you'll find an article about a new citizen science project being conducted by National Audubon Society. I urge you to become involved with "Hummingbirds At Home", especially if you have plants that attract hummers, or if you have feeders. It takes very little effort to file a report. Because there are just over 700 members in Rogue Valley Audubon, we should be able to make a significant contribution to this potentially very useful effort.

Recently I spent some time with Jesse Hodges, a new RVAS member and an avid bird photographer who has been developing a birders website. There are a lot of birding websites out there. However, his is a work in progress, and he would welcome any questions, comments and suggestions you may have. You can see where he's headed by visiting [www.birdingbuddies.com](http://www.birdingbuddies.com). Please share your comments and suggestions with Jesse at [jesse.hodges@birdingbuddies.com](mailto:jesse.hodges@birdingbuddies.com).

The new RVAS Board will meet on Saturday, June 8<sup>th</sup> for a full-day Retreat. We will establish goals for 2013-14, and prepare plans to reach those goals. Now is a perfect time for you to contact any Board members you know, tell us where you think RVAS should be headed, and what we should be doing differently. Suggestions for topics that you would like addressed at the Board Retreat are especially welcome. It's your organization, established in Jackson County to support bird conservation and education. We need to hear from you as we move ahead. Good Birding! --

Bill Hering

Field Notes: The Changing Seasons

*Compiled by Stewart Janes*

The spring flood of migrants has arrived. They are everywhere, and there are many more to come. And the flood was never more evident than on April 13. While working in my yard, I noticed flock after flock of **Yellow-rumped Warblers** passing through the oaks. They all seemed late for something important. I must have seen upwards of 150 birds. That was nothing compared with what Bob Arrigoni observed at North Mountain Park on that same day. He observed 1000 or more **Yellow-rumped Warblers** and 500 **Orange-crowned Warblers** all making their way down the valley. I'm not sure what bunched up the migrants, but it was sure fun to watch.

Besides the tidal wave of Yellow-rumped Warblers, others have been arriving, too. Some first of the year reports include:

Common Yellowthroat	3/29	Bob Hunter, Gretchen Hunter
Northern Rough-winged Swallow	3/30	Norm Barrett
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	3/31	Kate McKenzie
Cliff Swallow	4/2	Lisa Moore, Marjorie Moore
Black-throated Gray Warbler	4/9	Russ Namitz
Bullock's Oriole	4/13	Liz Northrup
House Wren	4/13	Liz Northrup
Nashville Warbler	4/13	Frank Lospalutto
Black-headed Grosbeak	4/14	Dick Ashford, Maggi Rackley
Yellow Warbler	4/14	Kate McKenzie
Western Kingbird	4/16	Bob Arrigoni
Calliope Hummingbird	4/16	John Bullock

The shorebird migration is also heating up. The first **Dunlin** were reported at the Kirtland Ponds on 3/27 (JT) rising to 50-60 on 4/13 (JT). **Black-bellied Plovers** first appeared on 4/11 (GS). Sprinkled in with them were **Greater** and **Lesser Yellowlegs**, **Western** and **Least Sandpipers** (NB,GS,FE,BH,FL).

**Eared Grebes** have been on all the large bodies of water and in good numbers beginning 4/3 (FL,MM,LM,FE,GS,NB,JT) with the greatest number (40-50) at the Kirtland Ponds on 4/9. A couple of **Horned Grebes** were among them at Emigrant Lake on 4/3 and 4/9 (FL). Fifty or more **Common Loons** were on Lost Creek reservoir on 4/5 (RN). I can't remember a report of this many before. **Bonaparte's Gulls** were at Agate Lake between 4/4 and 4/6 (JT,FE). **White Pelicans** were at Agate Lake between 3/30 and 4/13 (MR).

Geese are still migrating through the valley. Small flocks of **Greater White-fronted Geese** are appearing on farm ponds, and 140 **Cackling Geese** were on the Timber Products Pond on 4/8 (RN). Given the number of geese in the Klamath Basin we can expect more as April draws to a close.

## The Conservation Column

By Pepper Trail

Water! Nothing is more vital to the health of our southern Oregon environment and wildlife than adequate supplies of clean water in our rivers, lakes, and wetlands. Therefore, I'm devoting this column to updates on water-related conservation issues in our region.

### Southern Oregon Streams Threatened by Gold and Nickel Mining

Suction dredge gold mining literally sucks the life out of our streams and rivers, harming salmon and the health of our waterways at an alarming rate. In 2005, there were 414 dredging permits in Oregon, in 2012 there were 2,409. That's a 600% increase in just seven years, driven both by the rising price of gold and the statewide ban on this destructive practice in California, which took effect in 2009. That ban led many gold miners to move their operations to Oregon.

This is a critical time for efforts to forever protect our rivers from suction dredge mining. The Oregon legislature is considering passing Senate Bill 838 which would put a five year moratorium on suction dredging in salmon habitat. This would give our state agencies and legislature time to develop common-sense, science-based rules to govern in-stream mining.

Senator Alan Bates is a strong supporter of the bill, and told the *Oregonian*: "When you get to the level (of mining) we're talking about here, it's just going to go up and you've got a problem. Everything we're getting keeps telling us this is not helping fish."

The proposed moratorium in Senate Bill 838 is intended to allow time for State Lands, DEQ, the governor's office, Native tribes and other groups to propose a revised regulatory framework on mining. This framework could include a consolidated, single permit; effective monitoring, compliance and enforcement mechanisms; adequate fee structures; or a flat-out prohibition on mining with motorized equipment in certain areas.

Senate Bill 838 has successfully passed out of the Environment and Natural Resource committee, but there is still a long way to go before the moratorium can be passed into law.

Meanwhile, two southern Oregon streams, Rough & Ready and Baldface Creeks have been listed among America's Most Endangered Rivers of 2013 by the group American Rivers. This action shines a national spotlight on nickel mining proposals that threaten a wonderland of wild rivers, clean water, rare plants, and outdoor recreation.

Rough & Ready Creek is a beautiful rare plant reserve and tributary of Oregon's Wild and Scenic Illinois River. Baldface Creek is a pristine tributary of the Wild and Scenic North Fork Smith River. The creeks are home to wild salmon and trout and some of the purest water in the West. Both are located in the heart of the South Kalmiopsis Roadless Area, one of the biggest wild areas left on the West Coast.

*Conservation Column continued on page 8*

*Field notes continued from page 3*

The **Long-tailed Ducks** were still on Lost Creek Reservoir as of 4/11 (JT). **Cinnamon Teal** have appeared at several locations, the first at the Kirtland Ponds on 3/27 (JT). The first **Canada Goose** goslings were reported on 4/6 at the Avenue G Pond (HF).

Sparrows may not be as flashy as the warblers, but they are moving in large numbers. **Lincoln's Sparrow** were noted by many and in sizable numbers starting in early April. At my feeder I have had several **Fox Sparrows**, two **White-throated Sparrows** and numerous **White-crowned Sparrows** each pause for a day or two before moving on. I still haven't noticed a drop in **Golden-crowned Sparrow** numbers, but I'm sure most will be gone by the first of May.


**Evening Grosbeaks** continue their annual Ashland invasion. They are everywhere. They have also been noticed in Ruch (AG). Also if you listen carefully, you can still hear **Red Crossbills** in the foothills about Ashland. This may be the year they never leave. There are also a few lingering **Red-breasted Nuthatches** (MP). Maybe they will stay to keep the Crossbills company.

Speaking of nuthatches, the best bird of the month was the small group of **Pygmy Nuthatches** in Colestin Valley (RN). This is just one more piece of evidence that they are residents of Jackson County in the forests along the southern slopes of the Siskiyou.

Other sightings of note include **Townsend's Solitaires** in Ashland and on Shale City Road between 4/9 and 4/16 (BA, KC-S,MM,LM), **Tricolored Blackbirds** at the Sports Park on 4/13 (HF), and a **Northern Goshawk** on Heppsie Mountain on 4/13 (BB).

Thanks to this month's contributors including Bob Arrigoni, Dick Ashford, Brian Barr, Norm Barrett, John Bullock, Kate Cleland-Sipfle, Forrest English, Harry Fuller, Anne Goff, Bob Hunter, Gretchen Hunter, Frank Lospalutto, Kate McKenzie, Lisa Moore, Marjorie Moore, Russ Namitz, Liz Northrup, Michael Parker, Maggi Rackley, Gary Shaffer, and Jeff Tufts. Deadline for contributions to the Field Notes in the summer edition of The Chat is June 15.

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NATURE SHOP**  
Birdfeeding, Natural History, Science Toys  
154 Oak St. Ashland, OR  
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## Hummingbirds at Home - Audubon's New Citizen Science Project

The Continental US is breeding home to 14 species of hummingbirds, with a few other species making rare appearances. Rufous Hummingbirds visit our yards each spring to breed, looking for nectar from our gardens and feeders. Anna's Hummingbird overwinters in many Rogue Valley locations. Fascinating to watch, hummingbirds captivate us with their magical feats of flight and their showy colors.

Recent science reports that flowers are blooming earlier and earlier due to climate change. Some flowers are blooming as many as 17 days before the migrating hummingbirds arrive. The impact for migrating and breeding hummingbirds is unknown. National Audubon has launched a new Citizen Science program called Hummingbirds at Home.

Through this new program Audubon's goal is to gather data that will help document the hummingbirds' journey, and better understand how changing flowering patterns and supplemental feeding by people relate to hummingbirds' migration and breeding success, and also climate change. Since nectar is critical to hummingbirds, people are asked to document which flowering plants hummingbirds are feeding on in their backyards as well as whether hummingbird feeders are supplied and used. The Hummingbirds at Home program will provide an opportunity for citizen scientists to help us learn how these changes in the environment are impacting hummingbirds.

In this family-friendly program, participants will log hummingbird sightings and the flowering plants or feeders they visit, with free mobile technology or on desktop computers. Participants can also view hummingbird sightings online in real time. Scientists will use the data to better understand how hummingbirds are impacted by feeders, non-native nectar sources in gardens, shifting flowering times, and climate change.

Do you enjoy watching hummingbirds and want to become involved in this program? You can participate at a level that fits your schedule - from one sighting to watching hummingbirds over several weekends throughout the program. To learn more about this exciting citizen science project, go to [www.audubon.org/citizenscience](http://www.audubon.org/citizenscience).

### 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](mailto:imabrrrder@yahoo.com) to volunteer, or to get further information. Thank you.



## **Mark Your Calendar for Upcoming Field Trips**

### **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](mailto:bh@ashland.net), 541-488-5886 or Maggi Rackley at [imabrrrder@yahoo.com](mailto:imabrrrder@yahoo.com), 541-855-7935. Participation is limited; please register before May 1.

### **BREAR CREEK GREENWAY, SATURDAY MAY 25**

Harry Fuller will lead a field trip along the Bear Creek Greenway starting at Newbry Park, Talent. Easy walking and interesting habitat including a lake. Close to both Medford and Ashland. The group will meet at 7:30am at Newbry Park parking lot at Exit 21. We will finish by noon. Information & sign-up contact Harry Fuller [anzatowhee@yahoo.com](mailto:anzatowhee@yahoo.com)

### **CASCADE-SISKIYOU NATIONAL MONUMENT, SUNDAY MAY 26**

Pepper Trail will lead a trip up the Emigrant Creek Road area of the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument. The group will stop at several places and do short hikes along the road and nearby. Thus, some hiking will be involved, but not strenuous. Meet at 8:00am at the dirt lot in Ashland's Shop N Kart - Limited to 15 to provide a good birding experience - Please contact Pepper to sign up - [ptrail@ashlandnet.net](mailto:ptrail@ashlandnet.net)

**Spring 2013 Table Rocks Hikes sponsored by The Nature Conservancy and the BLM Medford District Office - explore these iconic landmarks during free guided, educational hikes with a naturalist.** No fee to participate but reservations are required. Participation is limited to 20 individuals. To reserve a space, call the BLM Medford District Office, Monday - Friday, 7:30 am - 4:30 pm at [\(541\) 618-2200](tel:5416182200) no later than 4 pm the Friday prior to the date of the hike. Dress for the weather and bring water (drinking water is not available). Hikes range from 3 to 5 miles roundtrip and last 3-5 hours.

### **Saturday, May 4 - 7:30 pm at Lower Table Rock Loop**

**Night Owls** - Steve Godwin, wildlife biologist with the BLM, will listen for the sounds of the night from dusk until dark on a walk around the Lower Table Rock Loop Trail (1/2 mile accessible trail). Steve will attempt to lure pygmy, great horned and screech owls. But no guarantees! A short presentation of the common owls in this area and their unique characteristics and adaptations will precede the hike. Bring your flashlights and good hiking shoes.

### **Saturday, May 11 - 8 am at Lower Table Rock**

**Bird's the Word** - Teresa "Bird" Wicks, Klamath Bird Observatory intern and SOU environmental education graduate student, will lead a group on a birding excursion through the chaparral, oak savanna, mixed woodland and mounded prairie / vernal pool plant communities of the Table Rocks. Bring your binoculars and bird guides and pick Bird's brain with your ornithology curiosities.

*Conservation Column continued from page 4*

At Rough & Ready Creek, a recently formed mining company (RNR Mining) has located new claims and submitted a new mining plan to USFS. It includes mining lands recommended as Wilderness, miles of road construction in the Rough & Ready Creek Botanical Area and South Kalmiopsis Roadless Area, and a smelter facility on the Rough & Ready Creek Area of Critical Environmental Concern.

At Baldface Creek, a foreign-owned mining company (Red Flat Nickel Company) has submitted a plan to conduct exploratory drilling at 59 sites in the Baldface Creek/North Fork Smith watershed, across approximately 2,000 acres of the South Kalmiopsis Roadless Area. The information gathered will be used to advance mine development. Baldface Creek's watershed was recommended as Wilderness by the Bush Administration.

The Environmental Protection Agency identified metal mining as the largest toxic polluter in the U.S. Strip mining, road construction, and metal processing would devastate this fragile, precious wild area. If one mine starts operating, thousands of acres of other nickel claims could be developed on nearby federal public lands— impacting designated and eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers and turning one of North America's most important rare plant centers and clean water supplies into an industrial wasteland. The Forest Service already concluded that this type of mining would have drastic and irreversible impacts at Rough & Ready Creek. Dangers include high chromium content smelter waste, naturally occurring asbestos, air and water pollution, and impacts to a world-class salmon and steelhead river.

Members of Oregon's Congressional delegation have repeatedly asked the Obama Administration to help them protect these Oregon treasures by withdrawing the federal lands in the Rough & Ready and Baldface Creek area from the 1872 Mining Law. Despite the extremely high scientific, social, and ecological values at risk, the area remains open to destructive mining and acquisition by mining companies under this unjust and antiquated law.

-- *Information provided by KS Wild and American Rivers. For more information (and some beautiful photos), see [www.roughandreadycreek.org](http://www.roughandreadycreek.org)*

### Klamath River Dams and Klamath Basin Water Situation

There have been many new developments in this never-ending saga on the past few months. First of all, in March the state of Oregon ruled on the decade-long process of establishing water rights in the basin ("water adjudication"), and determined that the senior water rights belonged to the Klamath Tribes. This sensible decision declared that the tribes' claim on Upper Klamath Lake and major portions of its tributaries dates to "time immemorial."

In the short term, this ruling does not appear to change much. The Klamath Tribes are supporters of the Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement (KBRA) and its proposed water allocations; and the Klamath Water Users Association (the major irrigators' group) declared their support of the outcome. If the KBRA falls apart, however, the tribes could become more assertive about their water rights.

And what about the KBRA? (For more information on this sweeping proposed water agreement, see the column in the October 2012 *Chat*.) In March, the Klamath County Commissioners formally voted to withdraw from the KBRA. This was no surprise, as the two new commissioners elected in November ran on a platform of rejecting the KBRA, which had been approved by the incumbents they defeated. Again, the practical effects are probably minor, as the KBRA continues in limbo, lacking any action – or even apparent interest – from Congress.

Meanwhile, one key aspect of the KBRA, the removal of four dams on the Klamath River, received a strong endorsement. The Department of the Interior completed its long-delayed environmental impact statement (EIS) analyzing options for these dams, and concluded that removal was the best course of action. But no money has been appropriated for this purpose, and without that, no action is possible. Finally, it appears that 2013 is going to be another grim water year in the Klamath Basin. Governor Kitzhaber recently declared a “drought emergency” in the Basin, where snowpack is about 65% of normal. This declaration enhances coordination among local, state, and federal officials, and may result in some assistance. However, given the reality of over-allocated water and with money tight at all levels, there are certain to be conflicts ahead. If history is any guide, it seems that the Klamath Basin National Wildlife Refuges, and the birds and other animals that depend upon them, are likely to suffer the most. In March, RVAS joined other state Audubon chapters and other conservation groups in calling on the U.S. Senators representing Oregon and California to assure that water for the refuges is not cut off this summer (as happened in each of the past two years). As of late April, it appears that water deliveries to the refuges are continuing, but as the irrigation season gets under way, pressures on the water supply will increase. We will continue to monitor the situation and do all we can to assure that the refuges receive an adequate amount of water to fulfill their vital ecological functions.

Whew! I'm thirsty – how about you?

### **RVAS to Offer Scholarships in 2013**

RVAS is offering scholarships to Jackson County educators for the Siskiyou Field Institute's 2013 field courses. 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 science educator, science grad student or science-related non-profit instructor.

What are your obligations? After your class, report to the 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 Siskiyou Field Institute's 2013 classes, visit [www.thesfi.org](http://www.thesfi.org). To apply for a scholarship, contact SFI Program Coordinator Kathleen Pyle at [programcoord@thesfi.org](mailto:programcoord@thesfi.org) or give her a call at (541) 597-8530.



## 2013 Birding Classes

**April 27-28**  
Shorebirds of the  
Klamath Coast

**June 8-9**  
Birding in Critical  
Habitat

**June 15**  
Klamath Basin  
Birding

**July 12-14**  
Lava Beds Cave  
Ecology and Bat Watch

**August 17**  
Birding at Sea  
Pelagic Trip

**September 14**  
Birding on Bikes  
on the Del Norte Coast



Siskiyou Field Institute invites you to learn more about the bird life of our unique Klamath-Siskiyou bioregion – Join us in the field this season!

Other birding education:  
**Birdwalks** during our  
Birds and Brews Fundraiser  
Saturday, May 18

**Morning birdwalk** at the Oregon Caves  
(during “Siskiyou Mountains and Streams”  
class, July 20-21)

**Request a 2013 catalog:**  
Phone: (541) 597-8530  
Email: [institute@thesfi.org](mailto:institute@thesfi.org)

**ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES IN THE ROGUE VALLEY** sponsored by Ashland Parks & Recreation 340 S Pioneer St in Lithia Park, 541-488-5340, [ParksInfo@ashland.or.us](mailto:ParksInfo@ashland.or.us)  
[www.AshlandParksandRec.org](http://www.AshlandParksandRec.org)

**Free Lithia Park Nature Walks - Enjoy Beautiful Lithia Park's Natural History**

Three days a week, rain or shine, trained volunteer naturalists from the Ashland Parks & Recreation Department lead an easy, interesting, 1.5-hour nature walk through Lithia Park. Topics include: trees, flowers, birds, climate, water, geology and the history of the park. Nature walks are free. Please meet us at the park entrance, across from the Plaza in Ashland. Walks are provided by the Ashland Parks & Recreation Department. Pre-registration is not required for the Nature Walks.

AGES	All ages welcome
DAYS	Saturdays (July & August only); Sundays, Wednesdays & Fridays
DATES	May 1—September 29
TIMES	10am
PLACE	Meet at Lithia Park entrance
COST	FREE

**Rogue Valley Bird Day**

**North Mountain Park Nature Center**  
620 N Mountain Ave in Ashland, 541-488-6606  
[www.NorthMountainPark.org](http://www.NorthMountainPark.org)

Rogue Valley Bird Day is the local celebration of International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD), which celebrates one of the most important and spectacular events in the life of a migratory bird—its journey between wintering and breeding grounds. The theme this year is the "Life Cycle of Migratory Birds: Conservation Across the Americas." This theme will focus on what birds are doing at various times of the year (nesting, migrating, overwintering) and the importance of conservation efforts along every step of their journey. Join us on Saturday, May 11, from 8:00 am to noon to celebrate! Enjoy... Wildlife Images exhibits, guided bird walks, shade-grown coffee, and a bird-calling contest for all ages. This outdoor event is admission-free and takes place at North Mountain Park, 620 N Mountain Avenue, Ashland. For more information visit [www.RogueValleyBirdDay.net](http://www.RogueValleyBirdDay.net) or call the North Mountain Park Nature Center at 541-488-6606.

# ROGUE VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

## THE CHAT

### Newsletter of the ROGUE VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

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## Wild Birds Unlimited



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712 Crater Lake Avenue 770-1104  
(Across from Providence Medical Center)  
Mon-Fri 9:30-6:00, Sat 9:30-5:00

## 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](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.