

The Chat

Number 401
Nov./Dec. 2013

A voice for education and conservation in the natural world

Rogue Valley Audubon Society

www.roguevalleyaudubon.org

Deadline for submissions for the January 2014 issue is Dec. 15.



NOVEMBER PROGRAM MEEING, TUESDAY, NOV. 26—7 PM.

JOIN US FOR A PRESENTATION BY
RUSS NAMITZ—"Twitching & Ticking:
Oregon's Record BIG YEAR"

Russ Namitz spent the year 2011 chasing birds around the state in an attempt to break the Big Year record for Oregon. He drove 41,000 miles, ate 48.5 feet of Subway sandwiches and pushed the record up by 18 species. Come and enjoy a month-by-month account of strategic birding, adrenaline-laced chases, comical mishaps and more. Russ is currently a wildlife biologist and part-time science instructor for Rogue Community College.



PLAN AHEAD FOR THE DECEMBER
PROGRAM MEETING—THE ANNUAL
HOLIDAY POTLUCK, PROGRAM,
RAFFLE AND AUCTION—DEC 7,
2013—6 PM

ALWAYS A GREAT TIME, JOIN US
FOR THE ANNUAL HOLIDAY POTLUCK
- BRING A DISH TO SHARE AND
YOUR OWN UTENSILS AND BUY
RAFFLE TICKETS FOR A CHANCE TO
WIN GREAT ITEMS ALL DONATED
WITH A GOAL OF RAISING FUNDS
FOR RVAS EDUCATION AND OUT-
REACH PROGRAMS.

PEPPER TRAIL WILL EMCEE AND JIM
LIVAUDAIS WILL
PRESENT A PROGRAM
OF BIRD PHOTOS.
See prize list on page
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Chapter Program meetings are held at 1801 E. Jackson St., Medford, in Lidgate Hall of the Medford Congregational Church.

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President's Column

RVAS is well into our 2013-14 season. Thanks to Field Trip Coordinator Maggi Rackley, we've already had trips in Jackson and Del Norte counties. Our last trip before the Christmas Bird Count will be Nov. 16th, lead by Dennis Vroman along the river at Valley of the Rogue State Park. Thanks to all the terrific leaders who have volunteered their time. These trips are an essential part of what RVAS offers for our members; I hope you are able to take advantage of them.

As for our indoor activities, Programs Chair Alex Maksymowicz has provided a roster of excellent presenters; Otis Swisher, Vince Zauskey, and John Alexander among them. Russ Namitz is up next—on Nov. 26th, and then we take a break until January. It's been a good year. I'm also grateful for the behind-the-scene efforts of Kaethe Fulton, *The Chat* editor, Jeff Tufts, who continues to keep the RVAS website current and useful, and Gary Palmer, who manages our data base. These folks lend their expertise to ensure that RVAS is providing what members want from the Audubon Chapter. RVAS cannot exist without the dedicated efforts of these and many other volunteers. Thank you Maggi, and Alex, and Kaethe, and Gary, and Jeff!

This winter Christmas Bird Counts will be held in Medford on Dec. 14th and in Ashland on Jan. 4th. It's a great time for birding in the Valley, for meeting other birders, and for an evening of pizza with friends. If you haven't done a CBC before, just let Bob Hunter or John Bullock (or both!) know, and they will help you find a team. I look forward to seeing you there.

Good Birding! - Bill Hering

Field Notes: The Changing Seasons

Compiled by Stewart Janes

It's been a busy fall migration. At least a lot of busy birders were out and about. Despite the series of September storms that brought snow on several occasions to the high country and rain everywhere else, migration continued pretty much on schedule.

I'm sure the odd swallow can still be found along the Rogue River or other big water, but the last sizable flocks were seen on 10/2. In addition to the large flock of **Violet-green Swallows**, a few **Tree**, **Cliff** and **Barn Swallows** were also seen on 10/2 (GR). This was also the last day flocks of **Vaux's Swifts** were reported. A big movement of **Violet-green Swallows** was observed 9/29 with hundreds over south Medford streaming south. Late **Barn Swallows** were also seen on 10/1 and 10/3 (MM, HF) and a **Tree Swallow** on 10/9 at Emigrant Lake (HF).

Turkey Vultures streamed through the valley beginning late in the third week of September ending with some of the larger flocks in the early days of October. The last kettle (about 200 individuals) was seen on 10/10. Now we wait for Valentine's Vulture Day and their return.

Fall migration brought a host of grebes of all flavors this year. **Eared Grebes** were especially numerous. They were reported from Emigrant Lake (HF), the Kirtland Ponds (RB, RN), and Lost Creek Reservoir from 10/6 to 10/19. The largest group of 90 individuals was at Lost Creek Reservoir on 10/6 (RN). Small numbers of **Horned Grebes** were seen at Emigrant Lake (JB, HF), and Lost Creek Reservoir (RN) and the Kirtland Ponds (GS, RN) between 9/22 and 10/14. **Red-necked Grebes** are uncommon in Jackson County but one was at Lost Creek Reservoir from 10/6 to 10/13 (RN).

Common Loons arrived at Lost Creek Reservoir on 10/10 (NB). A **Herring Gull** was at Emigrant Lake on 10/18 (HF), and **Caspian Terns** were seen at Emigrant Lake (HF) and passing high over Ashland (DA) between 10/9 and 10/14.

The surprise was the immature **Sabine's Gull** at the Kirtland Ponds between 9/24 and 9/26 (BB, GS, RK, RN). Sabine's Gulls are not unheard of in the County, but usually one needs to be at sea to find them.

The shorebird migration peaks in late August but doesn't wrap up completely until November. The **American Golden Plover** at the Kirtland Ponds was the star of the month. Most migrate through the Great Plains on their way to Argentina, but a few, usually immatures, turn up in Oregon, usually inland. Pacific Golden Plovers are more common along the coast on their way to the South Pacific. The American Golden Plover was discovered on 9/26 and remained until 10/3 (RN, GS, RK, RB). A **Black-bellied Plover** was also present on 9/29 (RN). Scattered **Semipalmated Plovers** were seen from 9/29 through 10/19 at Agate Lake and the Kirtland Ponds (GS, RN).

Pectoral Sandpipers put on a good show between 10/1 and 10/19 at the Kirtland Ponds and Agate Lake (RN, GS, JT, GR) with the largest number (16) at the Kirtland Ponds on 10/14 (RN). **Long-billed Dowitchers** are common enough during migration, but the total of 137 at the Kirtland Ponds on 9/29 was unusual (RN). **Dunlin** are the last shorebird species to pass through the valley, and early individuals were reported at the Kirtland Ponds beginning on 9/29 (RN).

Field Notes continued on next page

Red-necked Phalaropes were at Emigrant Lake and the Kirtland Ponds from 9/22 through 10/14 (HF,RN,GR,LK,PK,GS).

Waterfowl migration is picking up with **Greater White-fronted Geese**, **Cackling Geese**, **American Wigeon**, **Ring-necked Ducks** and **Northern Shovelers** leading the way. Bufflehead and Hooded Mergansers should be coming soon. An early **Bufflehead** and two **Lesser Scaup** were seen at Emigrant Lake on 10/18 (HF). Four **Canvasback** were at Agate Lake on 10/19 (RN). Two **Snow Geese** dropped in at Hammel Pond on 9/24 (MM), and an unusual **blue phase Snow Goose** was at the Kirtland Ponds on 10/14 (RN).

A couple of **Surf Scoters** hung out with the flotilla of coots at Lost Creek Reservoir between 10/1 and 10/12 (RN,RB,NB). Surf Scoters are becoming regular fall visitors.

The first week of October typically brings an end to most of our summer forest birds. The last report for a **Rufous Hummingbird** was on 10/2 (LH), **Yellow Warblers** on 10/3 (HF), **Swainson's Thrushes** on 10/3 (SJ), **Warbling Vireo** on 10/4 (SJ), **Western Tanager** on 10/5 (SJ), **Black-headed Grosbeak** on 10/6, and **Black-throated Gray Warbler** on 10/11 (SJ). A **Townsend's Warbler** was in Ashland on 10/8 (HF).

Other migrants of note were the **Lapland Longspurs** on the mudflats at Lost Creek Reservoir between 10/10 and 10/12 (RN,NB,RB). **Horned Larks** were also present at this time. **Vespers Sparrows** are uncommon on the valley floor, but one was at Emigrant Lake on 10/14 (HF).

Merlin began to show up in the County on 9/29 (MR), and several others have been seen since. A **Rough-legged Hawk** was at the Sportsman Park on 10/18 (NB). A late **Osprey** paused at Emigrant Lake on 10/18 (HF). A family of **Great Gray Owls** entertained observers at milepost 19 on Dead Indian Memorial Road between 9/28 and 9/30 (HF,LK,PK). A **Northern Goshawk** was on Mount McLaughlin on 10/17 (RN). The Mount McLaughlin expedition also produced **Clark's Nutcrackers**, **Evening Grosbeaks** and **Gray-crowned Rosy Finches** (RN).

Varied Thrushes began moving south through the high country on 9/27 (FL,SJ), and **Say's Phoebe**s began to appear on 10/4 (JB). The first **Northern Shrike** was seen in Eagle Point on 10/19 (BH).

Great-tailed Grackles just won't go away this year. Birds were seen both near the Kirtland Ponds and in Ashland this month (RN,DS).

Band-tailed Pigeons have been more numerous than usual. The largest flocks have included more than 100 individuals. These were among the oaks near milepost 10 on the Greensprings Highway.

Thanks to this month's contributors including Dick Ashford, Brian Barr, Norm Barrett, Ralph Browning, John Bullock, , Harry Fuller, Laura Hughes, Bob Hunter, Ron Ketchum, Linda Kreisman, Peter Kreisman, Frank Lospalluto, Marjorie Moore, Russ Namitz, Maggi Rackley, Gwyneth Ragosine, Gary Shaffer, Don Sutherland, Pepper Trail, and Jeff Tufts. Deadline for contributions to the Field Notes in the next edition of The Chat is December 15.

RVAS Local Membership Renewals Are Due

The Rogue Valley Audubon Society (RVAS) has over 800 members. Members are affiliated with RVAS in one of three ways: The vast majority pay dues to the National Audubon Society (NAS) and this automatically makes them members of RVAS, which is the local NAS Chapter. Some people pay dues directly to RVAS and are not NAS members, and some members pay dues to both the NAS and RVAS.

RVAS receives a stipend from the National Audubon Society for each NAS member and that is combined with the dues paid by RVAS local members and various donations, to help support a variety of activities and programs in the Rogue Valley. These include: *The Chat* Newsletter (nine issues per year), seven educational and social membership meetings per year, 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, and support for local research projects.

All RVAS local memberships are for a one year period, and expired September 30th, 2013.

If you pay local dues, please keep your local membership, and your support of RVAS, active by completing the application below, and mailing it with your check before September 30th. If you are not an RVAS local member please consider becoming one. (If you are reading this on our web-page, print the form you will find on the "Join and Support" page.) If you are uncertain of your membership status, or have any questions about membership, please send an email to: Gary Palmer at gpalmer@charter.net. Thanks very much!

The Rogue Valley Audubon Society dues are \$20 per year, per family.

RVAS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION OR RENEWAL

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone (optional): _____ Email: _____

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

Check if you are a: New member _____; Renewing member _____

The Chat, our newsletter, is available on the RVAS webpage or by email. Please check YES if you would like a printed copy mailed through the USPS. YES _____

Dues alone do not fully support our many activities, conservation, educational and research projects. Please consider a contribution in addition to your \$20 membership. Your additional contribution is tax deductible as RVAS is a 501(C)3 organization. Donation: \$ _____.

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

The Conservation Column

by Pepper Trail

In my September column, I discussed the critical water situation in the Klamath Basin, particularly how it is affecting the national wildlife refuges there. This month, I return to our side of the Cascades, to examine a proposal for drastically increasing logging on the Bureau of Land Management's O&C lands in western Oregon.

The history of BLM's O&C forests provides a striking example of the human tendency to treat natural resources as a free lunch. These "Oregon and California Railroad Revested Lands" were originally granted to the railroads in the late 1800s, and then taken back (for non-compliance with the terms of the original grant) and transferred to federal ownership in 1916. Ultimately, an arrangement was made that the eighteen western Oregon counties where O&C lands were located would keep 50% of the revenues from timber sales on the parcels. For decades, clearcutting of old-growth forests on the federal O&C lands provided a bountiful flow of funds into the coffers of the counties. As a result, O&C county residents enjoyed generous services while paying very little in property taxes (an average of 90 cents less per \$1000 of assessed valuation than the statewide average of \$2.81, according to the Oregon governor's office). It was a pretty great free lunch, all right.

Of course, O&C county commissioners and many ordinary citizens don't see the arrangement as a free lunch at all. They firmly believe that we're entitled to an unfailing flow of federal payments to make up for lost property tax revenue on the O&C lands. There are two problems with that argument. First, counties provide services only to private lands, where all the county population lives. If federal lands don't significantly increase costs, why should they be expected to provide significant revenue?

Well, comes the reply, if these were private timberlands, they **would** be paying taxes, so there's a loss that must be made up. Fair enough - but what would that loss amount to? The answer, according to calculations by the Oregon governor's office, is about \$10 million per year for all 18 O&C counties combined. This is based on an analysis of the (very low) property taxes paid by private timber companies in Oregon, the O&C acreage in each county, and a generous estimate of the timber quality ("site class") on the O&C lands.

Timber harvest on O&C lands has declined significantly in recent years, reflecting the unsustainable clearcutting of the past, and the increased understanding of the ecological and economic value of intact forest. The diminished timber revenue has resulted in budget crises in many counties. Despite mass releases of prisoners from county jails and other drastic cutbacks, voters in both Curry and Josephine Counties recently refused to raise their property taxes. Instead, the O&C counties want the federal government to pay. They asked not for \$10 million (the best estimate of potential lost tax revenue), but over \$100 million - and they recently got it, for yet another year, thanks to Senator Ron Wyden and a provision he slipped into legislation related to (of all things) the National Helium Reserve.

The Conservation Column *continued*

In this era of shrinking federal budgets, however, it's unrealistic to expect that America's taxpayers will make up the budget shortfalls of southwest Oregon's O&C counties forever. So, our elected officials have been busy trying to devise other solutions - but only ones based on the kind of "free lunch" thinking that has defined this issue for so long. *Senator Wyden is working on a big O&C bill, but so far has kept details close to his chest. On the House of Representatives side, Oregon Congressmen Peter DeFazio, Greg Walden, and Kurt Schrader have put forward their "O&C Trust, Conservation, and Jobs Act."* This passed in September (with only 18 Democratic votes), and awaits action in the Senate. *This bill contains so many anti-conservation provisions that President Obama announced that he would veto the bill if it came to his desk.*

DeFazio, Walden, and Schrader have done their best to portray their bill as a balanced approach, stating that about 55% of the O&C lands would be managed for "conservation purposes." Analyses of the bill's fine print by conservation groups calls this proportion into question, suggesting that less than 40% of the O&C lands would actually receive meaningful conservation status. But even if we set that controversy aside, what about the statement on Rep. DeFazio's website that "approximately 45% of the 2.8 million acres of O&C land would be managed for sustainable timber production by a public trust under strict guidelines." It's not clear what these "strict guidelines" might be, as under the bill, neither the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) nor the consultation requirements of the Endangered Species Act would apply to these "trust lands." Riparian buffers would be reduced to half the width of those mandated by the Northwest Forest Plan. A "pest management plan" would be developed by a board dominated by representatives of the timber industry and of cash-strapped counties. Widespread use of herbicides, typical of private timberlands in Oregon, would be the predictable result. Strict "fiduciary obligations" are written into the bill regarding the management of these trust lands, virtually requiring an aggressive and unsustainable logging program to generate revenue. Lawsuits by the public against logging plans would be barred; only O&C trust counties and adjacent landowners could sue. No wonder only 18 Congressional Democrats supported the legislation, and the Obama administration threatened a veto!

It is discouraging that our elected officials seem prepared to sacrifice all the environmental benefits that well-managed federal forests provide in order to maintain, for a bit longer, the free-lunch fantasy of the O&C counties. There is no logging our way to balanced county budgets. I'm afraid I see Mother Nature approaching... and she's got a bill in her hand.

The Conservation Committee is seeking more members.

Bird conservation is at the heart of the Audubon cause. The RVAS Conservation Committee meets twice a year to set objectives, discuss issues and plan local conservation work. Co-Chair Pepper Trail focuses primarily on national and regional issues and writes most of the Conservation Columns for *The Chat*. Co-Chair Robert Mumby focuses on local issues. If you are interested in joining the committee, contact Robert Mumby at 541-535-2934 or rdmumby@charter.net. We are interested in adding a RVAS liaison with the Klamath Basin National Wildlife Refuge Complex, so if this is an interest of yours, please let Robert know. Thanks!

RVAS MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

We welcome the following new National Audubon Society members to RVAS, this month: Sally Cole, The Converse, Diana Fairweather, Karen Finnegan, Phyllis Foster, Deborah Gudger, June Holmes, Arthur Howard, Sandra Johnson, Erin McNulty, Sean Moeschl, Roger & Christine Moore, Jean O'Donnell, Gary Pellett, Harumi Super, Michael Van Sciver, Robert Raymond Jr.

New NAS members currently receive the current issue of *The Chat* newsletter in a special mailing, along with other Rogue Valley Audubon Society information, and a postpaid, preaddressed postal card so that their preference for future issues of *The Chat* can be recorded. Any member may receive *The Chat*, by mail, at no cost, or it can always be viewed online at <http://www.roguevalleyaudubon.org/>. New members are encouraged to join us at our Chapter meetings, field trips and bird walks, and to become involved in the organization. Welcome to RVAS!

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

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS 2013

These important events give everyone an opportunity to be a part of the biggest citizen science effort in the New World. From mid-December to early January, tens of thousands of volunteers throughout the Americas take part in an adventure that has become a family tradition among generations. Audubon and other organizations use data collected in this longest-running wildlife census to assess the health of bird populations - and to help guide conservation action.

MEDFORD CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

This year the Medford count will be held on Saturday, December 14. The area of the Medford count is a circle 15 miles in diameter, centered a mile or so west of the junction of Hwy 140 and Hwy 62 in White City. The circle has been carved up in 15 sections with each section entrusted to an experienced leader who makes the decisions as to times and routes. New volunteers are welcome on many teams. If you are interested in participating, contact Bob Hunter at bobhunter@embarqmail.com or call 540-826-5569.

ASHLAND CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

The Ashland Christmas Bird Count will be on Saturday, January 4. Help us start the year off right with over 120 species and maybe even a couple vagrants. Again this year the count is being organized by Harry Fuller and John Bullock. Please contact one of them if you can participate. Bullock: jas@opendoor.com Fuller: atohwee@gmail.com

Compilation dinners are held after each count. Coordinators can tell you when and where.



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**Audubon Holiday Party
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December 7, 2013

Medford Congregational Church

1801 Jackson St., Medford

Dinner at 6 pm

Raffle tickets available at the November Chapter Meeting

Prizes so far:

Gift certificates from Wild Birds Unlimited, Medford and Northwest Nature Shop, Ashland

Gift Certificate from Ashland Food Cooperative

A one night stay for two at Ashland Springs Hotel + \$30.00 to spend at Larks

Wine tasting for eight at South Stage Cellars

Wines from local Wineries

Dinner for six at Standing Stone

Gift certificate from Four and Twenty Blackbirds Bakery

Pizza from Baci's, Medford

Dagoba chocolate

Wood carvings from Mike Guest

Beeswax plaques from Hinode Farms

Paintings by Katrina Meister

Cards by Augusta Lucas-Andreae

Hawk picture from Lynda Stevenson

Two rooms for one night at the Running Y

Two nights at Shelly Tanquary's cottage, Langlois

Birding Trip at Bob and Gretchen Hunter's Farm

Birding Trip along I-5 with Harry Fuller

Updating prizes daily!

Surprises!

Your donations are welcome!

New condition books or CD's

Nature DVD's

Items for a birder basket

Premium coffees, teas, packaged treats

Surprise us!

Can you help at the party? We need:

Prize runners—Winner Recorders—Post-party Cleanup

Call Kate at 541-482-2933 or Sooney at 541-482-5146

For raffle/auction questions

Donation pick-ups

UPCOMING RVAS FIELD TRIPS

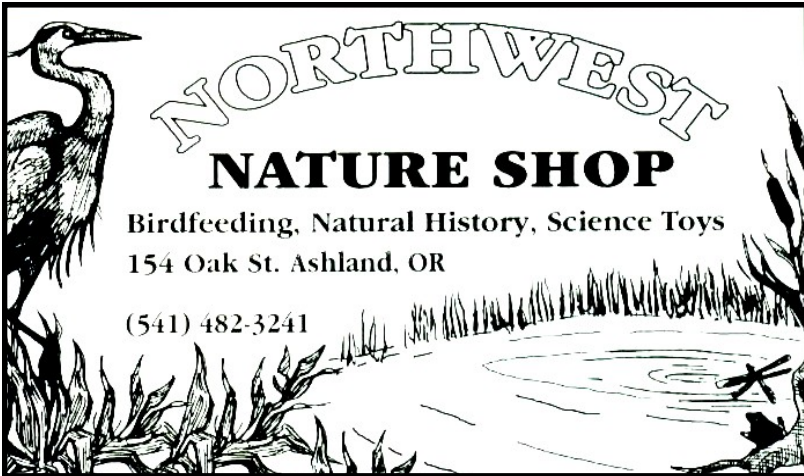
November 2: Mt Ashland area

This "off-season" visit to the Mt Ashland area with Russ Namitz as leader will involve mostly easy walking, with the possibility of more moderate walking if snow. Bring water, lunch and a sense of humor. Dress in layers. Meet at the east end of Ashland Albertson's parking lot at 8 a.m. For further information, contact Russ at namitzr@hotmail.com.

November 16: Valley of the Rogue State Park

Plan to walk the river trail, up to a distance of 2 miles, with field trip leader Dennis Vroman. Meet at the public parking lot located near the back portion of the park (past most of the camping loops).

Dress for the predicted weather and bring what food and drinks you desire. The trip will end around noon, unless those attending wish to stay a bit longer. The trails are basically level. Contact Dennis at 541-479-4619 or e-mail at dpvroman@budget.net if you have any questions.



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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 2014.

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.

