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President's Column

Happy New Year! On Friday afternoon December 6th, as Kate Cleland-Sipfle and Sooney Viani were putting the final touches on the Holiday Potluck and Auction the weather outside was frightful. By Saturday morning the snow was deep and with member safety a concern, a decision was made to reschedule the Annual Holiday Potluck, Raffle, Auction and Program scheduled for that night. Within two days a new date had been set and plans are underway for a "Loving Birds" Potluck Dinner on February 15th. This new activity and the spring Birdathon are the primary RVAS fundraising efforts. The events support our Rogue Valley elementary education programs, conservation efforts, and scholarships. We need your support. Please mark your calendars and join us for a wonderful evening in February.

Several volunteer opportunities will soon be available. I hope to name a Birdathon Chair soon so planning for our May event can begin. After two years of organizing exceptional Chapter programs, Alex Maksymowicz will be stepping down as Program Chair in June. The Birdathon Chair and the Program Chair positions are of critical importance. Please consider stepping into a leadership role with RVAS and contributing to the Audubon cause in the Rogue Valley. Just call or send me a message and I'll be glad to spend time discussing what each position requires and information sources.

In April, four Chapter Directors will be elected to serve terms beginning in July. Directors determine what RVAS will do, what policies RVAS will support, and provide leadership for our many activities. If you are interested, let any current Board Member know and they will be happy to discuss and provide information. If you've considered serving on the Board before and declined due to other commitments, consider it again. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Good Birding! - Bill Hering

Field Notes: The Changing Seasons—A recap of the past few months

Compiled by Stewart Janes

Submitted November 20:

Well, so much for the needed rain. The September storms have been pretty much it so far. One benefit of the good weather has been good birding.

One and nearly two species were added to the Jackson County list this month. The first is a well-documented **Heermann's Gull** found by Linda and Peter Kreisman on 10/28 at Emigrant Lake. There is nothing unusual about Heermann's Gulls in Oregon. It's just that they don't ever leave salt water. Well, almost never. Every summer Heermann's Gulls migrate up the coast from their breeding area in the Sea of Cortez following their meal ticket, the Brown Pelicans. The gulls regularly steal from them following a plunge in the ocean. And how many Brown Pelicans are in Jackson County? Well, none. This was one misplaced bird.

The second new record, as far as I know, was the immature **Broad-winged Hawk** found by Don Sutherland along Dead Indian Memorial Road two miles past the Keno Access Road. Don saw it well. However, without a second observer or a photographic record, it will have to remain on the hypothetical list. Several have been seen in recent years to the east in Klamath County in late September during fall migration, but none on our side of the hill.

Next two **Gray Catbirds** that showed up briefly at a feeder up Kane Creek on 11/7. Catbirds have been seen in the county before but only a couple of times. Equally rare was the **Rusty Blackbird** observed by Roxanna on 11/2 along the Greenway at Lynn Newbry Park. One made itself at home all winter in Ashland, but this one was a one and done.

Only slightly less unusual was the **Great-tailed Grackle** that remained near the Albertson's store in Ashland. It was last seen on 10/24 (DA). **Lapland Longspurs**, another rarely seen bird in the county, were seen again this fall on the mudflats at Lost Creek Reservoir on 10/29 (RN).

A couple of late migrants also make the list of the very unusual. An **Osprey** grabbed a last minute snack near Eagle Point on 10/31 (GH,BH). And the **Western Tanager** in Lithia Park on 11/4 (HF) really missed the bus to Mexico.

A number of waterbirds were noted moving through the county. **Eared Grebes** were at both Hyatt Lake and the Kirtland Ponds up through 11/21 (JT,PT,FL). The largest group contained 20 individuals at Hyatt Lake. A **Horned Grebe** joined the Eared Grebes at Hyatt Lake in 11/7 (FL), and a **Clark's Grebe** was at Howard Prairie on 11/11 (PT). A **Red-necked Grebe** was on Lost Creek on 10/24 (RN,JT), but even more unusual was the one on Ashland Pond from 11/2 through 11/14 (HF). They usually like much larger water.

Pacific Loons were at both Howard Prairie on 11/11 (FL) and Lost Creek Reservoir on 11/1 and 11/15 (NB,GS,JL,RN). Sightings of this species are becoming more common. A **White Pelican** was seen flying over Ashland on 11/16 (KM). An unusual **Glaucous-winged Gull** was at Lost Creek Reservoir on 10/24 (JT,RN), and **Bonaparte's Gulls** seemed to be just about everywhere all month.

Shorebirds wrapped up their fall migration with **Pectoral Sandpipers** at the Kirtland Ponds until 10/28 (RN,JT) and a **Black-bellied Plover** at Agate Lake on 10/28 (JT). A few **Least Sandpipers** have been lingering, and **Dunlin** were noted until 11/17 (JT,RN). Dunlin typically bring up the rear of the shorebird migration.

Continued on Pages 4, 5 & 6

The Chat - January, 2014

Field Notes continued

The first **Tundra Swans** were observed at Agate Lake on 11/2 (RN), and others were at Hyatt Lake on 11/15 (SB,JB). Barrow's Goldeneyes and **Greater Scaup** are back in the Holy Water for the winter along with a **Redhead** (NB,RN). Additional **Barrow's Goldeneyes** along with **Canvasback** were at Hyatt Lake on 11/11 (PT,NB,RN). Three **Snow Geese** were at the Boise-Cascade Pond in Medford on 10/24 (RN) including the blue form which is rare in the west.

Rough-legged Hawks, as many as 4, have been in the meadows about Howard Prairie from 10/30 through 11/11 including the rare dark morph (DA,PT,DS,RN,CS). **Ferruginous Hawks**, a rare winter resident, were seen at both the Kirtland Ponds and at Agate Lake on 11/2 (RN) including the rare dark morph. Dark morph Ferruginous Hawks are very rare as breeding birds in Oregon, but are more common in the eastern Great Basin in Utah. **Prairie Falcons** were seen on Butler Creek Road on 10/31 (HF) and on Heppsie Mountain on 10/23 (BH,GH). On 11/16 Dennis Vroman had the pleasure of watching a **Merlin** have a go at a **Peregrine Falcon**. It must have been quite a show.

Other sightings of note include a **Loggerhead Shrike** on the Hall Tract of Denman Wildlife Refuge on 10/28 (FL) and a **Northern Shrike** at Howard Prairie on 11/11 (PT,FL). **White-throated Sparrows** have been seen at several locations this fall from Sardine Creek (MR), to Medford to Ashland Pond (HF). They are becoming more and more common as a winter resident. Two **Say's Phoebes** were at Agate Lake on 10/27 (RN). **Black-billed Magpies** were seen along Cherry Lane in east Medford on both 11/7 and 11/14 (JT). Let's watch this area for a new family group establishing itself.

Thanks to October/November contributors including Dick Ashford, Norm Barrett, John Bullock, Stephanie Bullock, Harry Fuller, Bob Hunter, Gretchen Hunter, Linda Kreisman, Peter Kreisman, Jim Livaudais, Frank Lospalluto, Alex Maksymowicz, Kate McKenzie, Russ Namitz, Maggi Rackley, Gary Shaffer, Cecile Shohet, Don Sutherland, Pepper Trail, Jeff Tufts, Sooney Viani, and Dennis Vroman.

Submitted December 21:

By the looks of things, we can put the wraps on fall migration 2013. The last of the migrant shorebirds are safely on mudflats and beaches from central California to South America. The last of the reluctant passerines and oddballs have all moved on. For any that had thoughts of lingering, the recent arctic weather took care of that. Only the flock of 40 **Sandhill Cranes** over the Siskiyou Summit on 11/21 (FL) suggested some limited movement.

That's not to say all the birds got it sorted. A late **Spotted Sandpiper** at Lost Creek Reservoir on 11/22 was a bit unusual. So was the **Osprey** over the Rogue River at Denman on 12/4 (JT), but it is becoming the norm that at least one hangs out along the river all year. The **Green Heron** is also a marginal wintering bird. Most leave for warmer areas, but one or two usually tough it out with us. Thus the one at Ashland Pond on 11/26 (HF) was interesting but not unexpected.

Rock Wrens are a migratory species, and a few scattered individuals typically can be found on the Table Rocks most winters. The pattern was confirmed on 12/3 and 12/14 (FL,CBC). On the other hand, **Canyon Wrens** are considered to be non-migratory by many authorities. I question this assessment. It's not every year, but Canyon Wrens appear often enough during the nonbreeding season to challenge this assertion.

A Canyon Wren once again took up residence at Emigrant Lake first seen on 12/2 (GS) and thereafter on 12/9 (DS,RN). I wish they would remain in the valley to breed. Then I wouldn't have to travel so far to hear their song.

Northern Shrikes have again set up shop at their regular winter residences at the airport off Vilas Road, Denman, and at Agate Lake (BH,GH,DS). It's interesting that they return to the same locations year after year. Are they relatively long-lived birds that are repeat visitors or do their special habitat requirements funnel them into these sites? While you ponder that, a less common **Loggerhead Shrike** was seen on 12/14 (BH,GH) in Eagle Point. Oregon lies at the very northern extent of their wintering range. A careful observer can sometimes find them east of the Cascades at this time of year. Less often, one visits the Rogue Valley, thus the interest in this bird.

I guess we should be paying closer attention to the **Rough-legged Hawks** in the future. Most winters we might have a single individual visit briefly but quickly move on. I suspect it's not cold enough for them. This winter we have several in the Eagle Point area including a rare dark phase bird. Well, they are still there, and you wonder if they knew that this winter would be a cold one. The 3 in the meadows at the north end of Howard Prairie were still there as of 12/17 (HF). This is a more usual location for wintering Rough-legs in Jackson County.

Ferruginous Hawks are rare but regular winter visitors to the County. And, true to form, one is in the Agate Lake area and the other is in the White City area (11/23 and 12/1, FL,RN). Again, one wonders whether the choice of location involves the same individuals or habitat preferences. While **White-tailed Kites** are in their usual locations in the north county, sightings are still down south of Medford.

Northern Saw-whet Owls are permanent residents of our forests, and not uncommon. Yet they are incredibly hard to locate. Russ Namitz finally managed to coax one out for the Medford Bird Count on 12/14. This one was in the forest near Agate Lake. **Northern Pygmy Owls** have also been noted by several at scattered locations. I wonder why they are being more vocal this year.

Waterfowl have finally filled in the gaps. **American Wigeon** are now at all their usual ponds, and the **Hooded Mergansers** and **Buffleheads** finally arrived in number.

A few **Tundra Swans** typically winter in the fields about Eagle Point, but the lone individuals that appeared at Agate Lake on 11/22 (JT) and at Emigrant Lake on 12/4 (FL) were unusual. A **Snow Goose** was at the Ashland Middle School on 12/17 (HF). One of these hard to miss birds usually appears each winter. It usually drifts about the valley searching for the best grazing spot. **Redheads** are one of the less common wintering ducks in the valley. Three were at Hyatt Lake on 12/3 (RN). A surprising number of **Goldeneyes** both **Common** and **Barrow's** were on the Holy Water on 11/28 (MM,LM). A **Horned Grebe** was on Agate Lake on 11/14 and an **Eared Grebe** on E. Gregory Road on 11/9 (MM,LM).

Other sightings of note include the **Red-naped Sapsucker** at Lost Creek Reservoir on 12/10 (JL), a rare visitor from the intermountain region, 13 **Dunlin** and 11 **Least Sandpipers** at the Kirtland Ponds on 12/3 (RN), **Townsend's Warblers** on Upper Table Rock 12/14 and on the SOU campus 12/11 and 12/13 (RB,SJ,MP), and a flock of **Evening Grosbeaks** on Mount Ashland on 11/21 (FL). A flock of 19 **Band-tailed Pigeons** along Hammel Road on 11/14 was late (MM,LM).

Field Notes Conclusion

Varied Thrushes are common among the madrones at mid-elevations but few have ventured to the valley floor this winter. The **Robins** have started to exhaust the madrone berry crop in the foothills and, as of early December, are now scouring the meadows and pastures for worms and other edibles. As a final note, the sighting of Gray Catbirds last month proved not to be.

Thanks to this month's contributors including Ralph Browning, Harry Fuller, Bob Hunter, Gretchen Hunter, Jim Livaudais, Frank Lospalluto, Kate McKenzie, Lisa Moore, Marjorie Moore, Russ Namitz, Gary Shaffer, Greg Skoog, Don Sutherland, and Jeff Tufts. Deadline for contributions to the Field Notes in the next edition of The Chat is January 15.

Thank you Rogue Valley Audubon Society from Kelly Campbell

For the last year and a half I have been working towards my Masters degree in Environmental Education, at Southern Oregon University. As our capstone project, myself and 7 other members of my cohort, designed, planned, and taught an environmental education program at the Siskiyou Field Institute (SFI) called "Fall in the Field."

Last winter I learned that I would be responsible for developing a lesson about serpentine soil. Around the same time, I heard about the Serpentine 101 course at SFI and a potential scholarship available through the RVAS. I saw it as a great opportunity to become better informed on the mysteries of serpentine soil and how it affects plant communities.

The course was taught by Susan Harrison and was an excellent overview on how serpentine soil is formed, how it affects soil chemistry and plant endemism. The information was invaluable. I took what I learned and developed a hands-on, interactive, art-based lesson for 150 4th grade students at one of SFI's fen ecosystems. The lesson focused on the unusual chemistry of the serpentine soil and how the Cobra Lily, *Darlingtonia californica*, manage to thrive in these challenging conditions.

The students applied what they learned and created watercolor biological illustrations of the Cobra Lily. The students labeled their illustrations with the plant's adaptations that allow it to survive in serpentine soil. Their creations were stunning.

Thank you Rogue Valley Audubon Society for providing me with the knowledge and tools to share the area's unique biodiversity with our region's children.



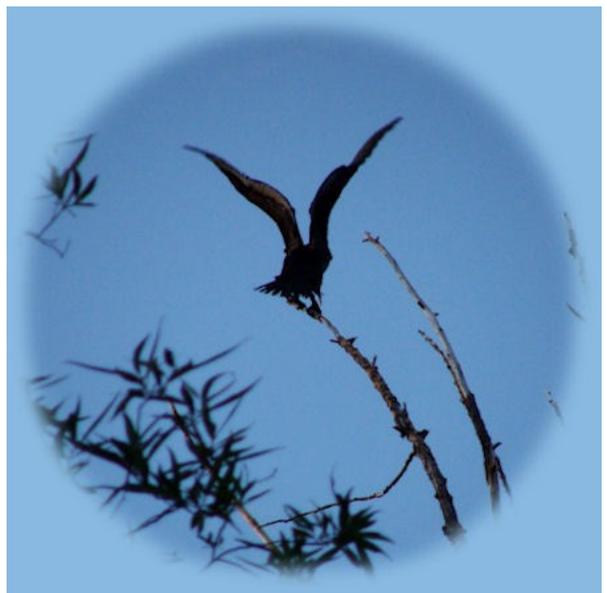
LOCATION CHANGE FOR FIRST WEDNESDAY WALK

Beginning in 2003, a first Wednesday of the month birding excursion has been an important event for many of our members. Birding Buddies, a small, informal group of RVAS Members, started these mid-week walks, open to the public, on the first Wednesday of each month on July 7, 2003 at the then proposed Jefferson Nature Center site. In addition to providing a mid-week opportunity for RVAS members to bird together, data regarding number of species and number of birds for each species are gathered to establish records for historical review. After three years the location was switched to the Central Point section of the Bear Creek Greenway. The site was switched again in 2009, to the Little Butte Creek Section of the Denman Preserve in White City. In 2011 Murray Orr was asked to continue leadership of the first Wednesday walks.

These walks will continue, but the location has changed once more. Beginning with the walk on February 5th, birders should meet at the parking lot on the far side of the lake across from the boat dock to observe birds on and near Agate Lake. The walk begins at 8:30 and will end before noon. Meet Murray at the gate. We hope you can join us. Murray can be reached at 541-857-9050, mworr2@charter.net.

ANNUAL DIPPER WALK -- SATURDAY, JANUARY 4, 2014

Join Bob Quaccia for the 15th annual Ashland Dipper Walk which this winter will be part of the Ashland Christmas Bird Count. Meet at the Plaza at 9 a.m. for a slow-paced walk along Ashland Creek in Lithia Park to count American Dippers. Since Bob began leading this walk, an average of five dippers have been seen along the approximate one and one-half mile route. Bob will be continuing his general bird survey for the Ashland CBC after the morning event, and Dipper Walk participants are invited to join him for any part of the day.



RVAS FUNDRAISER RE-SCHEDULED FOR FEB. 15, 2014 as "LOVING BIRDS"

Our snowed-out raffle and auction fundraiser has been rescheduled for February 15, 2014 same time, (6 pm) same place (1801 E. Jackson St., Medford at the Medford Congregational Church), same emcee (Pepper Trail) and new program (George and Sally Peterson will share photos and tips for finding and photographing birds). This event will be a potluck, so bring a dish to share and your own dishes and utensils.

We have the these wonderful prizes to tantalize you so you'll buy raffle tickets at the January meeting and the potluck, and plan your bidding around what you want most, and all in the interest of helping bird conservation through education in the Rogue Valley. There's plenty of time to find friends to share a trip or an outing if you're interested in one of the experiences to be auctioned.

Raffle Items

- Two admissions to **Science Works Hands-on Museum**, Ashland. (two winners of two)
- \$20 gift certificate from **Bloomsbury Books**, an independent bookstore in
- \$25 Gift Certificate from the **Ashland Food Co-op**; use within one year
- Two movie passes for **Coming Attractions Theatres** in the Rogue Valley (three sets of two)
Bird photo calendar from Emmalisa Whalley
- \$25 Gift Certificate for **Grange Coop** use during the year at any of their stores in Ashland,
- Augusta Lucas **Andrae's Art Greeting Cards** - five sets of four each
- Two beeswax candles from **Hinode Farms**
- From **Four & Twenty Blackbirds Bakery** in Ashland, a gift certificate for pie or cake (\$18)
- Ceramic figurines donated by Sharon Heisel - winners pick from: Lenox Baltimore oriole,
Lenox blue jay, Lefton white birds, Angeline Originals chipmunk
- A selection of **Dagoba Chocolate** made in Ashland
- Two \$10 gift certificates for **McGrath's Fish House**, Medford
- \$20 Gift certificate for **Little Shop of Bagels** in Ashland
- Large pizza Gift certificate from **Baci's Pizza and Pasta** restaurant in Medford
- \$50 gift certificate from **The Northwest Nature Shop** in Ashland
- \$50 gift certificate for **Alex's** restaurant on the Plaza, Ashland
- Multi-course Sunday brew and food tasting for two from **Standing Stone** in Ashland (\$50)
- \$75 gift certificate for **Cucina Biazzi**, Ashland
- \$100 gift certificate for find dining at **Amuse**, Ashland
- \$50 Gift Certificate for **Wild Birds Unlimited**, Medford

The Raffle Alternative Table will be stocked with items to choose if what you won does not work for you. These include: very gently used books about birds, Identi-flyer birdsong set, Ornamental blue birdhouse, Woodpecker painting, Bird ornaments for a holiday tree.

Auction Items

- Original owl wood carving created and donated by Mike Guest
- Two seabird prints by Katrina Meister of Katrina's Cards, Talent

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- Raven mask by Ben Della, Makah artist, dated 1988 donated by Kaethe Fulton
- "Loon in the Rain" print by Diana Tillion, Paris, 1975, donated by Kaethe Fulton
- Northern gannet carved in wood, painted, and donated by Mike Guest
- Framed print of a Cooper's hawk by Steele Roberts-Ross donated by Lynda Stevenson
- Mistle thrush print by M. Stage also donated by Lynda Stevenson
- Silver bird nest earrings with turquoise "eggs" made and donated by Lynn Kellogg
- A blue bead necklace you may have seen before, donated by Allen Dresher
- A basket for birders who read on snowy days, includes new books: *Bird Sense: What it's like to be a bird* by Tim Birkhead, *More than Birds: Adventurous lives of North American naturalists* by Val Shushkewich, four matching mugs, coffee, tea and treats, donated by Kate Cleland-Sipfle and Sooney Viani
- The Bird Songs Bible which you could find through Amazon for as much as \$200
This one is new and in original packaging, donated by Lynda Stevenson
- A very nice selection of brews, a six-pack of each, from Caldera Brewing Company
- Two wines from Grizzly Peak Winery: 2010 Intrigue (white) Le Mystere (red)
- One night in a Jacuzzi room at the Green Springs Inn, donated by Diarmuid McGuire
- Wine tasting with snacks for a party of eight at South Stage Cellars, Jacksonville
- A morning bird walk with coffee, tea, and snacks led by Bob Hunter at Osterhout Farm, donated by Bob and Gretchen Hunter (new item this year!!) For up to four persons
- Gift certificate for one night's lodging for two in a private room donated by the Siskiyou Field Institute for their field station in Selma
- May or early June morning bird walk in North Mountain Park, Ashland, led and donated by Vince Zauskey, who will bird by sight and sound
- A package of items donated by Wildlife Images Rehabilitation and Education Center in Merlin includes: admissions for two, Wild Weekend Saturday Youth Camp classes for two children aged 7-12, a wild animal release at a time to be arranged
- The Ashland Springs Hotel donation includes a one night stay in a double room plus a gift certificate worth \$50 at Larks restaurant
- One night's lodging for four persons in two double rooms donated by the Running Y in Klamath Falls, a birdy place
- A day of late winter or early spring birding for up to four persons in the Klamath River area of Northern California plus lunch will be guided and donated by Frank Lospalluto
- A two-night stay in Langlois, on the Oregon coast, at Eva's Garden House, a three-bedroom two-bath facility for up to six persons is being donated by Shelley Tanquary
- Harry Fuller is again donating guided birding along I-5, Freeway Birding, which he is known for as author of the book by the same title. Negotiate a trip north to the Portland area or south toward Sacramento with Harry if you win this trip, for which you will make your own accommodations and be responsible for your own meals.

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Thank You to Our Donors for the February 15 (rescheduled) Fundraiser Be sure to thank them in person!

Science Works Hands-on Museum, Ashland
Bloomsbury Books, an independent bookstore in Ashland
Wild Birds Unlimited, Medford
Coming Attractions Theatres
Craterian Theater
Ashland Food Coop
Augusta Lucas Andreae
Emmalisa Whalley
Hinode Farms
Sharon Heisel
Dagoba Organic Chocolate
Little Shop of Bagels, Ashland
McGrath's Fish House, Medford
Alex's Restaurant on the Plaza, Ashland
Four & Twenty Blackbirds Bakery, Ashland
Baci's Pizza and Pasta Restaurant, Medford
The Northwest Nature Shop, Ashland
Standing Stone, Ashland
Cucina Biazzi, Ashland
Amuse, Ashland
Evelyn Wadsworth
Maureen Swift
Lynda Stevenson
Mike Guest
Kaethe Fulton
Lynn Kellogg
Sooney Viani
Allen Drescher
Kate Cleland-Sipfle
Grizzly Peak Winery
Caldera Brewing Company
South Stage Cellars, Jacksonville
Bob and Gretchen Hunter of Osterhout Farm
Wildlife Images Rehabilitation and Education Center, Merlin
The Ashland Springs Hotel and Larks restaurant
Diarmuid McGuire, Green Springs Inn
Running Y, Klamath Falls
Siskiyou Field Institute
Vince Zauskey,
Frank Lospalluto
Shelley Tanquary
Harry Fuller

RVAS MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

We welcome the following new National Audubon Society members to RVAS, this month: Bobbie Pulver, Wendy Resnick, David Williamson, Annabelle Apodaca, G. Doran, Blanche Douma, Patricia R. Gray, W. J. Mortensen, Robby Donaghey, John Hamilton, Chris Volpe, Mary Cretney, Steve Dieffenbacher, Ken Doss, Marla Samuel, Marvin & Laurie Teply, Laura Young.

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!

If you would like to join, 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

MEDFORD CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT RESULTS

Persistent and occasionally dense fog and temperatures in the high 20s and low 30s tested the resolve of 14 groups of birders who participated in the Dec. 14, 64th annual Medford Christmas Bird Count. Despite the sometimes discouraging conditions, an official total of 119 species were recorded. That number compares favorably with recent tallies of 129 in 2012, 121 in 2011, and 133 in 2010.

Most notable bird reported at the countdown dinner at Baci's Pizza and Pasta in Medford Saturday evening was the Northern Saw-whet Owl found by Russ Namitz and his group while they were in the hills east of Agate Lake. CBC coordinator Bob Hunter believes that may be the first of the species ever reported on the count. The same area yielded Pileated Woodpeckers which were seen in only two other areas. The Saw-whet was one of five owl species—Barn, Western Screech, Great Horned and Northern Pygmy were the others—seen and/or heard by the day's observers.

Another bird considered generally rare on the Medford CBC is the Loggerhead Shrike that Bob Hunter and his group found in the Hall Tract of Denman Wildlife Management Area. This is probably the same individual seen earlier this month, and perhaps even the same bird reported from this location the past few years.

In the category of outright certainties, there is death, taxes, and humongous numbers of American Robins reported by Pepper Trail and Chris Uhtoff. The total this year was 43,800, most of which were observed late in the day as the birds flew in to their roosting site near the area formerly known as Kelly Slough. As local CBCers well know, Pepper and Chris take the phrase "dawn-to-dusk" very seriously.

Given the spate of recent freezing temperatures in the valley, it was no surprise that there was little open water in which to find ducks and geese and their cohorts. The one notable exception was the Rogue River, and it was there that Norm Barrett and Co. found 13 species of waterfowl including several that would normally be using some of the many local ponds. How often would you expect to see Pied-billed Grebes on the Rogue River? Despite the waterfowl bounty, the total number of species and individuals seen by Norm's group was well below their normal numbers. That's clearly a result of the poor visibility that prevailed throughout most of the day.

Two Eurasian Wigeons were the top birds spotted by the group led by Ron Ketchum. They patrolled the large area that included Eagle Point and its surroundings.

In addition to the Saw-whet Owl, the Russ Namitz-led group encountered an amazing flock of 150 Wood Ducks.

Harry Fuller's group, birding east Medford, spotted two Golden Eagles from the upper reaches of Hillcrest Drive. Their day list also included three Barn Owls, one Chestnut-backed Chickadee, and one Northern Shrike.

The group led by Gwyneth Ragosine birded south Medford and was able to find enough open water on two local golf courses to spot more than 200 American Wigeon along with smaller numbers of six other waterfowl species. Evelyn Wadsworth, who did a feeder count in this area, had a remarkable dozen Yellow-rumped Warblers that visited her suet feeder at The Manor.

Area H, surveyed by Lynn Kellogg and her group, produced a Rough-legged Hawk for the second straight year. It was one of two reported for the day, the other being seen near Agate Lake by Russ Namitz's crew.

The Chat—January, 2014

Ralph Browning had command of Upper Table Rock as usual, and his list included several notable birds including the only Townsend's Warbler of the day, five Tri-colored Blackbirds, a Rock Wren, and a Pileated Woodpecker.

Bob Quaccia is the man on Lower Table Rock, and his group once again was able to find Rock Wrens during their count. Bob's LTR Rock Wrens are almost as reliable as Pepper's Robin Horde.

Vince Zauskey and his crew, working the area that included Kirtland Road and the Newland-Downing section were able to spot nine different raptor species, and also had a remarkable total of eight Brown Creepers as well as one American Pipit. Although Pipits are occasionally seen in decent numbers on the Medford CBC, they were hard to find this year.

In addition to their Robins, Pepper and Chris reported 9,450 European Starlings. As with the Robins, most were seen flying in to roost. The evening sightings were described not as flocks but as "a continual blizzard of birds." Hope they were able to duck the snowflakes.

Among the species NOT seen on count day were Snow Goose, Northern Pintail, Mountain Quail, Green Heron, Spotted Sandpiper, ANY SPECIES OF GULL, Hutton's Vireo, Mountain Chickadee, American Dipper, and Pine Siskin. The lack of gull sightings may actually be a good omen. None were seen during last year's CBC, but the sightings of succeeding months included two Glaucous-winged Gulls (Kirtland and Lost Creek Lake), large numbers of Bonaparte's Gull at Kirtland for more than a month, and the rare Sabine's Gull that hung out at Kirtland long-enough to be seen and photographed by many.

Species seen by only one counting group included Greater White-fronted Goose (Lynn Kellogg), Barrow's Goldeneye (Vince Zauskey), Eared Grebe (Vince Zauskey), Black-crowned Night Heron (Bob Hunter), White-tailed Kite (Vince Zauskey), Virginia Rail (Norm Barrett), Greater Yellowlegs (Norm Barrett), Least Sandpiper (Norm Barrett), Western Screech-owl (Russ Namitz), Northern Pygmy-owl (Russ Namitz), Northern Saw-whet Owl (Russ Namitz), Say's Phoebe (Bob Hunter), Loggerhead Shrike (Bob Hunter), Chestnut-backed Chickadee (Harry Fuller), Red-breasted Nuthatch (Stewart Janes), Townsend's Warbler (Ralph Browning), and White-throated Sparrow (Stewart Janes).

Mingus Pond, surprisingly free of ice, produced the only Canvasbacks (22 of them—they do love that place) and the only Sora. Russ Namitz was the observer.

Christmas Count Coordinator Bob Hunter reported that 58 birders participated in this year's event, and they contributed a total of 120 hours of counting.

Top species total for the day was the 75 recorded by Norm Barrett and Co. in Section A (Rogue River and environs). Stewart Janes's crew had 73 species in Section G (Central Point and portions of Jacksonville). Russ Namitz and his group, in Section C (Agate Lake area) found 72 species.

Highest total of individuals was the 54,208 counted by Pepper Trail and Chriss Uhtoff (thank you Robins and Starlings). Russ Namitz and his group had 7,080 birds, and Harry Fuller and crew recorded 5,948. More Robins and Starlings.

The Conservation Column

by Pepper Trail

On December 2, the Conservation Committee met and discussed a wide range of topics of concern to Rogue Valley Audubon members. Much of the discussion dealt with major issues that have been covered in recent conservation columns: the O & C lands forestry proposals and the Klamath Basin refuges water crisis. These ongoing issues will be the subject of future columns (unfortunately!), but for this month, I would like to focus on an issue of conservation concern in our own back yard:

Roxy Ann Peak/Prescott Park

Roxy Ann Peak is a well-known landmark rising to over 3500 ft. on the eastern edge of Medford, and offering spectacular views of the valley. Much of the peak is within Medford's 1,740-acre Prescott Park. The park is relatively undeveloped, and is a favorite hiking spot, offering spectacular wildflowers in early spring and interesting birds year-round. As summarized in *Guide to Birds of the Rogue Valley*, by Barbara Massey and Dennis Vroman, the area offers both oak-chaparral specialties (e.g. Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and California Towhee) and high-elevation birds that are otherwise absent from the valley (e.g. Mountain Quail and Mountain Chickadee). Jeff Tufts has recorded almost 100 species in the area.

Back in August, the Rogue Valley Mountain Biking Association unveiled a plan to develop a system of over 30 miles of mountain biking trails in Prescott Park (see the Mail Tribune story at: <http://www.mailtribune.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20130821/NEWS/308210311&cid=sitesearch>). The Medford Parks and Recreation Commission has now approved the plan, which must still be reviewed and approved by the Medford City Council.

Jeff Tufts summarized the issue for the committee, and identified a number of significant environmental concerns. These include: habitat loss through construction of trails and a proposed 30-car parking lot; ongoing wildlife disturbance if the trails receive heavy use; and the potential for erosion from the trails and from possible off-trail biking (a chronic problem in many mountain-biking areas). The soil on the butte is mostly clay-based (unlike the decomposed granite of the Ashland watershed mountain-biking area), and seems unsuitable for bike trails, especially in the rainy half of the year. For all these reasons, the Conservation Committee has serious reservations about the mountain biking plan. We agreed that Jeff would continue to monitor the plan, and provide input to the Medford City Council at the appropriate time. **If any RVAS members would like to assist in this effort (especially Medford residents, and most especially anyone who lives near the park), please contact Jeff (email: TALLAHTO@aol.com).**

Everyone agreed that the meeting was very useful, and we will schedule another one in the spring; or sooner if developments warrant. In the meantime, remember that any RVAS members are always welcome to contact me (email: ptrail@ashlandnet.net) or co-chair Robert Mumby (email: rdmumby@charter.net) with conservation questions or concerns.

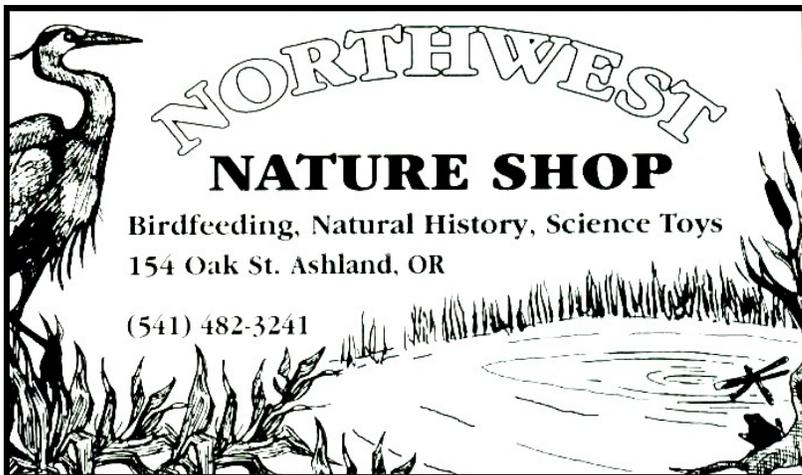
Conservation Column continued

And if there's anyone reading this who would be willing to write letters to the editor from time to time on conservation topics, please let me know, and we can work on talking points on issues of concern to you.

Happy Holidays, everyone! Here's to a New Year filled with conservation successes!

FIELD TRIP LEADERS NEEDED

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



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Harry Fuller will be leading a RVAS field trip to the Klamath Basin on Saturday, February 1. Check the website for additional details.



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.