

# The Chat

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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 Dec./Jan. 2014/2015 issue is Nov.  
20.



## NOVEMBER PROGRAM MEETING, TUESDAY, NOV. 25 at 7 PM.

**"FINS, FEATHERS AND FUR OF  
THE NORTH PACIFIC" presented  
by Bob Quaccia**

After a career of commercial fishing in Alaska, long time RVAS member Bob Quaccia is now employed as a summer staff member on an Expedition Cruise ship specializing in the North Pacific region. In addition, he captains a small boat in Hawaii in the winter, taking people to view Humpback Whales and Spinner Dolphins.

The program will be a compilation of wildlife photos taken on 6 voyages from Seward, Alaska to the Bering Sea, out the Aleutian chain to Russia and down to Japan. Whales, Sea Lions, Seals and coastal Brown Bears will be featured along with many of the unique sea birds nesting along the coastline. Featured bird species include Albatross, Auklets, Murres, Puffins and Steller Sea Eagles. Discussion of natural history, abundance and sustainability issues will be included.



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

This month, I'd like to tell you about the goals your Board of Directors have set for this year at our yearly workshop in June and give you a brief update on progress.

Produce 4<sup>th</sup> Edition of " Birds of Jackson County". Stewart Janes and his committee finished this in August. We've already sold enough to cover the cost of printing!

Revise bylaws to clarify Board terms (start and end dates ) and required number of members.

Mike Guest did the revising, the Board approved it and it was published for the membership.

Schedule two field trips each month, with the exception of July, August, and September. Russ Namitz has contacted trip leaders and has organized many trips. With the "First Wednesday" trips at Agate Lake we will be close to this goal.

Continue to build awareness of our third grade presentations throughout Jackson County and recruitment of volunteer help with birding field trips. Several projects are underway, including creating partnerships with Coyote Trails Nature Center and Stewart Janes' students at SOU.

Increase awareness of climate change. National Audubon helped a lot with the "Birds and Climate Change" report! Pepper Trail explained some of the report at the September Chapter meeting and wrote an article published in the Medford Mail Tribune. We have more plans, too, but welcome suggestions from all of you on how to do this most successfully.

Establish Denman Wildlife Area as a priority.

Trees planted last year at Whetstone Pond were watered all summer. The Board is working on at least one more possible project, but again more suggestions are welcome.

Identify a specific project that will be supported by each fundraiser. What projects would you like to see designated for support at the Holiday Party and Birdathon?

Linda

## Field Notes: The Changing Seasons

### Edited by Jeff Tufts

Early fall is moving time in the Jackson County bird world, as most of the remaining insectivorous passerines depart for warmer regions, montane birds disperse to lower elevations, and our cool weather visitors begin to arrive in numbers. And then there is the occasional rarity spotted while migrating through our area.

Most notable sighting of late September was the **Broad-winged Hawk** seen soaring over an open hillside north of I-5 near the Valley View interchange on September 27 (SJ). This is only the second report of this species in Jackson County, the first being a bird seen over the Dead Indian plateau last November. Neither bird can be officially accepted as a Jackson County record, as the checklist committee requires either a specimen, a photograph, or a corroborating report by a second observer.

Two **Ferruginous Hawks** made an appearance in early October. The first was seen over the Ashland Pond area October 3 (HF), and the second, a light phase adult, was reported on October 8 from the Kirtland ponds region (eB). We're still waiting for the first Rough-legged Hawk of the season.

Although **White-tailed Kites** have bred in Jackson County, most of the sightings of this graceful bird are during the fall and winter months. First report of the season came from an unusual location—the vicinity of the gravel pile several miles up Dead Indian Memorial Highway—on September 29 (DA) and two were seen October 11 (JB) in the more familiar area of Butler Creek Road.

**Osprey** are moving south during this period, but there are always a few lingering birds. One was seen at Emigrant Lake October 4 (HF) and another at Lost Creek Lake October 10 (JT).

The last large gathering of **Turkey Vultures** reported over the valley was on October 2 when 250-300 birds were seen kettleing over downtown Medford (JT).

As the Osprey and TV sightings decline, there are increasing reports of **Merlins**, **Prairie Falcons** and **Golden Eagles**.

**Merlins** were spotted at Lost Creek Lake September 27 (BH,GH), along Dead Indian MH September 29 (DA), near Brophy Road October 7 (MM,LM), near Pilot Rock October 8 (FL), Ashland Pond October 13 (HF), Newbry Park October 14 (eB), Ousterhout Farm October 15 (BH), North Mountain Park October 15 (HF) and Emigrant Lake October 17 (FL).

Also notable among raptor sightings was the juvenile **Northern Goshawk** spotted at Grouse Gap west of Mt. Ashland October 9 (FL).

Last month's report noted that **Greater White-fronted Goose** flocks had yet to show up through the third week of September. That all changed beginning September 25 when three groups were seen flying over Agate Lake. For the next two or three weeks, hundreds of the conspicuous waterfowl were seen and/or heard moving south, and many stopped over at least briefly at such expected locations as Lost Creek Lake, Hammel Road, Kirtland ponds, Agate Lake, and Emigrant Lake.

Other significant migrant reports were 200 **Vaux's Swifts** passing over Grouse Gap September 21 (FL), 150 of the same species over Tyler Creek Road (FE), one **White-throated Swift** over Agate Lake September 25 (RN), and 1,000 swallows (mostly **Violet-green**) at Agate Lake October 1 (JT).

Montane species that have been noticed in the valley at lower elevations include **Varied Thrush** (many reports), **Evening Grosbeak** (one in Ashland near Main Street September 27) (FE), and **Steller's Jays**.

*Continued on Page 4*

*Field Notes is continued from Page 3*

Ousterhout Farm in Eagle Point had its first ever **Steller's Jay** September 22 (BH), three more were seen there September 28 (BH,GH), a dozen showed up at a Central Point residence September 28 (HS), eight were at Denman Wildlife area October 8 (eB), a dozen were seen at Newbry Park in Talent October 10 (HF), and four to six birds were seen on each of four visits to Roxy Ann from September 26 to October 16 (JT). All of the Roxy Ann birds were on the west facing slopes which are predominantly oak woodland. They are normally seen only in the conifers at the northeast corner of Roxy Ann.

No surprise that **Steller's Jays** were seen at Rye Springs October 10, but it is interesting that they were one of four Corvidae species spotted there that day (NB). The others were **Clark's Nutcracker**, **Gray Jay** and **Common Raven**.

And speaking of montane birds, **Williamson's Sapsuckers** are most frequently seen in the Cascades but there were three recent sightings in the Siskiyou. A male was spotted near the Pacific Crest Trail in the Pilot Rock area September 21 (PT), another male was on McDonald Ridge the same day (FL), and a female was reported from the Wagner Butte Trail October 9 (eB).

It's a good year for **Lewis's Woodpeckers** so far. Most notable report was from Agate Lake where twenty were seen October 5 (CD,OS).

Reports of late passerine migrants include a very late female **Black-headed Grosbeak** at a Jacksonville residence September 22 (RK), a **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** at Ashland Pond September 25 (eB), **Western Wood-Pewee**, **Warbling Vireo** and **Black-throated Gray Warblers** at Ashland Pond September 28 (HF), **Yellow Warbler** at Agate Lake (JT), **Western Wood-Pewee** at Emigrant Lake October 2 (eB),

a very late female-type **Bullock's Oriole** at a southwest Medford residence October 5 (CS), **Nashville Warbler** at Rye Springs October 5 (CD,OS), **Western Tanager** at Ashland Pond October 12 (HF) and another **Western Tanager** October 14 at Newbry Park (eB).

With water levels very low at local reservoirs, smaller than usual shorebird numbers have been reported. The first **Dunlin** of the season were found at the Kirtland ponds October 15 (RN). On subsequent days, a few of the traditionally late arriving sandpipers were also seen at Agate Lake. Kirtland and Agate continue to attract a few **Least** and **Western Sandpipers**, **Greater Yellowlegs**, **Long-billed Dowitchers** and **Pectoral Sandpipers**.

One very interesting report from the summer came to light in early October. Noted local botanist Frank Callahan saw (and photographed) a **California Thrasher** south of Pilot Rock. This is only the fourth documented record of this species in Oregon (HF).

Recent editions of this column have been restricted to sightings from Jackson County, but beginning next month there will be a section devoted to notable birds from neighboring Josephine County. Future columns will also include occasional reports from Klamath County in Oregon and Siskiyou, Del Norte and Humboldt counties in California.

Thanks to this month's contributors: Dick Ashford, Norm Barrett, John Bullock, Carol Doty, Forrest English, Harry Fuller, Bob Hunter, Gretchen Hunter, Stewart Janes, Ron Ketchum, Frank Lospalluto, Lisa Moore, Marjorie Moore, Russ Namitz, Howard Sands, Corinne Stubson, Otis Swisher, and Pepper Trail. Sightings attributed to (eB) were obtained from eBird reports.

Deadline for submitting contributions to the Field Notes for the next edition of The Chat is November 15.

## Rogue Valley Audubon Society Membership

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

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

*The Chat* newsletter

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

Birding forum for posting sightings and active locations

Monthly field trips and bird walks

Educational programs for students and adults

Monitoring of regional conservation issues

Work with local wildlife managers to improve access and bird habitats

Bird counts for national species censuses

Support for local research projects

A one year family membership is \$20, and all memberships expire on September 30<sup>th</sup> each year. To become an RVAS member, please complete the form below and send with your check for \$20.

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### RVAS Membership Form

Please fill-in your information:

**Name(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Street:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City, State, Zip:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

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

- ☐ *Include my email on the RVAS list for notification of activities and posting of The Chat newsletter.*
- ☐ *Do not send a paper copy of The Chat newsletter.*
- ☐ *Send a monthly paper copy of The Chat newsletter.*

### Donation

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

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

**Rogue Valley Audubon Society**  
**PO Box 8597**  
**Medford OR 97501**

## The Conservation Column

By Pepper Trail

This month, I feature two items from allied conservation organizations. The first is an alert from the Oregon Conservation Network (OCN):

### **ODFW Budget in Crisis: An Opportunity to Strengthen Wildlife Conservation in Oregon**

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) is faced with an unprecedented budget shortfall that compromises its existing and future conservation programs. With legislative action in 2015, ODFW can be made functional, whole, stable, and accountable to the public for fulfilling its broad conservation mission to "...protect and enhance Oregon's fish and wildlife and their habitats for use and enjoyment by present and future generations."

#### **The Problem**

ODFW's current budget depends largely on hunting and fishing license sales and related fees. This dependence has created an internal agency dynamic that prioritizes game species and consumptive users of wildlife at the expense of the ODFW's broader conservation mission and constituency. Due to Oregon's changing demographics, this revenue stream has declined significantly. Combined with other economic factors, ODFW is now faced with an unprecedented \$32 million budget shortfall.

In response, the agency has proposed a 2015-2017 budget with deep spending cuts to conservation programs, increased hunting and fishing license fees, and \$17 million in general fund dollars. As currently proposed, ODFW's request for public dollars is not tied to any reform or conservation initiative that benefits the public at large.

#### **The Framework for a Pro-Conservation Solution**

Any pro-conservation solution to address ODFW's budget crisis should include the following elements:

- General fund dollars should be tied to agency reform that helps ODFW implement and expand its conservation mission.
- Avoid cuts to critical conservation programs and staff positions, including law enforcement, the water program, and key scientific capacities, particularly at the district biologist level.
- General fund dollars should be spent only on conservation programs that benefit the public at large (programs that can't access dollars from hunting and fishing license revenues).
- Fund and implement the Oregon Conservation Strategy, including protection and conservation of non-game species and their habitats.

Conservation Column continued

And from the Geos Institute:

- General fund dollars should not be used for predator control programs. These wildlife-killing programs are controversial, often counter-productive, and are generally designed to benefit narrow interest groups rather than Oregon's larger public interest.
- Support increases in hunting and fishing license fees to help balance the general fund request.

For more information...

Contact Quinn Read, [qr@oregonwild.org](mailto:qr@oregonwild.org), 503-283-6343 or Christy Splitt, [christy@olcv.org](mailto:christy@olcv.org), 503-224-4011

And from the Geos Institute:

### Oregon's Ancient Forests Are Pivotal In Efforts To Slow Climate Change

This summer, a group of scientists, including Dr. Dominick DellaSala of Ashland's Geos Institute, called on the Obama Administration to do more to protect the nation's mature "high-biomass" forests because of their unique climate change benefits. While the President has taken bold steps to reduce carbon dioxide pollution from coal and other fossil fuels, he has sidestepped efforts to protect productive older forests that store massive amounts of carbon and are key to helping stabilize runaway climate change.

Research led by Dr. Olga Krankina of OSU has shown that mature and old growth forests are a critical part of the global biological carbon cycle. These forests contribute to climate stabilization by the uptake and storage of atmospheric carbon in live and dead trees, foliage and soils. The oldest and most productive forests are where the trees are providing a long-term "sink" for atmospheric carbon, absorbing and holding on to it like a sponge for centuries. Those forests are the primary target for logging. When they're cut down, up to half of their stored carbon is released into the atmosphere as a carbon dioxide pollutant within just a few years. This loss is not made up for by planting trees or storing carbon in wood products as forest products have a short "shelf life" compared to mature forest that sequesters (absorbs) and stores carbon for centuries.

These and related findings show that older forests in Oregon store more carbon per acre than nearly any forest on Earth, while providing life-giving ecosystem benefits that will be in short supply in a changing climate such as clean water. Older forest benefits will become increasingly important as a refuge for climate-forced wildlife migrations in search of suitable climate. However, these same forests are now on the chopping block as both Senator Ron Wyden and Representative Peter DeFazio have introduced legislation to drastically increase logging levels on BLM lands in western Oregon. Such logging would result in carbon dioxide pollution that rivals Oregon's dirtiest coal-fired power plant. Similarly, in Alaska, old-growth rainforests are still being logged on the Tongass and these forests are among the most stable carbon stores on the planet.

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The study's analyses demonstrate that "high-biomass forests occur on less than 3% of the nation's forest base but the Pacific Northwest holds over half these forests. . . 68% of BLM forests in the Pacific Northwest are high-biomass; only National Parks have higher proportion of high-biomass forest in their forest area."

Using multiple sources of remote-sensing data on forest carbon, the researchers found that over an 8-year period (2000-2008) for which data were readily available, losses to these forests were greatest on private lands where logging was the primary cause. In comparison, loss of high-biomass forests to fire on public lands was ~30% lower than logging-related losses.

The study concluded that only 9% of these older productive forests in Oregon are adequately protected, meaning that the vast majority are vulnerable to logging. Planned revisions to the Northwest Forest Plan would greatly undermine the existing limited protection of older forests. New federal climate change initiatives also fail to recognize the value of forests as stores of carbon and the need to protect them from logging to prevent the release of stored carbon into the atmosphere as CO<sub>2</sub>.

Dr. Dominick A. DellaSala, Chief Scientist of Geos Institute and co-author, stated "From the massive Coast Redwoods of California to the towering spruce trees of the Tongass rainforest in Alaska, older forests help stabilize the climate, clean our air, give us drinking water, and support the region's outdoor economies. Protecting them would be a flagship accomplishment of the President's efforts to stem run-away climate change."

For More Information:

Contacts: Dr. Dominick DellaSala, Geos Institute (541-482-4459 x 302)

Dr. Olga Krankina, Oregon State University (541-737-1780)

## **ASHLAND AND MEDFORD CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS**

The Medford Christmas Bird Count will be held this year on Saturday, December 20. To register your intent to participate, contact coordinator Bob Hunter: phone 541-826-559 or email at [bobhunter@embarqmail.com](mailto:bobhunter@embarqmail.com).

The Ashland Christmas Bird Count will be held on Saturday, January 3, 2015. Contact coordinators John Bullock (email [jabtrout@gmail.com](mailto:jabtrout@gmail.com)) or Harry Fuller (email [atowhee@gmail.com](mailto:atowhee@gmail.com))



## **RVAS BIRDING FIELD TRIPS AND WALKS**

### **Birding at Lost Creek Lake and Holy Waters - Sat. Nov. 8—Leader: Russ Namitz**

Meet at the eastern side of the Dollar Tree parking lot at the intersection of Highways 62 and 140. We hope to leave the parking lot in carpools by 8:15AM. Bring a sack lunch and water. We will finish by 3PM. Target species include waterfowl, American Pipit, shorebirds and gulls, but will also include some passerine birding around the parking lot at Joseph Stewart State Park.

### **FIRST WEDNESDAY BIRD WALKS CONTINUE AT AGATE LAKE**

Murray Orr will continue to lead his monthly bird walks on the first Wednesday of each month at Agate Lake. Birders wishing to join Murray should meet him 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. Contact Murray at 541-857-9050.



## **FIELD TRIP REPORT**

The October 12<sup>th</sup> Rogue Valley Audubon Field Trip led by Harry Fuller brought out over 30 birders. First we visited Emigrant Lake which is not much more than a puddle right now. Eared Grebe was a pleasant surprise there. We had good looks at a flock of Bushtits, one group of trees full of Yellow-rumped Warblers and got to watch a Flicker eating a pear still on the tree. Also seen: Fox Sparrow, Bewick's Wren, Savannah Sparrow, Western Bluebirds and plenty of Golden-crowned Sparrows. The only ducks on the lake were Mallard and Common Merganser. Great Egrets (3) outnumbered Great Blue Herons (2).

To fill out our duck list we went to Newbry Park in Talent. There a single old gravel pit contained enough water to have attracted Gadwall, Wigeon, Shoveler, Ring-necked Duck, Wood Duck and Coot. On the Greenway Trail there we found a large flock of Cedar Waxwings, more Yellow-rumps and Flickers, a couple of Wrentits. There was a salmon trying to move upstream in Bear Creek.

## Project FeederWatch Returns

It's that time of year! In November Project FeederWatch begins at North Mountain Park in Ashland and Coyote Trails at Jefferson Nature Center in Medford.

Organized by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology Project FeederWatch is a winter-long survey of birds that visit feeders at backyards, nature centers, and other locales in North America. FeederWatchers periodically count the birds they see at their feeders from November through March and send their counts to Project FeederWatch. This data help scientists track broad scale movements of winter bird populations and long-term trends in bird distribution and abundance.

The free one hour watches provide novice birders the easiest possible identification practice since there are unobstructed, close up views of from ten to twenty species perched at feeders with the valley's top birder/educators available for help. Binoculars and field guides are available for use, though it is best to bring binos that are normally used if possible. More experienced birders often attend, jumping at the chance to show off their knowledge as well as to swap tall avian tales with their peers. There is shelter in case of inclement weather and young people are encouraged if accompanied by an adult companion.

Project FeederWatch schedule for 2014-15:

### Coyote Trails @ JNC (Medford) PFW

Thursdays: Noon - 1 pm; open to the public

Nov 13, Dec 11, Jan 8, Jan 22, Feb 5, Feb 19, Mar 5, March 19

Fridays: Noon - 1 pm; open to the public

Nov 14, Nov 28, Dec 12, Dec 26, Jan 9, Jan 23, Feb 6, Feb 20, Mar 6, Mar 20

### North Mountain Park (Ashland) PFW

Fridays: 9 - 10 am; counts done by 1 person; not advertised to the public

Nov 7, Nov 21, Dec 5, Dec 19, Jan 2, Jan 16, Jan 30, Feb 13, Feb 27, Mar 13

Saturdays: 9 - 10 am; open to the public

Nov 8, Nov 22, Dec 6, Dec 20, Jan 3, Jan 17, Jan 31, Feb 14, Feb 28, Mar 14

RVAS is seeking volunteers to lead each session. For more information or to volunteer contact Mary Pat Power at [marypat@ashlandhome.net](mailto:marypat@ashlandhome.net) about the Ashland PFW and Joanne Haddad ([JoanneHad@aol.com](mailto:JoanneHad@aol.com)) about Coyote Trails @ JNC PFW.

**GREAT GRAY OWL UPDATE**

Rogue Valley Audubon and Peter Thiemann have now put up 9 new nest platforms for Great Gray Owls in Jackson County. There are two breeding populations here: one along the crest of the Cascades and a second in the rugged ridgeland along the Applegate and Little Applegate Rivers west of Interstate 5. This latter population lives in a hotter climate than any other GGO population in the world. Most of them are also below 3000' elevation unlike their nearby cousins in the Cascades who are generally above 4500'. Recently two platforms went onto BLM-owned land in the vicinity of Howard Prairie east of Ashland.

Platforms are being made by volunteer and nature photographer, Peter Thiemann. Each needs to be carefully placed in dense, mature forest near meadows good for Great Gray hunting. A platform is put 35 feet above the ground by an experienced forestry worker. Donations go for materials and pay the person equipped to hang the platform.

There is good evidence of Great Gray Owls using nest platforms over many years. Here in the southern part of their range owls will pair and nest almost every season because food supplies—small rodents—are generally available. Further north lemming populations may crash leading to a dormant season where nests are fewer or non-existent. Platforms are now used for GGOs in Scandinavia, Canada and in their scattered nesting areas in the western U.S. One platform on private land near Howard Prairie Lake has been used both in 2013 and 2014. Some platforms have been used by GGOs as many as ten years in a row.

**To donate to the Great Gray Owl nest platform fund, please send check to RVAS, P.O. Box 8597, Medford OR 97501. Donations are tax deductible.**







These Great Gray Owls are among the birds being monitored as part of an RVAS-sponsored project to raise funds for building nest platforms for this signature species. For further information, consult the Conservation Topics page of the Rogue Valley Audubon website.



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## Birding By Boat By Peter Kleinhenz\*

I could tell by Stewart's eyes that the trip would be memorable. There was something about the way he described the possibilities of what we would see that was just mysterious enough to intrigue me. The chance to see cetaceans and rare birds was possible and the chance of me missing this trip was not.

Stewart Janes, the head of Southern Oregon University's environmental education graduate program that I am in, was sitting across from me at a picnic table with a far-off gaze. The prospect of the pelagic birding trip clearly had him excited. And when he is excited, I am too. He has been my birding mentor for the past year. Most life birds I have seen in Oregon are due to his help and my understanding of bird biology has deepened immensely as a result of his ornithology class. So, when the chance came to learn more from him in an environment totally foreign to me, I hopped in my car.

I boarded the "Superstar" in Brookings around 8:25 A.M looking super-cool in my rain pants, rain jacket that covered up my sweatshirt, and my hair that made it look as if I had just stepped out of a wind tunnel. The great thing is: I was there to go birding, not to win a fashion contest. All fifteen or so of us arrived, the young-ish captain gave us our safety talk, and we were off.

Elegant Terns danced in the air around us, living up to their name. Stewart had already left the introductions behind and was at the bow spewing off facts about these magical birds.

"They don't come up this far every year", he stated. "But, this year, they've made it as far up as Astoria." Stewart went on to explain that Elegant Terns have been nesting further and further north up the Pacific coast every year. The Elegant Terns constituted a lifer for me and the boat had not even left the harbor yet.

We penetrated the open ocean and small, bobbing figures appeared seventy or eighty yards off our port side. "Marbled Murrelets!" Stewart exclaimed. Looking across the water at these little bobbies, it was hard to imagine them flying deep into old growth forests and nesting on high, mossy limbs each night. What an amazing species, I thought.

The fog refused to lift. Our sight was generally limited but that did not seem to faze any bird-er aboard the "Superstar". In fact, the fog made the birding that much more exciting. You'd be staring at a blank, grey wall until some new species popped out of nowhere ready to be identified. The Pigeon Guillemots would glance up at us, give a nonverbal "meh", and continue their ocean float. Common Murres lived up to their name, eventually accounting for probably a third of the birds spotted. Occasionally, we would be graced by the presence of a few inquisitive California Gulls that must have been taking a break from their usual parking lot prowling.

We passed alongside my second lifer, a Red Phalarope, about forty-five minutes into the excursion. Lively debate about whether this was a Red or a Red-Necked Phalarope ensued but was settled, in my mind at least, when Stewart made his call. Shortly thereafter, a cluster of Rhinoceros Auklets were spotted in the distance. I admit...I counted these as my third lifer even though they could have been floating pieces of tire for all the detail I was able to see. At this point the Superstar was approximately five miles off shore.

We were travelling parallel to the coastline and heading south towards Crescent City. Stewart and I blabbed on the bow until we both realized that interesting bird sightings were tapering off. Something had to change.

## The Chat - November 2014

### *Birding By Boat continued*

Stewart expressed his concern about the paucity of bird sightings to the captain and recommended that we change our course. The captain turned the "Superstar" due west and as the direction changed, so did our luck. A Stellar's Sea Lion burst from the cold waters fifty yards or so off the starboard side. Sooty Shearwaters soared across our view, causing me to become nostalgic about my time spent birding in their Tasmanian home turf. A Fork-tailed Storm Petrel dashed in and out of sight in seconds. Pink-footed Shearwaters, declining inhabitants of the distant Juan Fernandez Islands, pierced the fog with increasing regularity. Things were turning around.

I would not be taking a leap of faith to say that most passengers came to see an albatross. No bird symbolizes pelagic perfection quite like the albatross does. We all knew that one would not appear, if it did at all, until we were far offshore. About twelve miles offshore, a single Black-footed Albatross soared across our line of sight. Everyone was thrilled and had their eyes glued to this effortless flier for several minutes.

We were now approaching twenty miles offshore. In the distance, a couple blasts of water indicated that we had whales nearby. Everyone was excited about the birds we saw but the whale sighting was the only one that had everyone moving to one side of the boat. These cetaceans turned out to be humpbacks and they impressed us continuously until they made their final dive out of sight. To me, they embody peace. Shortly after we viewed them, the fog broke and we could see glimmers of sunlight bouncing off the deep, blue ocean. Peace indeed.

Stewart and his friend, Tim, asked the captain to stop the boat when we were twenty miles out. They opened up gigantic bag of popcorn and distributed the contents in a trail behind the boat. This "chum" had little effect and, as most passengers (including myself) began to start to feel the up and down a little too much, Stewart sheepishly admitted that, "Well, this doesn't *always* work."

It was time to head back. The boat turned to face due east and we scooted back to shore. On the way, a pod of Dall's Porpoises exposed their black and white backs to us as they raced through the water. Shortly after they disappeared, Stewart spotted the coolest non-bird find of the day, as far as I was concerned. There in the water only twenty or thirty feet from the boat was the tall dorsal fin of a Mola Mola. This huge fish, also known as an Ocean Sunfish, was one I had wanted to see for years. I was pumped.

The Mola Mola was an unexpected find but, then again, what can you really expect on a pelagic birding trip except for the unexpected? We may not have had the species diversity of previous trips but no one I heard was complaining. As the "Superstar" pulled into the harbor, I felt calm, satisfied, and privileged to have shared such a unique experience with some of the best birders in southern Oregon. What a day.

\*:This account of a pelagic birding trip conducted by the Siskiyou Field Institute was provided by Peter Kleinhenz, a graduate student at Southern Oregon University, whose participation fee was covered by a scholarship funded by Rogue Valley Audubon Society.



## Hawks!

Ashland Parks & Recreation - North Mountain Park Nature Center

620 N Mountain Ave in Ashland, 541-488-6606

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

Hawks are fascinating creatures that capture our imaginations as few other bird groups do. Easily seen (but tough to identify), they push our primal poetic buttons. This popular course is a PowerPoint presentation that will examine the natural history of diurnal raptors - what makes a hawk a hawk, anyhow? We will also investigate hawks' relationship with humans throughout history. This is NOT an ID class but, at the end of this course, you are guaranteed to be a dedicated hawk enthusiast! Pre-register online at [www.ashland.or.us/register](http://www.ashland.or.us/register) or call the Nature Center at 541.488.6606.

Ages	11—Adult
Days	Tuesdays
Dates	November 4, 11 & 18
Time	7—8:30m
Place	North Mountain Park
Cost	\$25 for the series

Instructor Dick Ashford is the former President of the Klamath Bird Observatory and a popular hawk-watching tour leader in the Klamath-Siskiyou Region.



Photos from the October 12 Field Trip. Photos by Lewis Graham

# ROGUE VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

## THE CHAT

### Newsletter of the ROGUE VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

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## ANNUAL HOLIDAY POTLUCK

Keep **December 2nd** open for the Annual Holiday Potluck. It will be held at the Congregational Church, 1801 E. Jackson St., in Medford. As always, plan to bring a dish to share and your utensils and plates. Jim Livaudais, a favorite photographer, will be showing pictures of birds from his most recent visit to Ecuador.

### 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 online. 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.

