

The Chat

Number 414
April, 2015

A voice for education and conservation in the natural world

Rogue Valley Audubon Society

www.roguevalleyaudubon.org

Deadline for submissions for the May issue is April 20.



**APRIL PROGRAM
MEETING, TUESDAY,
APRIL 28 at 7 PM**

**"Great Gray Owls in
Southwestern Oregon"
PRESENTED BY
STEVE GODWIN**

Here in Southwest Oregon, we are lucky to have a population of Great Gray Owls nearby. These large and striking birds nest in snags in mature forests in and around the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument, although timber harvesting and fire suppression has affected their habitat. Learn more about the natural history and conservation status of this elusive species during this special presentation from wildlife biologist Steve Godwin. A Q & A session will follow.

About our Speaker: Steve Godwin has worked as a wild-life biologist for the Medford BLM for the last 25 years. During that time he has

had the pleasure of searching the Cascades and Siskiyou for a variety of wildlife species: northern spotted owls, Siskiyou Mountains salamanders, red tree voles, goshawks, eagles, assorted terrestrial mollusks and great gray owls. Steve led a radio telemetry study in the area which followed great gray owls for up to two years, in an effort to better understand their habitat preferences and seasonal movements.



Steve Godwin (right) and a co-worker outfit a Great Gray Owl with a radio transmitter.

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President's Column

Since I just recently got back from spending six weeks in New Zealand, I don't have much to tell you about RVAS this month. Unless you'd like to read about New Zealand birds.

No? Well, in that case, I'll just thank everyone on the RVAS Board for filling in for me while I was gone.

Thank you. It's great to be part of a good team.

P.S. I can't resist telling you that the English imports to New Zealand are doing well. They have a greater variety of English birds than we do, including Dunnock, Black Swan, and the English Blackbird and Goldfinch. Their House Sparrows seemed more numerous than ours (!); Starlings, less so. But some of our birds are also doing well there, including California Quail, Wild Turkey and Canada Geese.

Linda



Chapter Program meetings are held at 1801 E. Jackson St., Medford, in Lidgate Hall of the Medford Congregational Church.

**Field Notes for Jackson County
(Feb. 20 to Mar. 19, 2015)
Compiled by Jeff Tufts**

There are winters that seem to never end, and there are winters that never really get started. This one has been closest to the latter, so it's no surprise that Jackson County birders would be looking for spring migrants long before Spring actually arrived.

But, guess what? With a few exceptions—Rufous Hummingbirds, an occasional Violet-green or Barn Swallow, an Osprey at Tou Velle, and a flock of Band-tailed Pigeons—the unusually warm winter in southwest Oregon hadn't significantly hastened the arrival of northbound species as the first day of Spring approached.

First reported **Rufous Hummingbird** in Jackson County was a female that visited a feeder in Central Point Feb. 24 (HS); a male joined her there two days later. Other Rufous reports came from Eagle Point Mar. 9 (GH) and Gold Hill the same day (KS).

Sharp eyes spotted a single **Barn Swallow** amid a flock of **Tree Swallows** near the Kirtland ponds Mar. 17 (JH).

The lone **Osprey** reported during this period was seen on the familiar nest platform near the entrance to Tou Velle State Park Mar. 17 (eB) and again on Mar. 19 (GS). More sightings of this species in the usual locations can be expected as Spring commences.

Band-tailed Pigeons are working their way north, and our first report was a single bird near the lower portions of the Mt. Ashland Ski Road Mar. 15 (FL). The next day, a flock of about 25 of these game birds were seen cruising around the Oak Knoll area of Ashland (GR). That's one of their favorite locations in the valley.

But for the remarkable group of eight **Great-tailed Grackles** seen in December on the Medford Christmas Count, we could put this conspicuous species on the list of early spring migrants. Two were near Tolman Creek Road in Ashland Mar. 2 (LM, MM), and there were sightings of a single bird (probably the same individual) in the Denman Wildlife Area adjacent to Avenue G Mar. 11 (BH) and Mar. 17 (eB).

Will we find a breeding pair at that location this year?

Of the winter visitors that caused a stir among Jackson County birders, **Pine Grosbeaks** undoubtedly top the list. The latest sighting of these irruptive birds was on Feb. 23 when two female-types were seen near Forest Road 37 a bit north of Dead Indian Memorial Road (FL). It should be noted that the numerous Jackson County sightings this winter were part of a major invasion that produced unusually large numbers of these birds in many parts of the state.

Last month's Field Notes remarked on a troubling scarcity of **White-tailed Kite** sightings this winter, but that may have been premature. Four of the Kites were seen Feb. 22 during the monthly Medford Raptor Run. All four were hunting fields east of North Phoenix Road, and two of the birds were in an area where the species has reportedly nested in the past.

Three days later a pair was seen in Phoenix by the Ashland Raptor Run crew, and residents of the area had seen the birds carrying nesting material to a nearby grove of conifers. Additional White-tailed Kite reports came from Emigrant Lake Feb. 28 (HF) and Mar. 1 (FL) and from the Butler Creek Road area Mar. 3 (eB).

There were two notable waterfowl reports during this period: Seven **Cinnamon Teal** were at the Denman Avenue G ponds Mar. 17 (eB), and two days later 300 **Greater White-fronted Geese** were reported from the Kirtland ponds (BH).

Significant shorebird movement is yet to commence, but fourteen **Greater Yellowlegs** at the Kirtland ponds Mar. 15 (BH) were interesting, as were nine **Long-billed Dowitchers** at Whetstone Pond in the Hall Tract of Denman (RM).

Last month's report mentioned the return of gulls to the area, and they continue to make their presence felt at the Kirtland ponds and the Boise-Cascade pond. Most were **Ring-billed Gulls**, and as many as sixty were at the B-C pond Mar. 17 (RN). Three **California Gulls** were seen in company with Ring-billeds at Kirtland Feb. 28 (BH) and one was there Mar. 19 (BH).

Field Notes continued on page 4

Field Notes continued from page 3

American Pipits can be found in large flocks near various bodies of water during fall migration (Lost Creek Lake, Agate Lake, Emigrant Lake) but they get increasingly harder to find as winter sets in. The most reliable spots for these birds during the season are the Table Rocks, and three were seen Mar. 16 on Upper Table Rock (eB) and one on Lower Table Rock Mar. 17 (eB).

Additional birds of interest were a **North-ern Shrike** seen just south of Agate Lake (Feb. 22) by the Medford Raptor Run group, a **Townsend's Solitaire** along Emigrant Creek Road (Feb. 25) seen during the Ashland Raptor Run, the probable continuing **Swamp Sparrow** at

North Mountain Park Mar. 9 (MPP), a **Tri-colored Blackbird** at the Ousterhout Farm Mar. 16 (BH), and a **Yellow-headed Blackbird** near Brophy Road above Eagle Point Mar. 16 (RN).

Thanks to this month's contributors: Harry Fuller, Jim Harleman, Bob Hunter, Gretchen Hunter, Frank Lospalluto, Lisa Moore, Marjorie Moore, Robert Mumby, Russ Namitz, Mary Pat Power, Gwyneth Ragosine, Howard Sands, Gary Shaffer, and Karen Sublette. The report also includes sightings records obtained from eBird (eB).

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

Project FeederWatch Recap

The 13th season of Project FeederWatch at North Mountain Park finished in March with a total of 40 species seen at the feeders. The highlight was a **Swamp Sparrow** returning for a second winter. Complete data for this and all other PFW sites can be seen at feederwatch.org.

Thanks to those who served as observers and group leaders: John Bullock, Stephanie Bullock, Barbara Massey, Vince Zauskey, Kate Cleland-Sipfle, Nancy Menken, Sooney Viani, Keiko Thurston, Ron Ketchum and Bill Hering.

PFW is a joint project of RVAS, which pays for bird feed and provides volunteers, and North Mountain Park, which purchases feed and maintains the feeder area.

Mary Pat Power
PFW Coordinator, Ashland

ARBOR DAY FESTIVAL & SOLAR PAVILION GRAND OPENING

Where: Coyote Trails Nature Center

When: Saturday, April 4 from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Coyote Trails Nature Center and the City of Medford Parks and Recreation Department host this free, family-friendly event, which will include the grand opening of the new Solar Pavilion at Coyote Trails and an Arbor Day Proclamation presented by Medford Mayor Gary Wheeler. The Festival will also feature:

- Riparian Restoration Project tour
- Tree-climbing demonstration
- Sarah Red-Laird, aka "Bee Girl"
- Southern Oregon Monarch Advocates
- Coyote Trails Skills Stations, and more!

Additional information at coyotetrails.org

The Conservation Column

Items submitted by Fran Lospalluto, Carol Palmer, Kathleen Donham and Robert Mumby

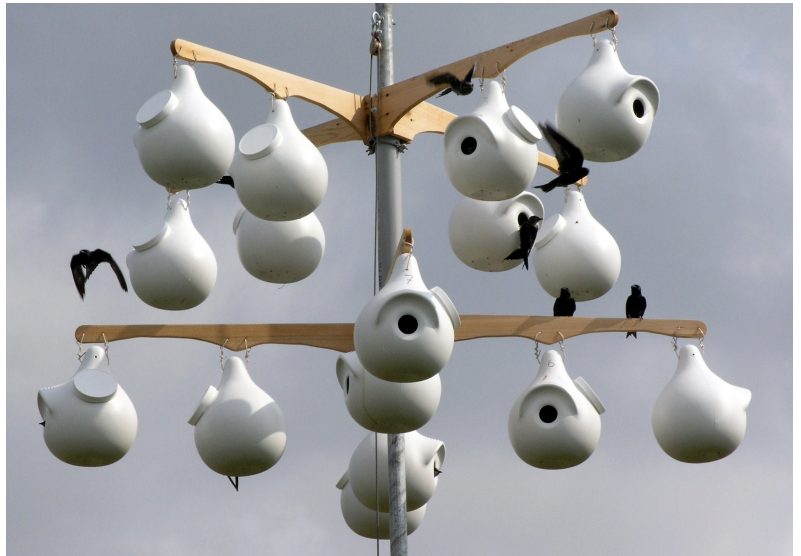
***Note: Pepper Trail's column will return next month.*

Klamath Refuges Conservation Plan Update

As many of you may have heard, March 5th was a good day for birds on the Lower Klamath and Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuges. In response to a lawsuit brought by WaterWatch of Oregon, Oregon Wild and Portland Audubon Society, a federal judge issued a finding that ordered the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to complete its Comprehensive Conservation Plan by August 1, 2016. The Klamath Refuges were supposed to have completed the CCP in 2012. These plans are required by law to protect wildlife from all commercial activities that occur on refuge lands. This is extremely important during this time of prolonged drought, to ensure that the wetlands on the refuges receive enough water to sustain the birds that use them. Learn more about this ruling at the Portland Audubon website: <http://audubonportland.org/news/march5-2015>

Coming Soon: RVAS-Sponsored Purple Martin Colony

The RVAS Board has been considering starting a Purple Martin colony. To that end, Marnie Albritten, retired wildlife biologist from the Umpqua ODFW, traveled from the Roseburg area to share her experiences with the colonies she has been supporting with RVAS at our monthly meeting. Having read accounts of others' colonies, we were encouraged by Marnie's presentation. She made it sound much less complicated, as the birds do not need nearly the support we had believed. With the board's approval, our first gourd array will be on site at Denman Wildlife Area soon. Though it is unlikely that we will attract Purple Martins the first year, they will probably at least check out the accommodations.



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Conservation Column *continued from page 5*

RVAS to Weigh In on the Table Rocks Interpretive Plans

Rogue Valley Audubon has been invited to participate in the interpretive plans for the Table Rocks. Bird Species of Concern in the Table Rocks Management area include **Lewis's Woodpecker**, **Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher**, **Grasshopper Sparrow**, **Peregrine Falcon**, and the **Western Meadow-lark**. The Nature Conservancy, the Tribes, and the BLM are meeting the objectives of the management plan for the entire area by holding meetings with interested parties. The first meeting addressed the overall approach to interpretation: attendees agreed that the geologic history of the Table Rocks was the first aspect of interest to visitors. Dogs continue to be a problem with visitors, and geocaching—for which users build rock cairns or side trails—has required restoration.

Secondly, the results of the SOU Table Rock survey were reviewed: more than 25,000 people visited the Table Rocks last year, with the most in the spring, especially on the weekends when the parking lot is overflowing. In 2010, approximately 200 people visited in a two-hour period (even on a weekday) during flowering season. Future plans for interpretive programming and trails will be discussed at future meetings; the Nature Conservancy and BLM will decide on priorities for signage and trail maintenance.

Spring Hikes at the Table Rocks

It's time once again for the 2015 Spring Table Rocks Hikes sponsored by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the Bureau of Land Management, Medford Office (BLM). These free guided hikes take place on Saturdays and Sundays from late March to May 17. Two hikes in particular might be of special interest to RVAS members.

Sunday, April 19, 8:00 am - Lower Table Rock

For the Early Birds Join local bird experts Bob Quaccia, with Rogue Valley Audubon, and Frank Lospalluto, with Klamath Bird Observatory, to view the spring birds of the Table Rocks. Learn I.D. Tips and conservation information. Bring binoculars and I.D. books if you desire. **LIMITED** to 15 individuals.

Saturday, May 9, 7:30 pm - Lower Table Rock Loop Trail

Whooo Comes Out at Night? Join Tony Kerwin, Steve Godwin and Ernie Fliegel, BLM wildlife biologists, to look and listen to sounds of the night from dusk 'til dark on a jaunt around the Lower Table Rock Loop Trail ($\frac{1}{2}$ mile accessible trail). Steve will attempt to lure pygmy, great horned and screech owls - no guarantees! A short presentation of the common bats, owls and other animals active at night in this area and their unique characteristics and adaptations will precede the hike. Bring your flashlights and good hiking shoes.

The hikes are free but reservations are required and space is limited. Contact BLM at [541-618-2200](tel:541-618-2200), Monday - Friday, 7:30 am - 4:30 pm to reserve a space. Sign up by 4 pm the Friday before the hike.

Hikes are 3 to 5 miles roundtrip along a moderate grade trail and generally last 3 to 5 hours. Participants should dress for the weather and bring drinking water (no water source on site) and a snack. Restrooms are available at the trail heads.

For more info or to view the full hike schedule visit:

BLM: <http://www.blm.gov/or/resources/recreation/ablerock/index.php>

TNC: <http://natureorg/trhikes>

RVAS BIRDING FIELD TRIPS AND WALKS

Saturday, April 11: Dennis Vroman and Zia Fukuda will lead a RVAS field trip to Whitehorse County Park, a Josephine County Park located approximately six miles west of downtown Grants Pass along Lower River Road. The group will bird along the river while looking for both waterbirds on the river and riparian species along the river banks. We'll also bird up to the campground, looking for species that prefer mixed conifer-hardwood forests.

Meet Dennis and Zia at the boat ramp parking area (no parking permit needed here) at 8 a.m. Carpooling sites will be the Shop N Kart in Ashland at 6:45 a.m. or the small parking area just off Poplar Drive and next to the north (Exit 30) Fred Meyer at 7:15 a.m. (look for the Goodwill truck.) For more information contact Dennis at dpvroman@budget.net

Coast Birding Trip - April 25 & 26: Ron Ketchum will lead a birding field trip to the Bandon/Charleston area if enough people (at least 10) are interested in participating. The trip will include the whole day on Saturday (the 25th) and a half day on Sunday. We will visit various sites in and around Bandon and Charleston. There are good chances of seeing **Tufted Puffins** (last year we had five) and other nesting seabirds. We will also visit sites inland for other birds.

Please contact Ron by email rketchum@charter.net or phone [541-944-3072](tel:541-944-3072) by April 11, if you wish to be placed on the attendee list. More specific information will be provided when you call.

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.

Birdathon 2015

Friday, May 1 at 6:00 pm - Saturday, May 2

Birdathon is right around the corner. In this fun and important annual fundraising event, sponsored teams take to the field to see how many species they can count in a 24-hour period. If you have questions or don't have a team yet, contact Katy Reed: kmreed24@hotmail.com or 541-245-5095 or Linda Kreisman: 541-482-6456.



Ashland Parks and Recreation Classes, Workshops and Events

Mindful Birding

Learn about our local birds using beautiful pictures, poetry, sounds and fun facts. A mindful approach connects us to nature, ourselves and the present moment. Evening class and Saturday morning field trip included; binoculars available for Saturday. Pre-register online at www.ashland.or.us/register or call the Nature Center at 541.488.6606.

AGES	10—Adult
	<u>Lecture</u> <u>Field Trip</u>
DAYS	Thursday Saturday
DATE	April 16 April 18
TIME	6:30—8pm 8—10am
PLACE	North Mountain Park
COST	\$15

INSTRUCTOR Kate McKenzie, counselor and masseuse, has studied birds and the natural world all her life. Shannon Rio, Family Nurse Practitioner, teaches classes about birds and is on the Board of the Klamath Bird Observatory.

Actions Matter at Rogue Valley Earth Day Saturday, April 25, 11am—4pm

Celebrate Rogue Valley Earth Day at the grounds of ScienceWorks Museum. From local food, farms and gardening to energy conservation, waste prevention and transportation, explore exhibits that teach how small actions can make a big difference. Interactive activities, live entertainment, food & beer and kids' activities will provide hours of fun and creative learning experiences for people of all ages. Rogue Valley Earth Day strives to be a zero-waste event, with efforts to prevent, recycle or compost all materials generated during the festival. Please bring a reusable beverage container. For more information please visit www.RogueValleyEarthDay.net.

Rogue Valley Bird Day May 9, 8am—Noon

Rogue Valley Bird Day is the local celebration of International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD), which focuses on a most spectacular aspect of the life of a migratory bird—its journey between wintering and breeding grounds. This year's theme is "**Restore Habitats, Restore Birds.**"

Join us on **Saturday, May 9, from 8 a.m. to noon**, to celebrate! Enjoy Wildlife Images exhibits, guided bird walks, and a bird-calling contest for all ages.

This outdoor event is admission-free and takes place at North Mountain Park, 620 N Mountain Avenue, Ashland. For more information visit www.RogueValleyBirdDay.net or call the North Mountain Park Nature Center at 541.488.6606.

"Birding in the Schools" Program Offered to Rogue Valley Classrooms

During this 2014-15 school year, a collaboration between the Rogue Valley Audubon Society, Klamath Bird Observatory and Northwest Nature Shop will enhance educational opportunities for students throughout the Rogue Valley with its "Birding in the Schools" program. With the combined resources of the three organizations, this trifecta of educational support will bring both field trips and classroom visits to over 350 students this year.

The program offers a range of classroom lessons to encourage students' curiosity in nature and build science skills. Students will gain a deeper sense of place through learning about local ecosystems and local land issues. All "Birding in the Schools" lessons meet education standards and are also attained through joyful educational experiences, using nature as both inspiration for creativity and scientific exploration. Inspiring excitement for education in students helps support development of well-balanced individuals and life-long learners.

Local naturalist and educator Jeanine Moy will lead students in the classroom and to local natural areas hands-on learning about the natural world. Jeanine holds an MS in Environmental Education and is an outdoor educator with 15 years of experience working with children. She currently works for Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center and teaches natural science at Willow Wind Learning Center. Jeannie is also founder of Ashland Trail Trekkers nature summer camp.

Please email JeanineMoy@gmail.com if you are a teacher (or know a teacher!) and are interested in reserving a date, or would like to help by volunteering to lead students on bird walks.

Field Notes for Josephine County (Feb. 20 to Mar. 19, 2015) Compiled by Jeff Tufts

Last month's report noted that Josephine County birders beat Jackson County birders in finding the first Rufous Hummingbird and first Barn Swallow of the season. And this month's report includes the first **Northern Rough-winged Swallows**. Two of them were near the Applegate Bridge along Fish Hatchery Road Mar. 19 (DV).

Another notable first for JoCo was a male **Yellow-rumped Warbler (Audubon's)** in breeding plumage Feb. 25 along the Rogue River west of Grants Pass (DV).

Gulls are generally hard to find in Josephine County, but five **Ring-billed Gulls** were at Riverside City Park Mar. 5 (DV) and twelve were there Mar. 11 (RN).

First **Ospreys** of the season for JoCo were one at the Copeland Ponds Mar. 19 and one along the Applegate River near US Hwy 199 the same day (DV).

Fifteen **Greater White-fronted Geese** at the Rogue Lea Estates Mar. 11 (RN) were notable as were 110 **American Crows** along Lower River Road Mar. 11 (RN).

Not sure if there have been any records of **White-tailed Kites** nesting in Josephine County, but a bird seen atop a conifer well away from likely hunting grounds Mar. 19 may have been associated with a possible nesting site (DV).

Thanks to this month's contributors: Russ Namitz and Dennis Vroman.

Rogue Valley Audubon Society Membership

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)
- 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 30th each year. To become an RVAS member, please complete the form below and send with your check for \$20.

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



Editor's Note:

Call for photos: I am seeking images of birds (and birders) to help jazz up *The Chat*. If you'd like to see your photos gracing these pages, please send them to chateditor@gmail.com. Please include location and I.D. for both birds and humans; make sure the humans don't mind appearing in the RVAS newsletter. Thanks, and I look forward to seeing your best shots!

—Juliet Grable

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The advertisement for Northwest Nature Shop features a collage of nature-themed items. At the top left, a child is shown from the waist up, wearing a white hat and a dark jacket, holding a small object. To the right of the child is a large, ornate wind chime. Below the child is a microscope. To the right of the microscope is a small, round, globe-like object. Below the globe is a small, square, glass container. The background is a light, textured surface. The text is arranged around the images, with the shop's name and tagline at the top, and contact information at the bottom.

ROGUE VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

THE CHAT

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Your Audubon Chapter wants to be sure you are aware of upcoming field trips, chapter meetings , the most recent edition of *The Chat*, and other items we post on-line. 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.

