

The Chat

Number 419
November 2015

A voice for education and conservation in the natural world
Rogue Valley Audubon Society
www.roguevalleyaudubon.org
Deadline for the Dec/Jan issue is November 20.



NOVEMBER PROGRAM MEETING
TUESDAY, Nov. 24 at 7 PM

"Conservation Opportunities in our Region"
Presented by KRISTI MERGENTHALER

Kristi Mergenthaler, Land Steward, will provide an overview of the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy's work, including the conservation of a newly-offered piece of prime bird habitat, which will be called the Rogue River Preserve. This spectacular 352-acre property, located near Dodge Bridge County Park along the Rogue River, is characterized by oak woodlands and chaparral and includes a 16-acre island. Birds commonly seen here include Wood Ducks, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, Lewis's Woodpeckers, and a nesting Bald Eagle pair. The Land Conservancy has an option to buy this beautiful property on the iconic Rogue, and RVAS has generously pledged to donate the proceeds of the Holiday Party towards this purchase. Kristi will also discuss other exciting conservation opportunities, such as the City of Ashland Imperatrice property in the Cascade foothills

Kristi is a member of RVAS and a (mostly) regular contributor to eBird. She is also the President of the Siskiyou Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Oregon and a board member of Siskiyou Field Institute, where she also teaches a few adult natural history classes every year. Kristi has conducted plant surveys in the Klamath Siskiyou Bioregion for 12 years. She is also a Wilderness First Responder and a certified Northwest Lichenologist. You may run into her (and her big red dog) birding and/or botanizing at Emigrant Lake or in the local mountains.



OFFICERS and DIRECTORS

President: Linda Kreisman, 541-482-6456

linda@ashlandhome.net

Vice-President: Jon Deason,

jdeason39@gmail.com

Treasurer: Sue Polich, 541-608-3802

spolich@charter.net

Secretary: Mike Guest, 541-857-6334

mwquest@juno.com

Carol Mockridge

mockridge50@hotmail.com

Carol Palmer

carol_p@charter.net

Angela Stormberg

storage13@yahoo.com

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Archivist: Alyson Dal Ponte, alyson287@gmail.com

Annual Picnic: Gaylene & Judd Hurley, 541-621-3196

Birdathon: Katy Reed, 541-245-5095

Book Sales: Sooney Viani, 541-482-5146

Chat Editor: Juliet Grable, chateditor@gmail.com

CBC-Ashland: Carol Mockridge,

mockridge50@hotmail.com & John Bullock,

jas@opendoor.com

CBC-Medford: Bob Hunter, 541-826-5569

Conservation: Pepper Trail, ptrail@ashlandnet.net &

Carol Palmer, carol_p@charter.net

Education: Lynn Kellogg, rvas.ed@gmail.com & Sooney

Viani, sooneyviani@gmail.com

Field Notes: Jeff Tufts, tallahto@aol.com

Field Trips: Russ Namitz, 541-294-2063,

namitzr@hotmail.com

Holiday Party : vacant

Hospitality: Katy Reed, 541-245-5095

Master Gardener Fair: vacant

Membership: Gary Palmer, 541-245-9815,

gopalmer@charter.net

Programs: Katy Reed, 541-245-5095

Publicity: Carol Mockridge, mockridge50@hotmail.com

CHAPTER COMMUNICATIONS

E-mail Address:

roquevalleyaudubon@gmail.com

The Chat: chateditor@gmail.com

Webmaster: Jeff Tufts, tallahto@aol.com

Web Site: www.roquevalleyaudubon.org

Chapter Program meetings are held on the fourth Tuesday of the month, September through April. Meetings take place at 1801 E. Jackson St., Medford, in Lidgate Hall of the Medford Congregational Church.

President's Column

We have seen great success in the drive to gather donations for your consideration at the December 5th Holiday Party, with an emphasis on field trips and overnight stays, local wines and chocolates, gift certificates, and a variety of unique “things.” We have field trips donated from three of your favorite leaders: Pepper Trail, Bob Hunter and Dick Ashford—each with a different focus. Shelley Tanquary has again generously donated two nights at her beach house, so give some serious thought to bidding on that. Also, we are very appreciative of Lithia Springs’ donation of a night at their resort. Take a look at the more complete list of donated items on page 8.

It should be a great evening. Hope you can all come!

Other news from the Board this month:

Nate Trimble is off and running, getting the word out to local teachers about the “Birding in the Schools” classes he is offering. If you know of any classrooms that would appreciate one of these classes, please let Sooney Viani or Lynn Kellogg know.

Our “Birds of Jackson County” booklet and “Birding Hotspots” pamphlet have been so successful that we need to print more copies. Many thanks to Stewart Janes for the booklet, to Gwyneth Ragsone for the “Hotspots” pamphlet, and to Gary Palmer for coordinating the re-printing.

Carol Mockridge and John Bullock have scheduled the Ashland Christmas Bird Count, and Bob Hunter the Medford Count. More information is on pages 3 and 4.

Carol Palmer is going to attend the Oregon Audubon Council meeting in Sutherlin on November 6-8, so we’ll be hearing a summary of issues from her. Jon Deason and Carol Palmer hosted a RVAS table at the SOCAN Summit on Climate Change at The Inn at the Commons October 12 and 13 to get the word out about how climate change is affecting birds.

Linda

Join the Ashland Christmas Bird Count

The Ashland Christmas Bird Count will be conducted on **Saturday, Jan. 2, 2016**.

The count circle is centered at the northwest corner of Emigrant Lake, so the count area includes both the northeastern slopes of Mount Ashland and the western slopes of the Cascades (as far east as Little Hyatt Lake). Also in the official area are the steep Siskiyou Mountain woodlands, extensive farmland-grassland-oak savannah habitats in the eastern section, and the entirety of the city of Ashland with its parks and gardens and riparian habitats.

If you would like to participate in Ashland Christmas Bird Count, please contact Carol Mockridge by Dec. 20 at mockridge50@hotmail.com. Teams usually meet at daybreak and bird until dusk. Birders who wish to count birds that visit their backyard feeders are also encouraged to join the Ashland CBC lineup. Newcomers are always welcome to participate in this traditional citizen science effort.

The post-count dinner will be held at The Black Sheep Pub & Restaurant on the Plaza.
<http://www.theblacksheep.com>

The Ashland count was first held in the years before World War II, then discontinued for many years. In 2010, under the direction of John Bullock and Harry Fuller, the count resumed with a large contingent of local birders taking part. This year's count is led by Carol Mockridge and John Bullock.

<https://sites.google.com/site/ashlandcbc/>

The Medford Christmas Bird Count

This year the Rogue Valley Audubon Society's Medford Christmas bird count will be on **Saturday, December 19, 2015**.

This important event gives everybody an opportunity to be part of the biggest citizen science effort in the New World. From December 14 through January 5, tens of thousands of volunteers throughout the Americas take part in an adventure that has become a family tradition among generations. Audubon and other organizations use data collected in this longest-running wildlife census to assess the health of bird populations—and to help guide conservation action.

The area for the Medford Christmas Bird Count is a circle 15 miles in diameter, centered a mile or so west of the junction of Hwy 140 and Hwy 62 in White City. The circle has been carved up into 15 sections. Each section is entrusted to an experienced leader who makes the decisions as to times and routes. Some leaders welcome newcomers to their teams. Others may prefer to team up with experienced, hardy birders who can cope with difficult terrain and a fast pace. Hard-core birders go from dawn to dark in all weather, which is sometimes wet, foggy, and cold.

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Those who live in the count circle and have bird feeders can do a feeder watch and add their sightings to the count. CBC feeder watch instructions and a tally sheet can be obtained by contacting Bob Hunter (contact information below).

Birds not seen in the count circle on the count day can still be included in the count if seen during the count week, which is from December 16th through December 22nd.

The teams will meet from 4:30 to 6:30 at Bobbio's Pizza and Pasta at 2105 on Roberts Road, Medford to report how the day went and to tally the birds. Everyone is welcome to come to the tally, even if you do not participate.

If you are interested in participating contact Bob Hunter: bobhunter@embarqmail.com or 541-826-5569.



Upcoming RVAS Programs

Jan. 26, 2016: "Status of Golden Eagles Nesting in Oregon,"
presented by Frank Isaacs

Feb. 23, 2016: "Birds: Their Role in Art, War, and History,"
presented by Harry Fuller

Mar. 22, 2016: "The Birds and the Bees"
presented by Gaby Chavarria

The Conservation Column

By Pepper Trail

For this column, I'd like to highlight one very local issue, and one big national one.

The local issue is the presence of cattle in the Grouse Gap area behind Mount Ashland. This beautiful mosaic of mountain meadows and granite outcrops is crossed by a scenic stretch of the Pacific Crest Trail, and is a favorite hiking and birding spot for many RVAS members. It is one of the best local sites for nesting Green-tailed Towhees and Lincoln's and Fox Sparrows, and attracts many migrating warblers and sparrows in the fall.

Unfortunately, a herd of cattle settled into the area this summer, and left much grazing and tracking damage—and copious droppings—behind. Cattle are supposed to be kept out of Grouse Gap by the Klamath National Forest, in part because just across Forest Road 20 is the Ashland Watershed, from which cattle are excluded to protect Ashland's water supply.

Some of you may have seen the letter to the editor in the *Mail Tribune* about this issue that I co-wrote a few weeks back. I reprint it here for those who missed it. If you observed cattle in this area this summer or fall, or if you are just concerned that they may return next year, please send an email to the address at the end of the letter.

No Cows in Grouse Gap

Grouse Gap meadows behind Mount Ashland is one of the most popular local stretches of the Pacific Crest Trail, with spectacular wildflowers and panoramic views. Unfortunately, the experience of visitors—and more importantly, the ecology of this beautiful area—was marred this summer by the presence of a herd of cattle, with dung strewn along the PCT, wallows in wet meadows, and damage to fragile areas with Ashland lupine and other sensitive plants.

There are no fences to prevent cattle “drift” into the adjacent Ashland Watershed, where grazing is prohibited, and Klamath National Forest (KNF) claims an interest “in discouraging cattle from using the upper reaches of Grouse Creek.” However, we documented the presence of at least 16 cows in Grouse Gap from August through September, and repeatedly notified KNF. Each time, KNF promised to have the cattle removed, but as of October 6, the cows were still there. KNF dismissed our reports of damage, and actually praised the cattle dung spread across the mountain meadows and streams as “fertilizer.”

If you love Grouse Gap and want flowers, not cow-flop “fertilizer,” please contact KNF Rangeland Management Specialist Daniel Henklein (dchenklein@fs.fed.us) with this message: Keep Grouse Gap cow-free next summer!

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On the national scene, the Obama administration released a hugely significant “Clean Water Rule” this summer, which has attracted relatively little media attention. This new rule unambiguously extended the protections of the Clean Water Act to wetlands and headwater streams that have not always been classified as “navigable.” The following is a summary of the new Clean Water Rule from the EPA’s website:

WHY CLEAN WATER IS IMPORTANT

Clean water is vital to our health, communities, and economy. We need clean water upstream to have healthy communities downstream. The health of rivers, lakes, bays, and coastal waters depend on the streams and wetlands where they begin. Streams and wetlands provide many benefits to communities by trapping floodwaters, recharging groundwater supplies, filtering pollution, and providing habitat for fish and wildlife. People depend on clean water for their health: About 117 million Americans—one in three people—get drinking water from streams that were vulnerable to pollution before the Clean Water Rule. Our cherished way of life depends on clean water: healthy ecosystems provide wildlife habitat and places to fish, paddle, surf, and swim. Our economy depends on clean water: manufacturing, farming, tourism, recreation, energy production, and other economic sectors need clean water to function and flourish.

WHAT IS THE CLEAN WATER RULE

Protection for about 60 percent of the nation’s streams and millions of acres of wetlands has been confusing and complex as the result of Supreme Court decisions in 2001 and 2006. The Clean Water Rule protects streams and wetlands that are scientifically shown to have the greatest impact on downstream water quality and form the foundation of our nation’s water resources. EPA and the U.S. Army [Corps of Engineers] are ensuring that waters protected under the Clean Water Act are more precisely defined, more predictable, easier for businesses and industry to understand, and consistent with the law and the latest science.

The Clean Water Rule:

- **Clearly defines and protects tributaries that impact the health of downstream waters.** The Clean Water Act protects navigable waterways and their tributaries. The rule says that a tributary must show physical features of flowing water—a bed, bank, and ordinary high water mark—to warrant protection. The rule provides protection for headwaters that have these features and science shows can have a significant connection to downstream waters.
- **Provides certainty in how far safeguards extend to nearby waters.** The rule protects waters that are next to rivers and lakes and their tributaries because science shows that they impact downstream waters. The rule sets boundaries on covering nearby waters for the first time that are physical and measurable.
- **Protects the nation’s regional water treasures.** Science shows that specific water features can function like a system and impact the health of downstream waters. The rule protects prairie potholes, Carolina and Delmarva bays, pocosins, western vernal pools in California, and Texas coastal prairie wetlands when they impact downstream waters.

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- **Focuses on streams, not ditches.** The rule limits protection to ditches that are constructed out of streams or function like streams and can carry pollution downstream. So ditches that are not constructed in streams and that flow only when it rains are not covered.
- **Maintains the status of waters within Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems.** The rule does not change how those waters are treated and encourages the use of green infrastructure. The Clean Water Act protects the nation's waters. A Clean Water Act permit is only needed if these waters are going to be polluted or destroyed. <http://www.epa.gov/cleanwaterrule> Clear Protection for Clean Water
- **Reduces the use of case-specific analysis of waters.** Previously, almost any water could be put through a lengthy case-specific analysis, even if it would not be subject to the Clean Water Act. The rule significantly limits the use of case-specific analysis by creating clarity and certainty on protected waters and limiting the number of similarly situated water features.

The rule protects clean water without getting in the way of farming, ranching, and forestry. Farms across America depend on clean and reliable water for livestock, crops, and irrigation. Activities like planting, harvesting, and moving livestock have long been exempt from Clean Water Act regulation, and the Clean Water Rule doesn't change that. The Clean Water Rule provides greater clarity and certainty to farmers and does not add any new requirements or economic burden on agriculture.

The rule only protects waters that have historically been covered by the Clean Water Act. It does not interfere with or change private property rights, or address land use. It does not regulate most ditches or regulate groundwater, shallow subsurface flows or tile drains. It does not change policy on irrigation or water transfers. It does not apply to rills, gullies, or erosional features.

I'm sure you noticed the rather defensive tone of this EPA summary, which anticipated objections from farm and industrial interests. And those objections came immediately. Among other legal challenges, a group of 13 primarily western states (NOT including Oregon, Washington, or California) filed suit to halt the rule. In early October, the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals, in a divided ruling, put a stay on implementation of the rule nationwide, based on a possible conflict between the new rule and earlier Supreme Court decisions. Here's hoping that the rule is eventually allowed to come into full effect. It clearly makes no sense for headwaters and vital wetlands like prairie potholes and vernal pools to be denied the protections of the Clean Water Act.

SAVE THE DATE—RVAS Holiday Party

When: Saturday, December 5th at 6:00pm
Where: Lidgate Hall, Congregational Church, Medford



Potluck Dinner: Bring a dish to share and your own place setting. We will provide non-alcoholic drinks and decorations. If you bring wine, please remember to be discreet and take the bottle home with you.

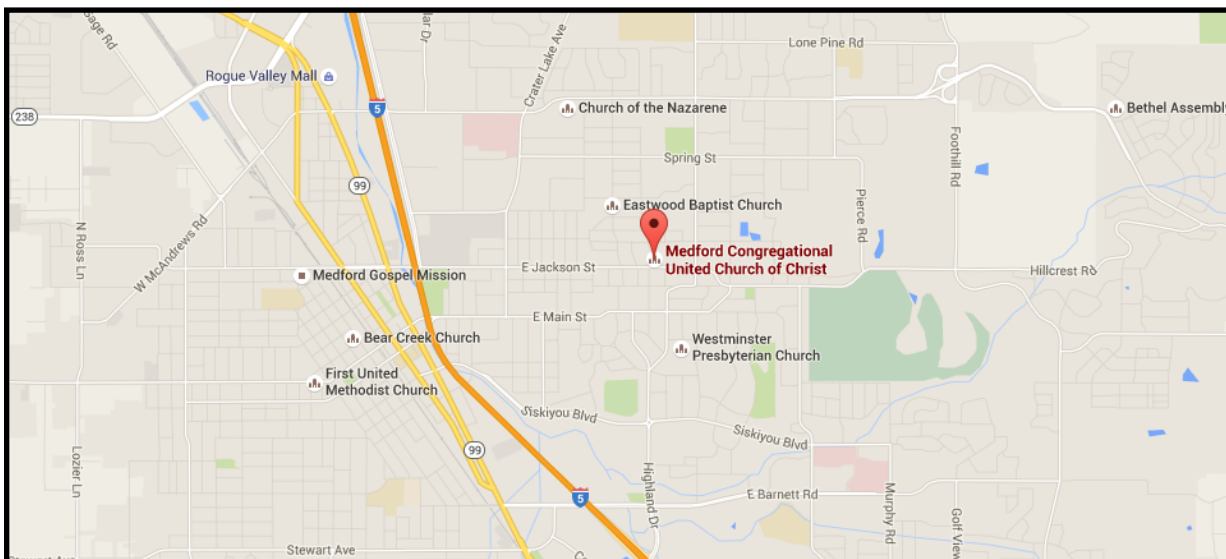
Entertainment: **Jim Livaudais** has graciously volunteered to show us his TOP 25 Fabulous Bird Pictures from around the world!
AND we may have a small group of **WARBLERS** fly in who will (for small cash inducements) entertain us with avian melodies.

Live Auction: **Pepper Trail**, our favorite auctioneer, will have several enticing items for your consideration, including: fields trips led by Bob Hunter (drift boating down the upper Rogue), Dick Ashford (to the Klamath Basin), and Pepper (100 species in one day!); overnight stays at Lithia Spring Resort, Shelley Tanquarar's beach house in Langlois, and the Running Y Resort; a pair of peonies planted for you by Jon Deason; a plant survey of your property by SOLC botanist Kristi Mergenthaler; and a Wine and Cheese Tasting with lunch at three Applegate Wineries with Kate Cleland-Sipfle as designated driver.

Raffle: **Raffle tickets** are \$5 each or 5 for \$20 and will be sold at Chapter meetings and at the party. One need not be present to win, but first-chosen tickets will get first pick of raffle items: restaurant gift certificates, wines, chocolates, puzzles, etc. Look for a more complete list of items at the Chapter meeting.

Come and enjoy an evening of food, festivity and friends as we raise money to help the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy preserve 352 acres of the best bird habitat in the Rogue Valley.

Link for directions to Lidgate Hall: <https://www.google.com/maps/place/Medford+Congregational+United+Church+of+Christ/@42.3315834,-122.8493943,15z/>



RVAS BIRDING FIELD TRIPS AND EVENTS

FIRST WEDNESDAY BIRD WALKS AT AGATE LAKE

Murray Orr will continue to lead his monthly bird walks at Agate Lake on the first Wednesday of each month. In this ongoing citizen science project, the numbers of the different species observed by walk participants are entered in the Cornell Ornithological Laboratory's eBird database. Birders wishing to join Murray should meet him at the picnic area off Dry Creek Road across from the boat ramp to observe birds on and near Agate Lake. Walks begin at 8:30 and end before noon.

November Walk: Wednesday, November 4

December Walk: Wednesday, December 2

Contact Murray at 541-857-9050 or [mworr2@charter.net](mailto:mwor2@charter.net)

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8 — MT. ASHLAND & EMIGRANT LAKE

Russ Namitz will lead this trip, which will start on Mt. Ashland. Participants will search for high-elevation birds such as White-headed Woodpecker and hope for a flyover Clark's Nutcracker or Gray-crowned Rosy-finch, and then move to Emigrant Lake to search for waterfowl and sapsuckers. Meet at 8 am at the gravel parking lot at the Shop N Kart in Ashland, Exit 14 off I-5. For those coming from Medford, meet at the north Fred Meyer at 7:30 am at the Goodwill truck parking lot near Taco Bell.

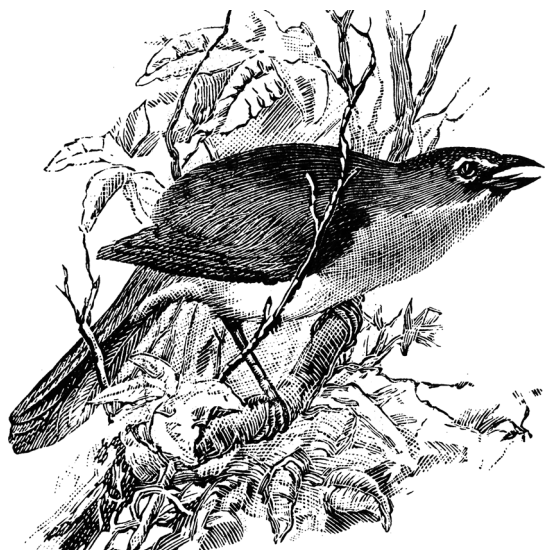
Bring layers and plan on possible inclement weather; Bring food and water, as well. Field trip will last until about 2 pm.

Space is limited. Please RSVP to Russ Namitz at namitzr@hotmail.com.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 2, 2016 — 17th ANNUAL ASHLAND DIPPER COUNT

Bob Quaccia will lead the 17th Annual Ashland Dipper Count on Saturday, January 2. Participants will meet at the Ashland Plaza at 9:00 a.m., and the count will take approximately three hours as the group slowly works its way up through Lithia Park.

For additional information, contact Bob at bquaccia@hotmail.com



A Note About Field Notes

Field Notes for Jackson and Josephine Counties will return next issue. Deadline for submission to the Dec/Jan issue is November 19.

Project FeederWatch schedule for 2015 – 2016

Coyote Trails (Medford) PFW

Thursdays: Noon – 1 pm; open to the public

Nov 19, Dec 3, Dec 17, Dec 31, Jan 14, Jan 28, Feb 11, Feb 25, Mar 10, March 24

Fridays: Noon – 1 pm; open to the public

Nov 20, Dec 4, Dec 18, Jan 15, Jan 29, Feb 12, Feb 26, Mar 11, Mar 25

North Mountain Park (Ashland) PFW

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

Nov 13, Nov 27, Dec 11, Jan 8, Jan 22, Feb 5, Feb 19, Mar 4, Mar 18

Saturdays: 9 – 10 am; open to the public

Nov 14, Nov 28, Dec 12, Dec 26, Jan 9, Jan 23, Feb 6, Feb 20, Mar 5, Mar 19

RVAS is seeking volunteers to lead each session. For more information or to volunteer contact Mary Pat Power at marypat@ashlandhome.net about the Ashland PFW and wendy.gere@gmail.com about Coyote Trails PFW.

Ashland Parks and Recreation Classes, Workshops and Events

Attracting & Feeding Birds in Your Yard

Learn about bird feeders, common bird-feeder visitors and feed that attracts birds to your yard. Common feeder visitors include: sparrows, woodpeckers, finches and more! Many of these birds rely on feeding stations, especially during the cold winter months. Instructor Vince Zauskey will answer such questions as: When should I begin feeding birds? Should I feed birds year-round? What is that hummingbird I see during the winter and should I feed it?

Vince will also show slides of common feeder birds, answer any other questions you may have and will provide handouts identifying the resources that make bird feeding easy and fun! This class will coincide with the Nationwide Project FeederWatch program that begins at North Mountain Park on Saturday, November 14. Pre-register online at www.ashland.or.us/register or call the Nature Center at 541.488.6606.

Date Tuesday, November 10

TIME 6:30—8pm

PLACE North Mountain Park

COST \$20

INSTRUCTOR Vince Zauskey is a longtime volunteer at North Mountain Park and member of the Rogue Valley Audubon Society and Klamath Bird Observatory.

Lithia Dipper Watch 2015

The American Dippers in Lithia Park in Ashland were back this spring, as were a group of curious and dedicated observers. As many of you know, most of the bridges that cross the creek in the park have had nest boxes installed under them. Since the boxes were installed in 2012 (one prototype installed 2011), American Dippers have

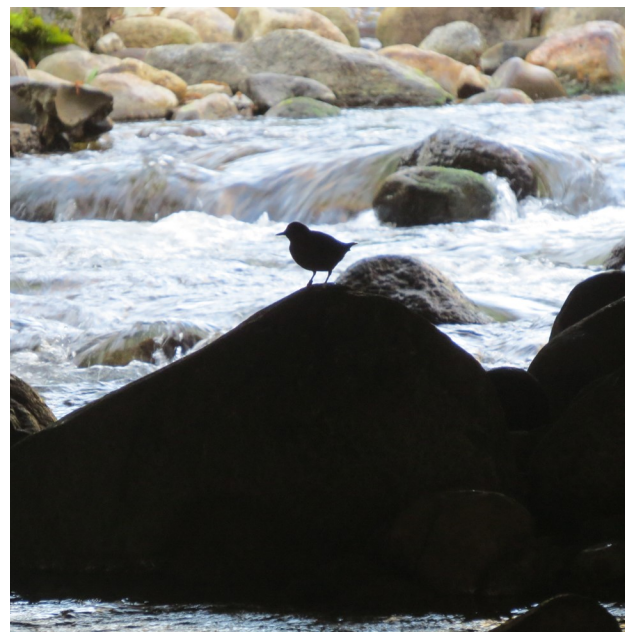


consistently used one of the boxes in the upper park. And for the first time this season, a pair used a box underneath the Main St. Bridge near Bluebird Park. Previously, the birds here used a plugged drainpipe that was less than 6" in diameter! Both pairs produced two broods that fledged despite the dry conditions.

While the use of nest boxes by the American Dipper has been documented elsewhere, it is not a widely-known or widely-utilized tool for the enhancement of American Dipper breeding in the increasingly urbanized world in western North America. It may be an important addition to the overall restoration of our waterways.

More information, including many detailed observations about the dippers and a link to more of Eric Setterberg's photos can be found at our web blog: <http://lithiadipperwatch.com/>

Many thanks to all observers, including Peter, Linda, Bob, Barbara, Eric, Dorsey, Mary Janet, Kristi, Harry, Lee, Sooney, Goly, Jim, Kim, John, Pepper and Chloe.



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 costs \$20. 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:

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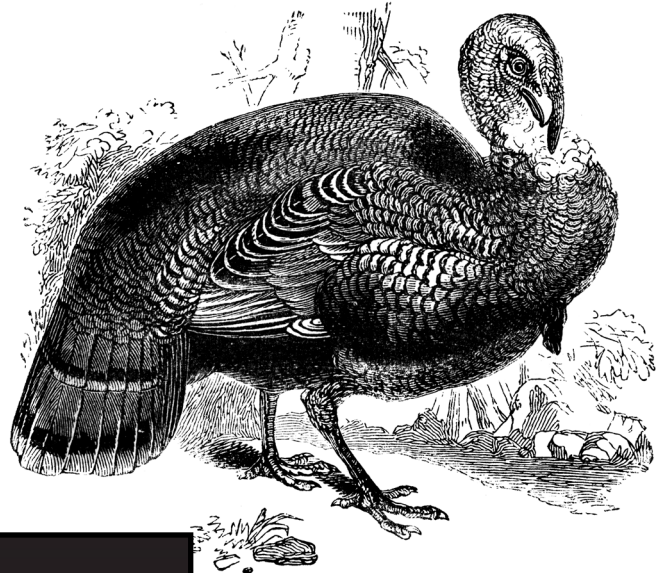
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**Happy
Thanksgiving!**

Don't forget to
feed the birds!

THE CHAT

Newsletter of the
ROGUE VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY
Post Office Box 8597
Medford, OR 97501

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Sign up to receive easy notification of Chapter activities

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