

The Chat

Number 426
September 2016

A voice for education and conservation in the natural world
Rogue Valley Audubon Society
www.roguevalleyaudubon.org
Deadline for the October issue is September 20.



SEPTEMBER PROGRAM MEETING
TUESDAY, Sept 27 at 7:00 PM

“Coastal Conservation Issues and Strategies: The Land-Sea Connection”

Presented by PAUL ENGELMEYER

Learn about the natural wonders of Oregon's complex marine food web as Paul Engelmeyer, a respected coastal conservation voice, talks about efforts to protect the prey base for seabirds and the unique habitat requirements of the ESA-listed Marbled Murrelet. Paul's presentation will include information about the designated Globally Significant Central Coast Marbled Murrelet Important Bird Area (IBA), which extends over 100,000 acres from north of Yachats basin to south of Heceta Head, as well as the Marine IBA effort, which includes partners from Baja to Barrow, Alaska. He will also provide an update on the status of Oregon's marine reserve process, including the formation of the Oregon Marine Reserve Partnership.



Paul will draw upon his years of experience managing the Ten Mile Creek Sanctuary (located near Yachats) for the Audubon Society of Portland, and on his service on Oregon's Ocean Policy Advisory Council (OPAC), which has developed a system of marine reserves and protected areas for Oregon's coast. Paul has decades of experience working in partnership to achieve conservation goals, including with the Siuslaw Forest Stewardship groups, which received the 2010 Two Chiefs' Partnership Award.

****Chapter meetings are held at 1801 E. Jackson Street in Medford****
Lidgate Hall, Medford Congregational Church

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Chapter Program meetings are held on the fourth Tuesday of the month, September through April, at 7:00 pm. Meetings take place at 1801 E. Jackson St., Medford, in Lidgate Hall of the Medford Congregational Church.

Letter from the Board

Hi again! We hope you all have had a great summer and are ready to start thinking (a little, at least) about Rogue Valley Audubon Society activities. We have—and are. As you will note from the title of this column, we are changing the format of this space slightly, so it will have more input from the RVAS Board as a whole and less from just the President.

At our June Workshop this year, we agreed on several priority objectives and will keep you up-to-date on our progress toward achieving these goals during this coming year:

- Develop a sustainable model for Birding in the Schools
- Develop a kit and a plan for outreach at events
- Schedule more local field trips that don't require car-pooling
- Develop a Holiday Party Fund-raiser for Birding in the Schools
- Disseminate the Imperatrice Bird Survey results to RVAS members

Today we want to tell you about our “sustainable model” for Birding in the Schools.” We are very happy to tell you that, with the invaluable help of Board member Jeanine Moy, we have been able to establish two new internships for first-year graduate students in SOU's Environmental Education program to run our Birding in the Schools. You may remember that Jeanine was the first person we paid to give bird classes in local elementary schools in 2014-15. She developed the curriculum she used while she was working for KBO before they stopped their education program. Last year, Jeanine helped Nate Trimble continue these classes for us.

Recruiting qualified people to do this every year and providing adequate compensation for them has presented a challenge. Stewart Janes and Linda Hilligoss, who lead the Environmental Education program at SOU, have agreed to give credit toward the program for these interns, and RVAS will pay them each \$500 for 10 class hours during the year. Jeanine will mentor them, drawing on her years of experience.

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Letter from the Board continued from page 2

Our first intern this year is John Ward. He has birding expertise, extensive classroom experience and is excited to help us develop and expand this program. (Wow, lots of “ex’s”!) We hope to introduce you to him on September 27 when he can tell you a little more about himself and what he plans to accomplish this year. He will also ask for your help supporting him both at an introductory bird outing to familiarize them with our local birds (timing to be announced) and to be on a list of people we can call if needed for help with birding field trips for some of the classes this year.

We hope to see you on September 27!

On a personal note, we are sad to lose the valuable contributions of Gary and Carol Palmer due to Carol’s health issues. We wish them both the best.

The RVAS Board

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 through the fall. These walks take place on the first Wednesday of each month. In this ongoing citizen science project, the numbers of 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 on the east side of the lake. Walks begin at 8:30 and end before noon.

See map at www.roguevalleyaudubon.org/First_Wednesday_Count.html

September Walk: Wednesday, September 7

October Walk: Wednesday, October 5

November Walk: Wednesday, November 2

BIRDING MT. ASHLAND

Vince Zauskey will lead a 1/2-day field trip to Mt. Ashland and surrounding areas on Sat., 9/17. We will search for Fall migrants such as accipiters, warblers and sparrows. Other birds we may see include Green-tailed Towhees, Cassin's Finch, Townsend's Solitaire and the harder to find White-headed Woodpecker. Meet at Shop N' Kart parking lot, Ashland, 8AM (**NOTE:** Shop N' Kart no longer has widespread parking, so we may have to move a few cars to the outer edge of nearby Bi-Mart.) We'll depart the area by noon and head back to Ashland. Expect light walking. Bring snacks and water, and a coat for possible cooler temps at higher elevations.

Field Notes from Jackson County (May 23 - Aug 20, 2016) Compiled by Jeff Tufts

Four out-of-territory species highlighted the birding reports submitted since the last edition of these notes; unfortunately, only one of them was seen by multiple observers.

The bird seen by many parties was the **Gray Catbird** first spotted Jun 21 at Wil-low Lake (EL). It remained at the location for a few days, long enough for several local birders to add it to their county lists.

Although fairly common breeders in portions of northeast Oregon, Gray Catbirds have been seen only a handful of times in Jackson County. The most recent sighting prior to this summer's bird was from North Mountain Park in June of 2014.

One day after the Catbird was found, there was a remarkable report of two **Brown Thrashers** seen near the south boat ramp at Emigrant Lake (MH). Only two sightings of this species are in the Jackson County records (1997 and 2002). It's an uncommon visitor to our state, and the first verified record was from Brookings (Curry Co.) in July 1978. Due to multiple confirmed sightings, the species was removed from the Oregon Records Committee's Review List in March 2013.

Still on the review list is **Phainopepla**, a desert-favoring species that has seven official Oregon records (two from Jackson County—both of those in December). One female-type bird was reported from the Co-lestin Road area May 28 (BH,SH), very close to the California border.

One male **Indigo Bunting** was reported from the Mt. Ashland area June 27 (JT), and it was seen in habitat that regularly attracts breeding Lazuli Buntings. Although it is primarily an eastern bird, it is considered "regular" along the west coast in spring. Most of them are males, and many have been known to establish territories and attract female Lazuli Buntings for nesting attempts.

As these notes are being written, south-bound waterfowl are beginning to show up in

Jackson County. Notable were flocks of 16 **Northern Pintail** at Agate Lake Aug 10 (RN), 15 of the same species at Lost Creek Lake Aug 16 (RN), and a dozen at the Kirtland ponds Aug 19 (FL).

There was a startling report of a **Ruddy Duck** included in an eBird checklist from a segment of the Pacific Crest Trail south and west of Mt. Ashland (SS) on July 29. There were no comments indicating whether it was favoring the company of Dark-eyed Juncos or Red-breasted Nuthatches.

Great Egrets aren't known to breed in Jackson County, but they regularly begin to gather at obvious locations (Emigrant Lake, Agate Lake, etc.) during post-breeding dispersal. Agate Lake seems to be especially attractive as the water level shrinks, and twenty-five of them were briefly seen resting along the west shoreline July 30 (RVAS).

Shorebird migration is a wonderful thing. Just when you think it's ending, it starts all over again. There's no way to know exactly when the last northbound bird passes through or when the first southbound bird shows up, but the interval isn't long.

The first significant batch of what we have to think are southbound birds were forty **Least Sandpipers** and sixty **Western Sandpipers** at the Kirtland Ponds July 8 (RN). And Agate Lake had sixty Western Sandpipers Aug 10 (RN, FE).

Where there are Western Sandpipers in numbers, there's always the chance of finding one or two **Semipalmated Sandpipers**. They are the most abundant transient shorebird in eastern North America, but only scattered individuals show up on the west coast each year. Reports of this species from Jackson County seems to have increased in recent years, and that may be a result of local birders having a greater familiarity with the field marks that distinguish it from Westerns and Least. First Semipalmated located this season was a bird at the Kirtland ponds July 28 (RN), and others have been seen (and photographed) at Agate Lake and Emigrant Lake.

Field Notes continued on page 5

Field Notes continued from page 4

Birds of Oregon: A General Reference notes that Semipalmated Sandpipers may be the fastest-flying of the long-distance shorebirds. In 1997, an individual banded in Massachusetts was found four days later 2,800 miles south in Guyana. The bird had averaged almost 30 miles/hour for ninety-six hours, without touching land (or using Facebook)!!

Other shorebirds species seen as of this writing include **Lesser and Greater Yellow-legs**, **Long-billed Dowitcher**, **Semipalmated Plover**, and **Wilson's and Red-necked Phalarope**. Still waiting (as of Aug 20) for the first reports of Baird's and Pectoral Sandpipers.

*[Additional Note: **Baird's Sandpipers** were seen late on Aug 19 (RN) at the Kirtland ponds and on Aug 20 (JT) at Agate Lake.]*

Not much to report from the Gulls-and-Terns division, although there seem to be more **California Gulls** around than usual. As many as 25 were at the Kirtland ponds back on May 22 (JT), and a half-dozen or more hung around Agate Lake for several days in early August.

For the second straight year, a family grouping of **Purple Martins** made their pres-

ence known at a residence on North Valley View Road on the outskirts of Ashland (KS). Immature birds were in the group (as they were last year) that showed up July 28, and it seems likely they were raised locally.

Purple Martins have been thought of as rare or irregular in Jackson County for several years, but multiple sightings this year at several different locations may indicate an upward trend.

Other rarities of interest in the period covered here were a **Black-chinned Hummingbird** at a feeder in Medford May 20 (GP) and a **Pygmy Nuthatch** near the Mt. Ashland parking lot June 3 (RK).

The first **Lewis's Woodpecker** of the season was seen along the Keno Access Road Aug 12 (LF), and an early **Varied Thrush** was in the Pioneer Hills area Aug 18 (JK).

Thanks to all whose sightings contributed to this report: Forest English, Lee French, Mark Heatherington, Bill Hering, Suzanne Hering, Janet Kelly, Ron Ketchum, Edith Lindner, Frank Lospalluto, Russ Namitz, Gary Palmer, Karl Schneck, and Susan Steele. RVAS indicate sightings from a Rogue Valley Audubon event.

TREASURER'S REPORT
Submitted by Sue Polich

2015-2016 Financial Summary

Total income of \$15,206 came from the following sources:

Sale of the Birds of Jackson County	\$ 227
Chat advertising	\$ 350
Local dues	\$2,200
National Audubon dues	\$1,870
Birdathon	\$3,000
Donations	\$2,872
Holiday Event	\$4,062
Great Gray Owl donations	\$ 625

Total expenses of \$13,276 includes the following:

Administrative expenses	\$2,008
Chapter meeting expenses	\$ 652
Printing and mailing the Chat	\$1,782
Printing Hot Spots Brochure	\$ 177
Feeder Watch (birdseed)	\$ 618
Membership letters	\$ 83
Conference attendance	\$ 216
Fundraising expenses	\$ 75
Expenses that support the RVAS mission*	\$7,460
Great Gray Owl expenses	\$ 205

*"RVAS mission expenses" includes support of the KBO Mountain Bird Festival (\$1,000); chapter membership in the Oregon Conservation Network (\$300); donations to Water-Watch (\$350) and the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy (\$4,000); purchase of Purple Martin nesting houses (\$450); and several activities that support education in the schools through North Mountain Park (\$200), and Birding in the Schools (\$1,200).

**Field Notes from Josephine County
(April 20 - Aug 20, 2016)
Compiled by Jeff Tufts**

Perhaps the most interesting report from Josephine County during the period covered in these notes comes from Wildlife Images Rehabilitation and Education Center outside of Grants Pass on June 6. An eBird checklist from that location includes five **Rufous/Allen's Hummingbirds**, and the reporting party (JT) includes the following comment: "Both Rufous and Allen's are present here, as we've identified both in the hand during banding this week and last."

Females of the two *Selasphorus* species are virtually impossible to separate in the field, and males are problematic since Rufous males with green backs are occasionally found. But with birds in hand, this banding group has been able to definitely identify Allen's at the location.

Romain Cooper has reported probable male Allen's Hummingbirds from the Takilma area this year and last, and eBird records submitted by Dennis Vroman include four banding captures at Horse Creek Meadows several miles west of Grants Pass between 1992 and 2002.

Allen's Hummingbirds breed in Curry County and elsewhere along the coast, and obviously some individuals find their way across the mountains and into Josephine County. Could Jackson County be next?

Eastern Kingbirds breed in eastern Oregon, but are only occasionally seen west of the Cascades. One was found in the hills west of Williams May 31 (JM).

More recently, a **Northern Mockingbird** was seen along Waldo Road south of Cave Junction July 30 (FE).

One **White-crowned Sparrow** was at the Siskiyou Field Institute in Selma July 2 (GB).

There was a single **Lewis's Woodpecker** spotted in the Illinois River Road burn area west of Eight Dollar Mountain July 1 (GB).

One **Bank Swallow** was at Whitehorse County Park May 14 (DV).

Thanks to those whose sightings contributed to this report: Gloria Beerman, Forrest English, Jeff Miller, Jaclyn Tolchin, and Dennis Vroman.

The Conservation Column

By Pepper Trail

RVAS Comments on Draft Conservation Plan

We start the new “Audubon year” with that perennial issue for our region, the fate of the Klamath National Wildlife Refuges. This spring, the US Fish and Wildlife Service released the long-overdue draft Klamath Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP). This document, unfortunately, fell far short of assuring a secure future for these irreplaceable waterbird refuges and their water supply.

Detailed comments, totaling over 120 pages, were submitted to the US Fish and Wildlife Service on August 4, from Audubon Society of Portland and six other Oregon Audubon Chapters, including RVAS. Carol Palmer stepped up and took the lead on our involvement with preparing these comments. The remainder of this column is the introductory and concluding text of these comments.

Comments on Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan, Klamath National Wildlife Refuge Complex

The Klamath Refuge Complex consists of approximately 200,000 acres of lands adjoining the border dividing Oregon and California. This area historically consisted of over 185,000 acres of wetlands, lakes, and marshes, but less than 25% of these areas remain today. Despite the tremendous loss of wetlands that has occurred over the last 150 years, the Klamath Refuge Complex still provides essential habitat for millions of migratory birds each year, which utilize the Refuges for nesting, molting, forage, and cover.

Because these lands provide important habitat for migratory birds and other species of wildlife, Oregon and California ceded these lands to the United States, which withdrew them from entry by private individuals. These lands were then set aside specifically for wildlife purposes and incorporated into the National Wildlife Refuge System (“NWRS”). As units of the NWRS, federal law requires the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (the “Service”) to manage these lands for the primary purposes of wildlife conservation.

Despite these legal mandates, the remaining wetland habitat and the wildlife that depend upon it are facing severe threats from an artificially curtailed supply of water and persistent drought conditions, threats that are now being exacerbated by climate change. Most of the water that does flow to the refuges under water rights held by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is not used to sustain wetland habitat, but is instead currently allocated to agricultural lease lands within the boundaries of the Lower Klamath and Tule Lake Refuges. As a result, water allocations to wetlands on the Lower Klamath and Tule Lake Refuges have dwindled to a trickle over the past several years. The Lower Klamath Wildlife Refuge, which is listed as a National Natural Landscape because of its ecological value, may have been completely deprived of water in some recent years. These problems in water allocation have caused corresponding decreases in wildlife habitat and water quality, decreases in populations of migratory birds, and increases in outbreaks of avian disease.

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While agribusiness is continuing to irrigate leaselands inside these wildlife refuges, the wildlife species that are protected by law are dying by the thousands in outbreaks of avian disease as the wetlands have gone dry.

In short, management of the Klamath Refuge Complex is failing to meet the wildlife conservation purposes for which these lands were set aside by the Federal government and conditions are continuing to worsen. The current level of leaseland farming is simply not consistent with the wildlife conservation purposes of the Klamath Refuge Complex, which were established by Congress.

The Draft CCP/EIS is fatally flawed because it does not address the fundamental underlying threats to wildlife habitat – lack of water for the Refuge wetlands. “Proper waterfowl management” requires the Service to ensure that the refuge lands have the minimum amount of water necessary to support the wetland habitat required by waterfowl and other wildlife. In order to provide the minimum necessary quantity of water, the Service may have to decrease—or eliminate—the acreage of leaseland farming on refuge lands. Or the Service may have to provide the wetlands with a higher priority for water delivery as compared to the lease lands.

Along with these management steps, the Service must also consider whether and to what extent a major restoration effort is required in the Klamath Refuge Complex in order to meet their purposes as required by law.

Consideration of these management steps is required by federal law because these lands have been dedicated for “the major purpose of waterfowl management.” In passing the Kuchel Act, Congress addressed the conflict between agriculture and wildlife conservation and “resolved the issue in favor of conservation, primarily waterfowl management purposes, because it clearly appears that such a priority is in the public interest * * *.” The Draft CCP/EIS fails to reflect this fundamental policy choice made by Congress. In fact, the Draft EIS fails to even consider an alternative that would result in reallocation of water from leaseland agriculture to wetland habitats within the Refuge Complex. In the comments that follow, we provide further detailed feedback on the Draft CCP/EIS, including new alternatives that must be considered along with serious flaws in the agency’s consideration and disclosure of data and impacts relating to waterfowl and wildlife, water quality, pesticides and toxics, and economics. [The body of the comments follow this introduction...]

CONCLUSION

For the reasons set forth above, it is clear that the current level of leaseland farming is not consistent with the primary conservation purposes of the Klamath Refuge Complex. The Final CCP must consider a reduction in or phase out of the leaseland farming program to ensure that enough water is available to support the wetland habitat existing when the Kuchel Act was passed and necessary to support functioning populations of all wildlife that depend on the Klamath Wildlife Refuges for habitat. Federal law requires that the Service change course, and none of the alternatives in the Draft CCP/EIS even consider the fundamental re-allocation of water that is necessary to conserve the incredible biodiversity of this national treasure.

RVAS will continue to monitor the CCP as it is revised, and we will keep our membership informed.

Upcoming RVAS Programs

Sept 27: "Coastal Conservation Issues and Strategies: The Land-Sea Connection," by Paul Engelmeyer, Manager of the Ten Mile Sanctuary near Yachats

Oct 25: "Birds of the South South Pacific: Tahiti to Easter Island," by Pepper Trail, ornithologist at the Forensics Lab in Ashland and RVAS member

Nov. 22: "Southern Oregon Bats: Habits and Challenges," by Dave Clayton, Forest Service Biologist



Peter Kreisman photographed this Great Gray Owl in late August.



Late Summer Saturday Morning Bird Walk

Stroll through North Mountain Park with local birding experts from the Rogue Valley. This will be an opportunity to see and hear a variety of birds that are year-round residents in the Rogue Valley and some that are migrating through the area. Binoculars and field guides will be available for check-out. Pre-register online at ashland.or.us/register or call the Nature Center at 541.488.6606.

DATE Saturday, Sept 10

TIME 8-9 AM

PLACE North Mountain Park

COST Free

INSTRUCTORS are local volunteer birders

Bear Creek Salmon Festival

Saturday, October 1 from 11:00 am - 4:00 pm

The Bear Creek Salmon Festival returns for its 12th year with the theme: “Stewardship Flows Downhill.” This admission-free festival will feature all-ages interactive exhibits focusing on improving salmon and wildlife habitat in our region and on watershed stewardship in our own homes and yards. Explore Bear Creek and beautiful North Mountain Park while learning from local experts on topics ranging from water saving and pollinator friendly gardening to how and where to see spawning salmon in Bear Creek. Experience a variety of fun outdoor activities such as the Salmon Story Tent, Native American drumming, the Salmon Spiral Labyrinth, crafts and fly casting.

A food concession will be provided by Sultan’s Delight. Please help us make this a Zero Waste event by bringing a reusable water bottle or cup. To learn more, including a schedule of Watershed Exploration Days – regional events, visit www.BearCreekSalmonFestival.net or call the North Mountain Park Nature Center at 541.488.6606.



Karen DeBoer captured this Pileated woodpecker outside her cabin at Lake of the Woods.

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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best bird photos!**

Please send them to Juliet at
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Please identify the bird and include the
photographer's name and location
where it was photographed.

Thank you!

Birding: More Than
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THE CHAT

Newsletter of the
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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.

