

The Chat

Number 421
February 2016

A voice for education and conservation in the natural world

Rogue Valley Audubon Society

www.roguevalleyaudubon.org


Deadline for the March issue is February 20.



FEBRUARY PROGRAM MEETING
TUESDAY, Feb. 23 at 7 PM

"Birds in Art, Science and History"
Presented by HARRY FULLER

Join Harry Fuller on an exploration of some of the landmarks in bird illustration and the discovery of North America's birds. Wilson and Audubon were both explorers and important artists. A major landmark field guide was written by Florence Merriam Bailey, two decades before Peterson's first guide. Some other names you see in field guides belong to men and women who were crucial in the early science of ornithology: Cassin, Brewer, Anna, Nuttall, Townsend and Steller.



Harry Fuller is the author of *Freeway Birding*, *San Francisco to Seattle* and *Great Gray Owls of California, Oregon and Washington*. He leads field trips for Klamath Bird Observatory, Golden Gate Audubon Society and Partnership for International Birding. While living in Ashland he helped start the Ashland Christmas Bird Count and the Mountain Bird Festival. He currently lives in McMinnville.



Harry Fuller's website: www.towhee.net

Oregon & Northern California bird updates: <http://atowhee.wordpress.com/>

Partnership for International Birding: PIBirding.wordpress.com

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

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

Wendy Gere

wendy.gere@gmail.com

Carol Mockridge

mockridge50@hotmail.com

Carol Palmer

carol_p@charter.net

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, fgpalmer@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

The illegal occupation of The Malheur Wildlife Refuge center is of prime concern this month.

On January 19, I took part in a Rally for Malheur and Public Lands and said a few words at Representative Walden's office on your behalf. The intent of the rally was to speak out loud and clear for the vital importance of public lands for America, its people and its wildlife. And, of course, to protest the armed occupation of one of Oregon's public-lands treasures, the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. As I write this, the occupation is dragging on into its third week, despite increasingly urgent calls from around the country—and particularly from the residents of Harney County—for the occupation to end. By the time you read this, I can only hope that will have happened.

Almost as soon as the takeover of Malheur took place, the Oregon Audubon community mobilized to make a forceful response. A letter was drafted by Portland Audubon in consultation with local chapters, and was publicly released on January 11 with the signatures of every Audubon chapter in Oregon and Washington. I urge you to read this statement, either in the Conservation Column in this newsletter or by following the link on the RVAS website. It provides a great summary of the importance of the refuge and of the long history of collaboration between refuge managers and the local community. The RVAS website also has a link to a list of suggestions for each of us on how to make our voices heard about this issue.

Once the occupation is over, it will be imperative for all conservation-minded people to continue to speak out loudly in defense of our public lands generally and national wildlife refuges specifically. We cannot allow the media and politicians (such as, unfortunately, our own Congressman Greg Walden) to reframe this outrageous and illegal takeover in terms of "the legitimate grievances" of the Bundys and their ilk. While the concerns of the ranching, farming, logging and mining communities must be considered in land use discussions, the managers of the Malheur Refuge have made a serious effort to do just that. Guns have absolutely no place in such discussions.

President's Letter continued on page 3

President's Letter continued from page 2

We must be forthright, steadfast, and uncompromising in our message that public lands protection and wildlife preservation are essential public services of government, which benefit all Americans – in contrast to the narrow private interests championed by the Bundys and their allies.

You can affirm your support of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge by making a donation to Friends of Malheur at **www.malheurfriends.org**

Linda

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.

February Walk: Wednesday, February 3

March Walk: Wednesday, March 2

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

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27 - KLAMATH BASIN

Dick Ashford will lead this trip, which will focus on wintering raptors and waterfowl. With its number of National Wildlife Refuges, the Klamath Basin is a premier birding destination where waterfowl, Bald Eagles and other raptors congregate in a wonderful birding spectacle. Enjoy detailed instruction from raptor expert Dick Ashford on aging and identifying the plethora of raptors, both individuals and species.

Meet at the Shop N Kart (gravel parking lot) in Ashland at 8 am to carpool. Pack a lunch and expect to return to the starting point around 5:00 pm. RSVP to Field Trip Coordinator Russ Namitz at **namitzr@hotmail.com** to secure your spot, as this trip has limited space.

SATURDAY, MARCH 12 - SISKIYOU COUNTY AND SHASTA VALLEY

Frank Lospalluto will lead a trip to the Shasta Valley, which is a birding mecca for wintering raptors and waterfowl. Take advantage of Frank's expertise to gain instruction on birding by ear, as well as fine-tuning your waterfowl identification.

Meet at the Shop N Kart (gravel parking lot) in Ashland at 8 am to carpool. Pack a lunch and expect to return between 2-4 pm. RSVP to Field Trip Coordinator Russ Namitz at **namitzr@hotmail.com** to secure your spot, as this trip has limited space.

Field Notes from Jackson County (Nov 21 - Jan 19, 2015) Compiled by Jeff Tufts

Rain and snow are to be welcomed. We know that. But with the wet, cold weather comes fewer attractive birding opportunities and, generally, fewer notable bird sightings. That's certainly been the case so far this winter.

The only really rare passerine to be seen during the period covered by this report was the **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** spotted in Area H (Sams Valley) during the Medford Christmas Count (Dec. 19). This small, distinctive bird breeds in Jackson County but is usually gone from the area by mid-September. It is known to engage in "reverse fall migration" on the east coast of North America, and similar behavior by small numbers of birds in the West may account for late fall-winter sightings in Oregon.

One Blue-gray Gnatcatcher was reported on a Douglas County CBC December 30, 2015, and another individual was seen regularly at the Tillamook Bay Wetlands Area (in Tillamook County, on the coast, roughly the same latitude as Portland) from late November, 2015, through January 2 of this year.

There are historical CBC reports of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers from Salem (Dec. 1979), Grants Pass (Dec. 1993) and Coos Bay (Dec. 1981).

And then there are the **Tree Swallows**. What to make of them? If they're seen in October in Jackson County, we can call them late migrants that are southward bound. And in January, they can be early northward bound migrants. But when they're frequently reported in December—albeit in relatively small numbers—it's natural to consider alternative narratives.

Could the Tree Swallows that have been reported in our area in December and January be birds that bred far to the north (Alaska or northern Canada), migrated south in mid-to-late-summer, and then began moving northward again in early December? Or

maybe they never moved further south than Oregon.

Birds of Oregon: A General Reference (2003) notes that there are "numerous late Dec. and Jan. records, but successful overwintering has not been demonstrated." That publication also notes that "in cold weather, individuals will roost close together to conserve heat, or may become torpid."

Multiple local Tree Swallow reports this winter have mostly been from the Kirtland ponds, starting in mid-December and continuing through mid-January. Curiously, eBird records do not include a single Jackson County report from the month of November (that's ANY November.)

Of interest while considering the status of this species is a continuing small group being reported from the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge (that's on the Columbia River north of Portland). As many as 14 Tree Swallows were reported in mid-December from that location, and there have been several reports since then of at least a half-dozen.

Barn Swallows are often the last swallow species to pass through this area in large numbers during fall migration, but two unusually late birds were reported from Kirtland Dec. 5 (DI).

If the passerine action is slow, look to the waterbirds.

White geese are rarely common in Jackson County, but the occasional **Snow** or **Ross's Goose** is often to be found associating with flocks of Canada Geese.

A single Ross's Goose was spotted flying overhead with several dozen Canada Geese during the Ashland CBC Jan. 2, and reports of a single bird from Medford Jan. 4 (RN) and the Agate Lake area Jan. 18 (BW) could well have been the same individual.

First Snow Goose report for this period came from the Kirtland ponds Nov. 29 (JT), and subsequent reports include four from the Brophy Road area north of Eagle Point Jan. 17 (BH).

Field Notes continued on page 5

Field Notes continued from page 4

Tundra Swans are most often found at certain favored hangouts, with the most reliable location being fields along Brophy Road east of Ball Road. Ten were reported from that spot Jan. 17 (BH), and they were still there two days later.

Most interesting of the smaller waterfowl seen locally were two **Redheads** spotted at the Kirtland ponds Dec. 22 (RN). They are one of the tougher duck species to find in Jackson County.

Eurasian Wigeon reports include two at Lost Creek Lake Dec. 7 (RN, CB), four at Lynn Newbry Park on the Talent Greenway Dec. 8 (GV), and two from the VA Domiciliary in White City Jan. 19 (BW).

Notable because of where they were seen were a female **Common Goldeneye** at the Sterling Meadows Golf Course in Medford Jan. 4 (NB), and two females of the same species in Bear Creek in Medford Jan. 19 (RN).

Second biggest surprise of the Medford CBC Dec. 19 was the **Pacific Loon** spotted at Kime Reservoir in greater west Medford. Lost Creek Lake is the location where this deep-diving species is most often seen.

Not many unexpected grebe reports from this period, but eight **Eared Grebes** at Whetstone Pond Jan. 9 (eB) were notable, as were three **Western Grebes** at Ashland Pond Jan. 7 (eB).

Noticeable flocks of **American White Pelicans** are fairly common in the valley through the fall, but by early December they pretty much disappear. It's surprising then that as many as 20 were spotted at Emigrant Lake Dec. 27 (GZ).

Gull sightings were few and far between during the period covered in this report. For the fourth straight year, not a single gull was found during the Medford Christmas Count, and the Ashland count had only five **Ring-billed Gulls**.

In late November (Nov. 22) there were 15 **Bonaparte's Gulls** at Lost Creek Lake (hanging out with five Ring-billed Gulls). And Emigrant Lake had 24 Ring-billed Gulls Dec. 31 (MD).

Raptor populations this winter may be slightly above average—a record 123 **Red-tailed Hawks** were spotted during the Dec. 30 Medford “Raptor Run”—and **Rough-legged Hawks** have been especially conspicuous. They have been seen in the area north of Eagle Point, northeast of Interstate 5 in Ashland, in the Agate Lake area (at least two different birds), and in the Denman Wildlife Area.

Ferruginous Hawks have been a bit harder to find. One was in Sams Valley during late November (Nov. 29, JT), and another has been reported twice from the vicinity of the Whetstone Preserve in Central Point (Jan. 18-19, BH, BW).

Now, about those sparrows. We have our visiting **Golden-crowned** and **White-crowned Sparrows** (with a few **White-throated Sparrows** thrown in). And, we have our **Fox Sparrows**, **Lark Sparrows**, and **Savannah Sparrows**. There are the resident **Song Sparrows** and their close cousins, the **Lincoln's Sparrows**.

And then there is **THE Swamp Sparrow**. [To be fair, there was a second Swamp Sparrow reported Jan. 1 from the Butler Creek Road area (DA).] And it's that bird at North Mountain Park that we salute. It was first found Nov. 2 at the Ashland park, even before the bird feeders were well stocked. And it's still there. It put in an obligatory appearance for the Ashland CBC, and it's been seen as recently at Jan. 18. Let's call it the southern Oregon FeederWatch Bird of the Year.

How do we know that it's the same bird being seen each time (and most likely the same bird that was seen last year and the year before)? Well, we don't know. BUT WE DO KNOW! Do you know what I mean?!

Thanks to all whose sightings contributed to this report: Dick Ashford, Norm Barrett, Camden Bruner, Matt Dufort, Bob Hunter, David Irons, Russ Namitz, Greg Vinyard, Ben Wieland and Glen Zimmerman. Sightings designated by (eB) are from eBird.

Holiday Party: Contributors Put the “Fun” Back into Fundraising

By Linda Kreisman

Our annual Holiday Party of December 5th was a great success! Not only did we all have a lot of fun, we raised almost the entire \$4,000 we had pledged to the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy for their purchase of The Rogue River Preserve.

Many people and businesses need to be thanked for making this happen.

First of all: Thanks to all of you for coming, joining in the festivities, and opening your pocket books to buy raffle tickets and bid on the many auction items. Your support was vital, of course, and much appreciated.

Pepper Trail, not only for being an unparalleled auctioneer who made us all laugh delightfully while getting us to bid more and more, but also for coming up with the idea of making the pledge to SOLC in the first place. Without him, we couldn't/wouldn't have done it.

Sooney Viani and Kate Cleland-Sipfle for giving us the confidence to think that we could do it—without them we probably wouldn't have even tried—and then for helping us to organize all the logistics and carry through with it. They also had the inspired idea of “The Warblers” and entertained us all through dinner, along with Sally Peterson and Nick Viani.

Jim Livaudais for his beautiful photographs and for rising to the challenge of picking out his favorites. They were a real treat.

All of the RVAS Board members who had never before asked for contributions but who did it anyway and did it well. All who set up and decorated the tables. Everyone who brought and organized the array of offerings and beverages and tidied up afterward.

Pepper Trail, Bob Hunter and Dick Ashford for offering their all-day field trips that were bid on with lots of drama.

Thank you to Ron Ketchum, Kate McKenzie, Bob Hunter, Carol Palmer, Lynn McDonald, Gaylene and Judd Hurley, Emmalisa Whalley, Frank Lospalluto, Shelly Tanquary, Kate Cleland-Sipfle, Augusta Lucas-Andreae, Jon Deason, Kristi Mergenthaler, Mike Guest, Sally Peterson, Carol Mockridge, and the Teplys for your contributions.

Thank you to our business supporters and donors: The Northwest Nature Shop, Bloomsbury Books, Ashland Food Co-op, Noble Coffee, Rogue Valley Roasters, Dagoba Organic Chocolate, Branson's Chocolates, The Wild Goose Café and Bar, Jackson Creek Pizza Company, Little Shop of Bagels, Bobbio's Pizza and Pasta Restaurant, and Porters Train Station Restaurant, The Running Y, The Lithia Springs Resort, The Greensprings Inn, Craterian Theater and Ashland Cinema & Varsity Theatres, Grizzly Peak Winery, South Stage Cellars, Valley View Winery, Klamath Bird Observatory, Siskiyou Field Institute, and Wild Birds Unlimited.

The Conservation Column

This month, we have devoted the Conservation Column to the illegal occupation of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, which began on January 2. Pepper Trail's column will return next issue.

Audubon Statement on the Occupation of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge

January 3, 2016: Malheur National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1908 by President Theodore Roosevelt to protect the vast populations of waterbirds that were being decimated by wanton killing by the plume trade. The 188,000 acre refuge represents some of the most important bird habitat on the Pacific Flyway. It is one of the crown jewels of the National Wildlife Refuge System and belongs to all Americans. In 2013, the Refuge adopted a long-term management plan developed through an inclusive collaborative process that brought together the local community, tribes, conservation groups, state and federal agencies, and other stakeholders. These stakeholders have continued to work together to implement this strategy which includes one of the biggest wetland restoration efforts ever undertaken.

The occupation of Malheur by armed, out of state militia groups puts one of America's most important wildlife refuges at risk. It violates the most basic principles of the Public Trust Doctrine and holds hostage public lands and public resources to serve the very narrow political agenda of the occupiers. The occupiers have used the flimsiest of pretexts to justify their actions—the conviction of two local ranchers in a case involving arson and poaching on public lands. Notably, neither the local community nor the individuals convicted have requested or endorsed the occupation or the assistance of militia groups.

Audubon fought 100 years ago to protect this incredible place. The powerful images taken by Oregon Audubon founder, William Finley, of Malheur's incredible bird populations and the wanton killing that was being inflicted upon them, caused President Theodore Roosevelt to make Malheur one of the first wildlife refuges in the Western United States. Audubon Chapters across Oregon and Washington, from our coasts, valleys, mountains and deserts, rural and urban, call upon the local, state and federal authorities to once again protect this incredible place for the amazing wildlife that live there and to preserve this natural heritage for current and future generations. Audubon greatly appreciates the outstanding federal employees that staff the refuge, as well as members of the local community who have rejected this illegal occupation. We hope for a safe, expeditious end to this armed occupation. The perpetrators of this armed occupation should be prosecuted. It is time for myriad local and non-local stakeholders to continue to work together to restore Malheur in ways that are supportive of both the local ecology and the local economy--the occupiers are serving nobody's interests except their own.

The real shame would be if Malheur came to be seen as a flashpoint for controversy. In fact it should be seen as a tremendous example of true collaboration and consensus building—a place where myriad diverse interests came together, worked hard and developed a common agenda to support both the local ecology and the local economy. On a landscape rife with tremendous challenges, we need to redouble efforts on a place where consensus and collaboration is being accomplished. This should be a call to action for the community, non-governmental stakeholders, and local, state and federal agencies to invest deeply in the Malheur effort. It is a critically important opportunity and it needs to succeed.

Conservation Column continued on page 8

Conservation Column continued from page 7

Ken Hashagen, President, East Cascades Audubon Society
Bob Sallinger, Conservation Director, Portland Audubon Society
Linda Kreisman, President, Rogue Valley Audubon Society
Paul Engelmeyer, Manager, Audubon Ten Mile Creek Sanctuary
Ann Vileisis, President, Kalmiopsis Audubon Society
Diana Wales, President, Umpqua Valley Audubon Society
Jim Fairchild, Conservation Chair, Corvallis Audubon Society
David Harrison, Conservation Chair, Salem Audubon Society
Susan Bennett, Conservation Chair, Whidbey Island Audubon Society
Dan Streiffert, Conservation Chair, Rainier Audubon Society
Krystal Kyer, Executive Director, Tahoma Audubon Society
Tom Gauron, President, Kittitas Audubon Society
Tim Manns, Conservation Chair, Skaggit Audubon Society
George Exum, President, Willapa Hills Audubon Society
Susan Bush, President, Siskiyou Audubon Society
Harvey Schuboth, President, Cape Arago Audubon Society
Maeve Sowles, Lane County Audubon Society
Lori Nelson, President, Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society
Deb Nickerson, President, Black Hills Audubon Society
Barb Jensen, president, San Juan Island Audubon Society
Chris Howard, Conservation Chair, Blue Mountain Audubon Society
Allen Gibbs, Conservation Chair, Pilchuck Audubon Society
Rick Jahnke, president, Admiralty Audubon Society
Ken Wiersema, President, Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society

In 2013, the following vision was adopted for the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge by a diverse array of stakeholders, including members of the local community.

Together with our surrounding community, partners, friends, staff, and all those who cherish this unique place where desert and water meet, Malheur National Wildlife Refuge commits to care for, conserve, and enhance the health of the Malheur Lake, Blitzen Valley, and Double-O units, including the playas, dunes, marshes, rivers, meadows, and ponds that are all part of this landscape.

We will observe nature and manage in harmony with ecological forces, while recognizing and maintaining the Refuge as a key anchor for migratory and breeding waterfowl, waterbirds, shorebirds, songbirds, and raptors.

We will work diligently to improve the health of the land and water, reducing the destructive impact of carp and other invasive species, addressing imbalances in floodplain function, and restoring the original abundance of fish and wildlife for which Malheur is famous.

We will celebrate and welcome our visitors, noting and protecting the features that draw people again and again-the expansive landscape, the plenitude and diversity of wildlife, and the signs of a timeless history.

Conservation Column continued on page 9

Conservation Column continued from page 8

We will allow and enhance opportunities to experience abundance, solitude, and renewal, for people birding, fishing, hunting, and learning on the Refuge. In respect to our ancestors and their fortitude, we will carefully preserve the legacies they left behind on this land.

Collaboration with our neighbors, partners, and friends will be a critical cornerstone in our day to day work; we recognize that nature crosses our boundaries and we can be successful only in partnership. We recognize that our activities are inextricably linked to the health of the local economy. We commit to environmental stewardship and sustainable management. We commit to learn from our efforts, successes, and failures; to be humble about what we know; and to continuously strive for greater understanding in our stewardship of this remarkable place.

* * * * *

For more information on Audubon's connection with Malheur, please contact Bob Sallinger at Portland Audubon Society (bsallinger@audubonportland.org, 503 380-9728) or your local chapter. For updated information about Malheur visit the "Restore Malheur" facebook page online.

Pepper Trail Named Oregon Book Award Finalist

Congratulations to longtime RVAS Conservation Chair Pepper Trail whose 2015 publication, *Cascade-Siskiyou: Poems*, has been selected as a finalist for the 2016 Oregon Book Award in the Poetry category.

Published by Painted Thrush Press, the collection of more than fifty poems made Pepper one of five candidates for the Stafford/Hall Award for Poetry. The winner will be announced at the 29th annual Oregon Book Awards ceremony on April 11, at the Gerding Theater at the Armory in Portland.

Cascade-Siskiyou: Poems is available at Northwest Nature Shop and Bloomsbury Books in Ashland and online through Amazon.

Pepper dedicated this collection to Dave Willis, whom he describes as a "tireless advocate for the establishment, protection and expansion of the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument."

Tributes include the following from two-time Oregon Poet Laureate Paulann Petersen: "These fine eco-poems are necessary and welcome. As a suite, they contain a vastness and specificity commensurate to honoring the ecosystem that inspired them. Reading Pepper Trail's book is a boon and a blessing."

Medford CBC Sees Strong Turnout

Sixty birders—most of them in the field and a few doing feeder-watch duty—enjoyed thankfully dry weather December 19, 2015, as Rogue Valley Audubon conducted the 65th Medford Christmas Bird Count. There were 126 species recorded—second highest total of the last five years—with three others added as count week birds.

Surprise birds for the day were a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher spotted in the Sams Valley area—first of that species for the Medford count—and a Pacific Loon seen at Kime Reservoir. The only other Pacific Loon in Medford CBC annals was seen in 2004.

Blue-gray Gnatcatchers nest at several locations in the Rogue Valley and are generally gone from the area by mid-Fall. Pacific Loons are irregular visitors to the valley, but usually at deeper bodies of water like Lost Creek Lake.

Stewart Janes and Ben Wieland, birding Area G (southwest Medford and Central Point), recorded 94 species (including the Pacific Loon), and that was the highest total from the twelve groups that covered the count circle. In addition to the Pacific Loon, theirs was the only group to have Band-tailed Pigeons (five), Chestnut-backed Chickadee (one), and Brown-headed Cowbird (one). Band-tailed Pigeons were last seen on the Medford CBC in 2009.

Stewart also added Turkey Vulture and Common Loon to the count week list while birding the day after the CBC. The third species added for count week was Greater Yellowlegs, as 13 were seen at the Kirtland ponds the day before the CBC.

Norm Barrett's group, birding Area A, which includes most of the Denman Wildlife Area, came home with the second-highest total for the day, as they found 85 species. Their list included eleven Virginia Rails, six Soras, thirty-four Tree Swallows, and the day's only Eurasian Wigeon.

Area A's Tree Swallows contributed to a count total of 39, which smashed the old Medford CBC record of eight (seen in 1979). Other species with record count totals were Double-crested Cormorant (40), Sharp-shinned Hawk (17), Red-tailed Hawk (260), Merlin (24), Western Scrub-jay (436) and Common Raven (690).

The twenty-four Merlins easily exceeded the previous mark of 15. There have been eight Medford CBCs with Merlins in double figures, and five of those were in the last seven years. Ten of the twelve counting groups saw Merlins with Area G spotting seven.

Medford CBC Coordinator Bob Hunter and his crew recorded 76 species from Area K, which includes portions of the Hall Tract of Denman WA and significant amounts of agricultural property. Their list included the only Black-crowned Night-Herons (six) seen on the count, and eleven raptor species, including count-high totals of White-tailed Kite (five), Northern Harrier (14), and Red-tailed Hawk (48).

With Edith Lindner filling in for leader Lynn Kellogg, the group birding Area H (Sams Valley and adjacent properties) found 72 species, with the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, spotted by Dorsey Burger, being the top find. They also recorded count-high totals of Acorn (76) and Lewis's (40) Woodpeckers, as well as the day's only Tundra Swans (four).

Medford CBC continued on page 11

Medford CBC continued from page 10

Vince Zauskey and crew, whose Area J includes the Kirtland ponds, tallied 70 species, including the count's only Northern Pintails (ten), Redheads (two), Dunlin (three), and Long-billed Dowitchers (13).

Area E, encompassing a substantial section of western Medford and Central Point, was birded by a large group led by Jeff Tufts, and their total of 70 species included count-high numbers of Canvas-back (14 at Mingus Pond), Wilson's Snipe (13), Rock Pigeon (250, whoopee), Mourning Dove (213), Anna's Hummingbird (11), Western Scrub-jay (82), Varied Thrush (13), Cedar Waxwing (66), and Yellow-rumped Warbler (21). Joe Shelton, long-time leader of the group that covered this area, added the count's only Western Screech-owl, which was spotted in his neighborhood.

Area L includes the Kelly's Slough region, and that means roosting American Robins. Pepper Trail and Chris Uhtoff counted more than 20,000 of them. Their tally of 64 species also included most of the day's Common Goldeneyes (59) and Wrentits (20), as well as more than 5,600 European Starlings and more than 2,000 Brewer's Blackbirds. Not surprisingly, their total of more than 29,000 individual birds topped all of the other groups combined.

Ron Ketchum and his group, surveying Area 6 (Eagle Point and parts of White City), also had 64 species. Their nine raptors included count-high numbers of Bald Eagle (five), Golden Eagle (four), and American Kestrel (18).

John Bullock led the group birding Area D (eastern Medford including Roxy Ann), and their 63 species included the day's best totals of Western Bluebird (104) and American Crow (27).

Area C (Agate Lake and points east and south) was covered by Jim Harleman and crew, who found the day's only Rough-legged Hawk, as well as a remarkable total of 549 Common Ravens. That's more than were seen during every entire Medford CBC with the exception of 2012 (total of 660).

Although Area N (Lower Table Rock) and Area H2 (Upper Table Rock) produced the lowest group totals for the day (31 and 53, respectively), they were responsible for the only Rock Wren sightings. Bob Quaccia and company found four of the habitat specialists on his tour of Lower Table Rock, and Tom Phillips had a single bird on Upper Table Rock. Tom also had 42 of the day's 59 Wood Ducks.

Christmas counts nationwide are used to track declines and increases in populations of certain species, and local birders are especially interested in the status of Eurasian Collared-doves and their relationship to Mourning Doves. No question that the Collared-doves population in the Medford circle has grown dramatically. Only three were spotted in 2006. Last year the total was 338. The 204 counted this year may represent a statistical decline, but it's still the second-highest total ever. Although the count of 520 Mourning Doves this year is down from last year's 679, it's still the second highest number in the last six years.

For the fourth straight year, not a single Gull of any species was seen. The last gull recorded on a Medford count was a single Ring-billed Gull from 2011. It's pretty clear that the prevailing winds in December just aren't taking the aroma of French Fries far enough afield.

Medford CBC continued on page 12

Medford CBC continued from page 11

Although there weren't any dramatic "misses" on count day, the zero count on Pileated Woodpeckers was a bit surprising. The last two Medford CBCs produced a total of 12 of these large woodpeckers. The last time we blanked on Pileateds was in 2007.

Thanks to all who participated in this year's count—both in the field and watching feeders—and a special thanks to Bob Hunter, who coordinates all the group leaders in advance of the count and then tackles the laborious task of transferring data from multiple count sheets to a single Excel chart and directing it to National Audubon for inclusion in the main data base.

Results from previous years' Christmas counts nationwide are available at the National Audubon Society website: <http://netapp.audubon.org/CBCObservation/>

Lithia Dipper Watch 2016

By Frank Lospalluto

It's 2016, and the American Dippers will soon begin their breeding season with all the attendant behaviors. This is where you come in. YES—all you Rogue Valley birders who visit Lithia Park during the next few months can make a contribution to our citizen science project. No long-term commitment required!

Your observations and resightings of these banded birds represent the data. So this season we are teaming up with the Klamath Bird Observatory to create a data form that we will enter into eBird or the affiliated Avian Knowledge Network, so that we can begin to quantify our results. This will be in addition to the long-form natural history notes that you can find on our blog:

www.lithiadipperwatch.com

The details of how this form will be accessed and entered have yet to be worked out, but we wanted to invite you all to participate. So stay tuned. We will make further announcements here, through the member email list, the RV Birds listserv and on the DipperWatch blog.

Also, we are looking for a core of volunteers who might be interested in participating on a more regular basis via monthly or bi-monthly group walks along the creek.

If you have any questions or wish to know more please contact:

Frank Lospalluto: fdlospalluto@gmail.com

Linda Kreisman: linda@ashlandhome.net

or Barbara Massey: bmassey@mac.com

Ashland CBC: Committed Counters Brave the Elements

“It wasn’t the cold. It was the cold AND the wind.”

That could have been the 54 Ashland Christmas Count birders talking January 2, 2016, or it could have been a communication from the birds. Temperatures were well below freezing, even in the valley (19 degrees in Ashland), and a persistent morning wind made for difficult conditions for the groups that set out early to survey ten different areas in the count circle. Many of the local birds were generally slow to become active, a fact that may have contributed, in part, to the total count of 10,043 individuals—the second lowest total since the Ashland count resumed in the 2010 cycle.

Especially affected were Areas 9 (eastern high country) and 10 (Mt. Ashland), where counters were forced to deal with deep snow and occasionally impassable roads.

Despite the obstacles, the full count recorded 114 separate species, a number exceeded only by the 2012 and 2013 totals of 119.

Historically, the Ashland Christmas Count had its beginning in 1939. After a second renewal in 1940, the count was discontinued during World War II and didn’t resume after the war. Following National Audubon protocol, a “dress rehearsal” took place in the 2009 cycle (actual count in early January, 2010) and the official count resumed during the 2010 cycle.

The 15-mile diameter count circle is centered near Emigrant Lake. It takes in large sections of Mt. Ashland and extends into the Cascades to include Grizzly Peak and Little Hyatt Lake.

Although no especially rare species were spotted, the single Ross’s Goose seen flying over Nepenthe Ranch represented a first for the Ashland count, and two Williamson’s Sapsuckers, located despite the daunting conditions in the Cascades, were also new to the survey. Norm Barrett, part of the group covering Area 4, noted the Ross’s Goose, and Russ Namitz and crew found the sapsuckers while dealing with heavy snow in Area 9.

Also new to the Ashland historical list were the six American Pipits spotted by Dick Ashford and his group in Area 1, which covers a wide section on the northeast side of Interstate Five.

Vince Zauskey, covering North Mountain Park for the Area 4 group, spotted the now familiar Swamp Sparrow. Local birders suspect that it’s the same individual that showed up the previous two years to take advantage of the well-stocked feeders there.

John Alexander and co., birding Area 2, which includes the Billings Ranch, recorded 64 species—the highest single group total for the day. On the Area 2 list were the day’s only Green-winged Teal, Wrentits, Savannah Sparrows and Evening Grosbeaks.

Ashland CBC continued on page 14

Ashland CBC continued from page 13

The eight birders led by Jeff Tufts and Norm Barrett logged 62 species in Area 4. In addition to the Ross's Goose, that list included the count's only Snow Goose. That bird was actually spotted in the morning along Tolman Creek Road by Ben Wieland while on his way to Area 6.

Area 8, which includes Emigrant Lake, is home to leaders George and Sally Peterson, and their group's total of 58 species included the count's only Cackling Goose, Canvasbacks, Western Grebes, Ring-billed Gulls, Rock Wren, and Lewis's Woodpecker. The latter bird was seen near Oak Knoll Golf Course by Area 4 counters who were en route to one of their locations. As many as 89 Lewis's Woodpeckers have been seen on the Ashland count (2012), and the last two years had 26 and 15 respectively.

Dick Ashford and crew had 57 species in Area 1 which, in addition to the American Pipits, had the count's only Ring-necked Pheasant, Rough-legged Hawk and Say's Phoebe. And, their 413 Golden-crowned Sparrows contributed mightily to the Ashland count's record total of 1025 of that species. Previous high total for Golden-crowns in the Ashland count was 725 from 2012.

Peter and Linda Kreisman led the counters to snowy Area 7, where the main access road is Dead Indian Memorial Highway. Their total of 52 species included the count's only Gadwall and Lesser Scaup, as well as the count-high total of 84 White-crowned Sparrows.

Brandon Breen and group were in Area 5 above Siskiyou Boulevard and into the west side of the Ashland Creek watershed. Their total of 49 species included the day's only American Dippers—six of them spotted during Bob Quaccia's annual Lithia Park Dipper Walk—as well as count-high numbers of Western Scrub-jays and Steller's Jays, Bushtits and White-breasted Nuthatches, and Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets. They were also strong in the Thrush family, with top numbers for Western Bluebird, American Robin and Varied Thrush.

Kate Cleland-Sipfle led Area 3 counters, and their 48-species day list included the day's only Great Egret. Theirs was one of three to have a single White-throated Sparrow on the day.

Tolman Creek Road led Area 6 birders—headed by Ben Wieland—into a wide section of the hills above Ashland. Their trail-exploring efforts produced 46 species, including 30 Cedar Waxwings. It's feast or famine with these peripatetic fructivores. Only two were counted in 2010 and only 12 last year, but the 2013 count total was more than 2,200.

Russ Namitz led a hardy band of birders into the Cascades to cover Area 9, and, when not extricating vehicles from the snow, they managed to identify 36 species. In addition to the aforementioned Williamson's Sapsuckers, they spotted four Golden Eagles, which was the high number for that species. The entire count's total of 10 matched the previous Ashland record posted two years ago.

Ashland CBC continued on page 15

Ashland CBC continued from page 14

Area 9 birders also logged 110 Pine Siskins, and no other group had more than 31. Although very common in the Rogue Valley last Fall, their numbers seemed to have dropped considerably in recent weeks. From an admittedly small sample, Ashland records show a curious “predictable unpredictability” in terms of Pine Siskin abundance at Christmas Bird Count time. The initial Ashland CBC recorded a bit more than 200 of them, and the following year had almost 700. Totals then dropped to 245 and 70 in 2012 and 2013, and went back up to more than 700 last year. This year’s number was exactly 200.



The Maximum-Effort-Per-Species Award for the count goes to Frank Lospalluto and Kristi Mergenthaler, who donned skis and covered Area 10, which includes a good portion of Mount Ashland and the Coolest Valley. If the cold and wind got to you in the valley or foothills, imagine what they had to put up with. Their 26 species included the day’s only Cassin Finch, White-headed Woodpeckers (two), and Northern Saw-whet Owl. They also had count-high numbers of Mountain Chickadees, Red-breasted Nuthatches and Townsend’s Solitaires.

Notable “misses” for the Ashland CBC this year were Band-tailed Pigeon (also missed in 2011), and Marsh Wren (first ever miss).

Coordinator Carol Mockridge and compiler John Bullock deserve special thanks for their efforts this year, and congratulations to all participants who put up with the difficult conditions in the morning.

Ashland Parks and Recreation Classes, Workshops and Events

Learning Bird Songs

This presentation focuses on learning to identify a bird by its song. The program will include use of poetry and lore that explores how the sounds of birds connect us to deep places in our psyche. Pre-register online at ashland.or.us/register or call the Nature Center at 541.488.6606.

Date: Wednesday, February 17

Time 6:30—8pm

PLACE North Mountain Park

Cost \$15

Instructor Shannon Rio teaches classes about birds, plant medicine and yoga. She is on the board of the Klamath Bird Observatory.

Coming Soon: Birdathon 2016

Birdathon is...

- a) A chance to celebrate Southern Oregon's spring migration in the company of other birders
- b) A competitive sport
- c) An **important fundraiser** for the Rogue Valley Audubon Society
- d) All of the above

Birdathon returns on Saturday, April 23. If you've never participated in this annual event, why not make 2016 your year? The object of Birdathon is for sponsored teams to count as many species as possible within a 24-hour period. Teams can range widely or stick close to home, so long as they stay in Jackson County. In a nutshell, here's how it works:

Form teams. Call your best birding buddies, or recruit a newbie. Most teams include two to five birders, although a single individual may also comprise a team.

Find sponsors. A person can sponsor your team with either a fixed donation or an amount per species your team sees.

Count species. The event officially begins on Friday, April 22 at 6:00 pm and ends 24 hours later, but you count species any time within that window.

Celebrate! Join the other teams at Jackson Creek Pizza, at 317 E. Main, Medford, Saturday evening for tale-swapping, prizes and mild bragging.

Birdathon 2015 featured five stellar teams: the Binosaurus, Great Grays, Old World Warblers, The Pedal Ducks, and Wandering Tattlers. Collectively these teams raised over \$2,714 for RVAS. The Binosaurus and the Great Grays were in a dead heat, but the Great Grays pulled ahead, recording 157 species in the 24-hour period. The Binosaurus hit 154. The year before the two teams tied at 156 species.

Look for more details in upcoming issues of The Chat. If you have a burning question, feel free to contact Katy Reed at kmreed24@hotmail.com or 541-245-5095 or Linda Kreisman at 541-482-6456.



Project FeederWatch Schedule for 2015 - 2016

Coyote Trails (Medford) PFW

Thursdays: Noon – 1 pm; open to the public
Feb 11, Feb 25, Mar 10, March 24

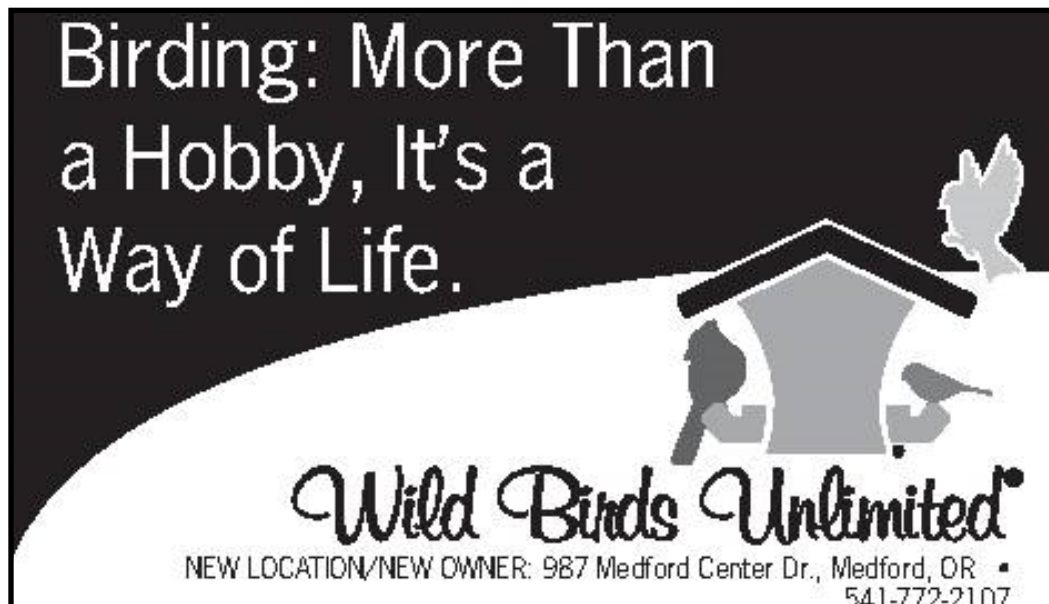
Fridays: Noon – 1 pm; open to the public
Feb 12, Feb 26, Mar 11, Mar 25

North Mountain Park (Ashland) PFW

Fridays: 9 – 10 am; counts done by one person; not advertised to the public
Feb 5, Feb 19, Mar 4, Mar 18

Saturdays: 9 – 10 am; open to the public
Feb 6, Feb 20, Mar 5, Mar 19

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.



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:

Rogue Valley Audubon Society
PO Box 8597
Medford OR 97501

NORTHWEST
nature shop
SINCE 1985

Intriguing gifts, toys, and
tools for discovering the
natural world.



for the
explorer

for your
garden

for the
scientist

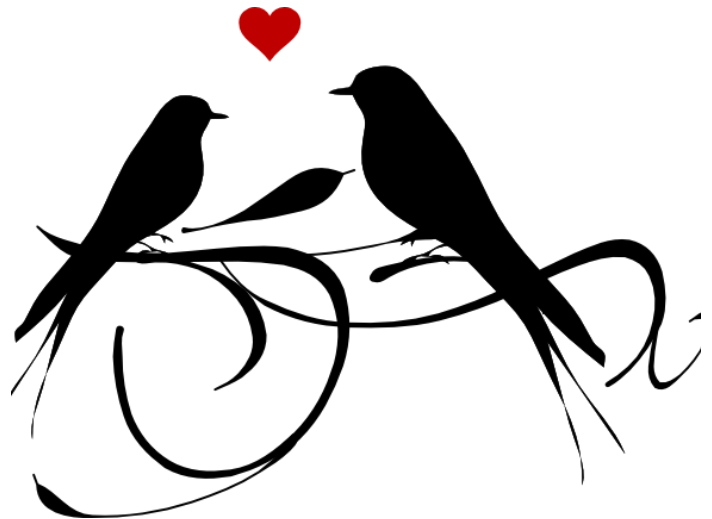
"The Northwest Nature Shop proudly sponsors the Ashland Independent Film Festival!"

154 Oak Street, Ashland, Oregon 97520
(541) 482-3241 | www.northwestnatureshop.com
Mon-Sat 10am to 6pm and Sun 11am to 5pm

ALLEN G. DRESCHER, P.C. *Attorney At Law*

Member, National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys

21 South 2nd Street (541) 482-4935
P.O. Box 760 Fax (541) 482-4941
Ashland, OR 97520 drescheral@aol.com
www.ashlandoregonlawyer.com



Upcoming RVAS Programs

March 22, 2016: "The Truth About the Birds and the Bees"

A program on native bees, presented by Gaby Chavarria

April 26, 2016: Stewart Janes will give a bird-centric presentation

THE CHAT

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

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Sign up to receive easy notification of Chapter activities

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

