

The Chat

Number 424
May 2016

A voice for education and conservation in the natural world

Rogue Valley Audubon Society

www.roguevalleyaudubon.org

Deadline for the June issue is May 20.



RVAS ANNUAL PICNIC Tuesday, May 24 at Tou Velle State Park

Bird Walk: 5:00 p.m. (sharp!)

A guided bird walk will wind through the park and along the Rogue River.

Potluck dinner: 6:00 p.m.

Bring a dish to share, plus your own plate, cup and utensils. Tea and lemonade will be provided.

The potluck will take place in the main area of the park; enter on the east side of Table Rock Road. There is a daily parking fee unless you have an Oregon State Parks pass or a Jackson County Parks pass.



****Chapter meetings are held at 1801 E. Jackson Street in Medford****
Lidgate Hall, Medford Congregational Church
Our next Program Meeting will take place in September.
Have a great summer!

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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.

President's Column

At our last RVAS Board meeting, we agreed to Jeff Tufts' suggestion that we post each month's Minutes on the RVAS website. But these minutes are often quite terse, so we will be discussing other ways to engage you with Board activities—stay posted. One idea is to align this column more closely with the Board's activities. We'll be discussing that and the other topics listed below at the annual Board Workshop on June 4th at Coyote Trails Nature Center. Your input on any of these topics is requested, encouraged, and welcomed!

Other Topics for the June Board Workshop:

- Member Recruitment Process
- Additional field trips (shorter and more local, with no carpooling needed)
- Board training
- Tracking of requests, grants, expenditures, and reports of projects supporting the RVAS mission

One exciting piece of news is that we voted in three new Board members at the April Chapter meeting. Here is some brief biographical information on the new members:

Nala Cardillo moved to Ashland 12 years ago from the East Coast. She realized she was "a birder" when a flock of erupting Meadowlarks drowned her binocular view in a sea of golden feathers! After doing environmental education outreach with Klamath Bird Observatory, North Mountain Park and Jefferson Nature Center, she spent five years coordinating a seabird and intertidal ecology education program on the Oregon coast. Upon returning to the Rogue Valley, she participated in her first Christmas Bird Count with Bob Hunter's team in Medford. She is excited to support RVAS efforts to explore, conserve, and appreciate the diverse eco-tapestry into which we are all woven.

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Susan M. Stone is relatively new to the area, having just moved into her new home outside of Jacksonville. She is a good birder and has experience volunteering—most recently, by answering phone calls at the Portland Audubon Society's Care Center. She earned a couple of degrees "a long time ago," and wants to meet people and make a contribution by helping local birds, wildlife, and native habitats.

Jeanine Moy graduated from Cornell University with a B.S. in Applied Ecology and holds an M.S. in Environmental Education from Southern Oregon University. She has engaged in various nature-based education programs in the last several years. Jeanine has served as the Education Program Manager for the Klamath Bird Observatory, led bird education classroom visits to elementary schools around the Rogue Valley (supported by RVAS), and founded the Ashland Trail Trekkers summer nature camp. Currently, she is the Outreach Director for the Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center.

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 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 am and end before noon.

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

May Walk: Wednesday, May 4

June Walk: Wednesday, June 1

July Walk: Wednesday, July 6

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

BIRDATHON 2016—Saturday, May 7

NOTE: THE DATE FOR THIS EVENT HAS CHANGED!!

Birdathon 2016 officially begins on Friday, May 6 at 6:00 pm and ends 24 hours later. 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. For more info, contact Katy Reed at kmreed24@hotmail.com or **541-245-5095** or Linda Kreisman at **541-482-6456**.

Field Notes from Jackson County (Mar 20 - Apr 19, 2016) Compiled by Jeff Tufts

One brief storm—accompanied by very strong winds—delivered a remarkable assortment of shorebirds to the settling ponds on Kirtland Avenue during the second full week of April, and that occurrence overshadowed the expected arrival of passerine migrants during the period covered in this report.

Highlight of the April 13-14 weather event was the flock of twenty-nine **Black-bellied Plovers** that was first spotted the morning of the 14th (GS). One or two individuals of this species regularly show up in Jackson County during spring and fall migration, but this number seemed unprecedented. All of the birds were fully or partly in the startling plumage that gives them their common name.

Also at the Kirtland ponds on the 14th were six **Semipalmated Plovers**, at least 200 **Dunlin**, and more than a dozen **Western Sandpipers**. Dunlin were being seen there in small numbers for several days before the storm, but the size of this grouping was extraordinary. The 'Semi' Plovers were the first reported locally this spring.

This storm and its shorebird bounty was slightly reminiscent of the weekend of April 26-27, 2014, when a similar weather front rolled through the Rogue Valley. On the morning of the 27th, the mudflats at Kirtland had only one Black-bellied Plover, but there was also a Ruddy Turnstone, a Whimbrel, three Marbled Godwits, five Black-necked Stilts, twenty Semipalmated Plovers, fifty Dunlin, seven Red-necked Phalaropes and more than 2,000 Least and Western Sandpipers.

With precipitation totals slightly above normal this winter/spring, the front pond at Kirtland is still completely flooded as of this writing. This means much less suitable foraging habitat for migrating shorebirds. In 2014, there was plenty of exposed mudflats for the birds that sought respite from the winds of the storm.



Black-bellied Plover, by Gary Shaffer

Although no **Black-necked Stilts** were seen on the 14th, it is hoped that the higher water level will encourage this species to again nest at Kirtland. A pair successfully raised three young there in 2013, but a similar effort in 2014 with a lower water level was ultimately unsuccessful. There was no breeding attempt there last year when the water level was again low.

The other North American member of the *Recurvirostridae* family—the **American Avocet**—has never been recorded as a breeder in Jackson County and rarely shows up in migration. Four of these distinctive birds with the dramatically upcurved bills were at Howard Prairie Apr 17 (BH,FL), and a single bird was a surprise visitor to Kirtland Apr 20 (BH,GS,HS).

Greater Yellowlegs are found almost year-round in Jackson County, but it was unusual when thirty-four of them were at Kirtland Mar 25 (BH) and forty-seven were counted there two days later (RN).



American Avocet, by Gary Shaffer

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The back pond at Kirtland is a favored hangout for such common waterfowl species as **Northern Shoveler** and **Ruddy Duck**, but it was special on Apr 17 when a pair of **Red-heads** took up brief residence (JT). They are common breeders in the Klamath Basin, but very few show up in Jackson County each year.

Ring-necked Ducks—very common in winter and early spring—have not been documented as breeders in Jackson County, but two pairs at Ashland Pond Apr 18 may have been investigating possible nesting sites (BM).

The most unusual waterfowl sighting from the period covered in this column was a **Mute Swan** spotted in the Bear Creek area just south of Bear Creek Park in Medford and reported to eBird Apr 18 (MC). This is listed as a “controlled Eurasian bird” species in Oregon. Importation is prohibited, and although it is legal to possess or sell them, all males must be neutered and all individuals must be surgically pinioned.

The controlled status of Mute Swans is due to their aggressive nature and the fact that they consume large amounts of aquatic vegetation. They can outcompete and displace native species with undesired consequences.

There is a historical record of six pairs of Mute Swans from Sweden that were introduced to Lithia Park in Ashland in 1921.

Another interesting report to eBird was of a male **Allen’s Hummingbird** at Valley of the Rogue State Park Apr 8 (MR). This species does not appear on either the official Birds of Jackson County checklist or the supplemental list (unconfirmed sightings), but it seems reasonable to suggest that it will someday make either list. They are a common breeder along the coastal fog belt from California into southern Oregon, and they have been seen in Josephine County.

Identification of Allen’s Hummingbird is a problem, though, as females and immatures are virtually identical to those of Rufous

Hummingbird, and even adult males present a special challenge since some male Rufous have greenish backs.

American White Pelicans usually don’t show up in Jackson County in numbers until April, but a dozen were at Agate Lake Mar 20-21 (RA,BH,BW), and a similar number were seen flying over the Kirtland ponds a week later (GS).

As this column is written (Apr 20), only a few of our common neotropical migrants haven’t put in an appearance in Jackson County. The list of “they’re-on-their-way-but-not-here-yet” species includes Yellow Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Western Wood-Pewee, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Ash-throated Flycatcher, and Common Nighthawk. Yellow Warbler and Ash-throated Flycatcher have been reported from Josephine County.

One of our least conspicuous migrants is **Common Poorwill**. One was heard along the Mt. Ashland Ski Road Apr 16 (BW), and at least three were heard Apr 18 in the hills southeast of Butte Falls (CB).

Tricolored Blackbirds, regarded as a species in decline in California (primarily due to habitat loss), were conspicuous this winter/spring in Jackson County. As many as 300 birds were seen in the vicinity of Ousterhout Farm in Eagle Point Apr 10 (BH).

Much less common locally are **Yellow-headed Blackbirds**. The first 2016 report of this species—a single bird—was on Apr 17 at Ousterhout Farm (BH). Coincidentally, the first April 2015 report was on the same date from Agate Lake.

As many as five **Great-tailed Grackles** showed up at the Avenue G ponds Mar 20 (HS), and two were reported from Lynn Newbry Park—along the greenway in Talent—Apr 13 (KY). One grackle flew over the Kirtland ponds Apr 14 (BW).

Thanks to all whose sightings contributed to this report: Rene Allen, Camden Bruner, Mark Chichester, Bob Hunter, Frank Lo-spalluto, Barbara Massey, Russ Namitz, Michele Reyes, Howard Sands, Gary Shaffer, Ben Wieland and Kimberly Young.

Spring Hikes at the Table Rocks

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the Medford District Bureau of Land Management (BLM) are sponsoring free guided hikes at the Table Rocks. Several of these feature the birds and insects at the Rocks. Hope you can join us!

Hikes are free but reservations are required, as space is limited. Register online (link follows each hike) or call the Medford District BLM at 541.618.2200, M-F 7:30 am - 4:00 pm. Hikes are 3-5 miles roundtrip along a moderate grade trail and generally last 3-5 hours.

Dress for the weather and bring drinking water (none is available at the site) and lunch or a snack. Restrooms are available at the trailhead. No dogs, mountain bikes or OHVs are allowed on the trail.

Beautiful Butterflies & Incredible Insects

Saturday, May 14, 10:00 am - Lower Table Rock

Dr. Peter Schroeder, entomologist and affiliate professor of biology at Southern Oregon University, will lead a hike to observe and discuss the beautiful butterflies and other incredible insects that live on or flutter by the Table Rocks. On this hike, Peter will help you gain a deeper appreciation for how butterflies and other insects live and their essential role in the environment.

<http://beautifulbutterflies.eventbrite.com>

Whooo Comes Out at Night?

Saturday, May 14, 7:30 pm - Lower Table Rock Loop Trail

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

<http://whocomesoutatnight.eventbrite.com>

Southern Oregon Land Conservancy Events

The Southern Oregon Land Conservancy (SOLC) hosts several hikes and tours that explore selected locations around the Rogue Valley. Some of these are specifically focused on birds. Examples of upcoming events include

- Beekman Woods Birding
- Natural History Hike at Rogue River Preserve
- Oredson-Todd Woods Ecology Hike

Please note that some events are reserved for SOLC members. For a complete list of their events (all of which require registration), go to

www.landconserve.org/upcoming/hikes-and-tours

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

Early arriving migrants are probably the most interesting birds in this report, and again Josephine County birders found some species sooner than Jackson County birders despite there being far fewer persons in the field.

The **Green Heron** at the Rogue Lea Estates ponds on Mar 28 (RN) was two weeks earlier than the first JaCo report.

A single **Vaux's Swift** Apr 10 (DV) beat the earliest Jackson County report by four days.

There was an **Ash-throated Flycatcher** at the Merlin Rest Stop Apr 20 (DV). Still waiting for one in Jackson County.

Several **Yellow Warblers** were seen at Whitehorse County Park Apr 17 (LG), but none have been reported in Jackson County as of Apr 20.

Perhaps the rarest bird from this period was a probable male **Allen's Hummingbird** reported from the Takilma area Feb 27 (RC).

Thanks to those whose sightings contributed to this report: Romain Cooper, Linda Gilbert, Russ Namitz, and Dennis Vroman.



On a recent RVAS trip to Northern California, Timothy Simonsen captured both birders and birds, such as this Savannah Sparrow, with his camera. Frank Lospalluto led the trip.



The Conservation Column

By Pepper Trail

BLM's New Western Oregon Plan Would Increase Logging, Weaken Environmental Protections

On April 12, the Bureau of Land Management released new plans that will guide recreation, wildlife habitat protection, water quality, and logging on 2.6-million acres of federal forests in western Oregon. Home to salmon and ancient forests, these public lands also provide drinking water for nearly 1.8-million Oregonians. It's BLM's latest stab at threading a political and ecological needle, one that has historically pitted owls against loggers and county commissioners. Earlier attempts at sweeping "Western Oregon Plan Revisions," dating back to 2003, have been withdrawn or rejected by the courts.

The O&C lands are a checkerboard of timber-rich federal tracts that run along Oregon's Coast and Cascade ranges from Portland to the California state line. The lands in the mid-1800s were given to the Oregon and California Railroad, but the company reneged on its promise to sell lands to settlers. Congress in 1916 reclaimed title to nearly 3 million acres.

The lands today are governed under a special law enacted in 1937 that requires BLM to manage them "for permanent forest production," while also protecting watersheds, providing recreation facilities and supporting local economic stability.

If made final, the Proposed Resource Management Plan would weaken key protections of the Northwest Forest Plan that have guided management and ecosystem restoration on these forests for the past two decades.

"The Obama administration has an opportunity to embrace recreation, clean drinking water, and carbon sequestration to fight global warming with these plans," said Doug Heiken from Oregon Wild. "But instead we see weakened stream buffers, no recognition of the importance of forest carbon, and key measures to protect salmon and other endangered wildlife being thrown out."

The Northwest Forest Plan took a science-based ecosystem management approach to forest management to protect rivers, old-growth forests, and populations of native plants and animals that were decimated by decades of unsustainable logging. Twenty-year monitoring reports released in 2015 revealed the Northwest Forest Plan is restoring watersheds and the old-growth ecosystem as intended, something the new BLM plan will set back.

A key principle of the Northwest Forest Plan is the Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS), which includes designated buffers around streams where logging is not allowed and other important provisions to protect streamside forests, clean water, and fish. The proposed new plan cuts this buffer zone in half, with impacts to water quality, and fish and wildlife habitat. It would also significantly reduce protections for the reserve network for old-growth habitat, and completely eliminate a program to protect rare species, known as Survey and Manage.

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“The forests and rivers managed by the BLM are essential to clean drinking water and native salmon runs. Desire has never been higher to protect these public resources, so it is unthinkable that the BLM would slash the buffers in half that protect water quality,” says Josh Laughlin, Executive Director of Cascadia Wildlands.

The proposed plan would log 278 million board feet a year—a 37% increase over current annual harvest levels. Increased logging will likely have negative impacts on public recreation values and ignores the growing recreation-based economy in the state.

Yet western Oregon counties said the plan falls short of what is needed to sustain timber jobs and provide adequate harvest revenues for county services. The Association of O&C Counties said it will lead 17 counties in challenging the plan in federal court. Counties have long argued that the O&C lands—which grow an estimated 1.2 billion board feet annually—could sustainably provide much more timber. They believe the plans should offer a minimum of 500 million board feet.

Under the BLM’s latest plan, seventy-five percent of the lands would be designated as reserves—a 9 percent increase from the current plan. Some timber harvests would be allowed in the reserves, but only to the extent that they are compatible with the areas’ conservation objectives.

The BLM’s new plan does not place as much of an emphasis on recreation as many in the public are demanding. According to a recent study on the economic impact of “quiet recreation” on BLM lands, activities like camping, hunting, and fishing contribute \$214 million to Oregon communities and support 2,322 jobs. BLM timber, wood, and non-wood product sales generate only \$58 million. “We should embrace the role of the expanding recreation economy in Oregon,” said Joseph Vaile from the Klamath Siskiyou Wildlands Center. “People from all over the world are visiting our state to celebrate its natural beauty. If the BLM caves to political pressure from the timber industry, this plan will put our growing recreation economy at risk.”

BLM’s Draft “Transportation Management Plan” for the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument

In other BLM news, the Medford District released its Draft Transportation Management Plan for the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument in March. This plan presents a range of alternatives for managing the Monument’s network of roads. We believe that many of the existing roads should be closed, as they fragment wildlife habitat, disrupt hydrology, and are sources for the spread of invasive weeds, among other negative impacts on the Monument’s ecological integrity. Our comment letter and further information can be found on the RVAS website.

Ashland Parks and Recreation Classes, Workshops and Events

Rogue Valley Bird Day – Saturday, May 14, 8 am - noon

Rogue Valley Bird Day is the local celebration of International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD), which celebrates one of the most important and spectacular events in the life of a migratory bird—its journey between wintering and breeding grounds. This year's theme will focus on how birds have inspired many of the most significant environmental conservation actions in the Americas. We recognize the capacity of citizens in every country to support programs and laws that protect birds and their habitats, including a landmark treaty that, for the last century, has protected nearly all migratory bird species in the U.S. and Canada ~ the Migratory Bird Treaty. Enjoy Wildlife Images exhibits, guided bird walks and a bird-calling contest for all ages. This outdoor event is admission-free and takes place at North Mountain Park, 620 N Mountain Avenue, Ashland. For more information visit www.RogueValleyBirdDay.net or call the North Mountain Park Nature Center at 541-488-6606.

Introduction to Bird Language

Interpreting bird language—what the birds are 'saying' and why they're 'saying it—is an ancient skill that people have used for thousands of years. Birds are keenly aware of their surroundings and often very vocal about what they observe, especially songbirds. Through their communication, we can gain insight into the movements of predators and other events that are unfolding in real time on the landscape, and that's not all; tuning into birds helps us to expand our awareness, deepen our listening skills and re-discover ourselves within a web of relationship that many have been forgotten in these modern times. Pre-register online at ashland.or.us/register or call 541.488.6606

DATE Friday, May 27

TIME 9:30am—4pm

PLACE North Mountain Park

COST \$55 (*children under 10 are free*)

INSTRUCTOR Will Scott is co-founder & lead instructor at Weaving Earth Center for Relational Education in Northern California.



Tim Simonsen caught this singing Western Meadowlark on an RVAS field trip to Northern California, led by Frank Lospalluto.

Another Successful FeederWatch Season
By Mary Pat Power, Ashland PFW Coordinator

Project FeederWatch in Ashland completed its 14th season with increased attendance and great enthusiasm among the observers. Saturday sessions averaged 14 observers.

Thanks go to RVAS for providing funds for the bird feed and North Mountain Park staff for maintaining the feeder area and publicizing the watches. Great appreciation to the lead observers **Barbara Massey, Vince Zauskey, John and Stephanie Bullock, Bill Hering, Kate Cleland-Sipfle, Nancy Menken, Sooney Viani, Keiko Thurston, Ron Ketchum, and Nala Cardillo.**

Birdathon 2016 is here!

****The Pledge/Donation form for the event is below. Please fill out****
and include the form with your pledge or donation.

Good luck to all of our Birdathon teams!

BIRDATHON 2016: Please Pledge or Donate

You can either make a donation of a set amount or pledge a certain payment per species seen. That way you can do your own Birdathon species list, put together your own Birdathon team, or support a team of your favorite birders. If you are participating as a birder, please ask friends and team members to pledge as well.

--My tax-deductible donation of \$_____ is enclosed.

--I pledge \$_____ per species.

--This pledge is for birds I will see myself.

--This pledge is for birds seen by _____ (name of Birdathon team or other birder).

Please mail your check to

Rogue Valley Audubon Society

P.O. Box 8597, Medford, OR 97501

RVAS is a non-profit 501 (c) 3 organization, and all donations to RVAS are tax-deductible.

RVAS will mail you a receipt for your tax records if you provide us with your address.

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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[www.facebook.com/
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Birding: More Than
a Hobby, It's a
Way of Life.



Wild Birds Unlimited

NEW LOCATION/NEW OWNER: 987 Medford Center Dr., Medford, OR •
541-772-2107

THE CHAT

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

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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.

