

A voice for education and conservation in the natural world

Rogue Valley Audubon Society

[www.roguevalleyaudubon.org](http://www.roguevalleyaudubon.org)

Deadline for the September issue is August 20.



## President's Letter

I'm going to take this opportunity to summarize some of our chapter's accomplishments during this past fiscal year. We on the Board feel that it's been a successful year, and we hope you do, too. We have also laid the groundwork for future projects.

### Membership:

- The Board agreed to change from all membership renewals in September to annual RVAS subscriptions (\$20), which are tracked from the date of joining.
- We have fine-tuned the change to on-line delivery of *The Chat* (unless hard copies are requested). Please contact Carol Palmer at [carol\\_p@charter.net](mailto:carol_p@charter.net) if you are having any difficulty getting your notification for *The Chat*.
- In May, we reached a new high of 126 local members, plus the National Audubon members in the Rogue Valley.

### Conservation:

- The Board agreed to a pledge of \$4,000 to the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy to support their purchase of the Rogue River Preserve, and we made this support the theme for this year's Holiday Party. The Holiday Party was great fun, and we came very close to raising the entire \$4,000!
- The trees planted two years ago at Denman were watered all summer, fertilized this winter and are doing well.
- The Purple Martin nest structures at Denman have been installed again and more have been added.
- In partnership with SOLC, we negotiated an agreement for KBO to conduct a Grasshopper Sparrow survey on the Imperatrice land owned by the City of Ashland. The survey will be conducted this June, with the report completed by September. RVAS will provide \$1,000 for this survey.
- Board members manned an RVAS table at the SOCAN Climate Change conference.
- We have added our chapter name to letters written to support: Expanding the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument; Protect Crater Lake; Protect the Bald Eagle and Migratory Birds; The Albatross and Petrel Protection Act; and The Bird-Safe Building Act, as well as the statement protesting the Malheur Occupation. We also submitted letters in support of road closures in the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument and opposing aspects of BLM's Resource Management Plan for Western Oregon.

*President's Letter continued on page 2*

## OFFICERS and DIRECTORS

**President:** Linda Kreisman, 541-482-6456

[linda@ashlandhome.net](mailto:linda@ashlandhome.net)

**Secretary:** Jon Deason,  
[jdeason39@gmail.com](mailto:jdeason39@gmail.com)

**Treasurer:** Sue Polich, 541-608-3802  
[spolich@charter.net](mailto:spolich@charter.net)

Nala Cardillo  
Wendy Gere  
Carol Mockridge  
Jeanine Moy  
Carol Palmer  
Susan Stone

[nalacardillo@gmail.com](mailto:nalacardillo@gmail.com)  
[wendy.gere@gmail.com](mailto:wendy.gere@gmail.com)  
[mockridge50@hotmail.com](mailto:mockridge50@hotmail.com)  
[Jeanine@kswild.org](mailto:Jeanine@kswild.org)  
[carol\\_p@charter.net](mailto:carol_p@charter.net)  
[weaverstone86@gmail.com](mailto:weaverstone86@gmail.com)

## COMMITTEE CHAIRS

**Archivist:** Alyson Dal Ponte, [alyson287@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto:chateditor@gmail.com)

**CBC-Ashland:** Carol Mockridge,  
[mockridge50@hotmail.com](mailto:mockridge50@hotmail.com) & John Bullock,  
[jas@opendoor.com](mailto:jas@opendoor.com)

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

**Conservation:** Pepper Trail, [ptrail@ashlandnet.net](mailto:ptrail@ashlandnet.net) &  
Carol Palmer, [carol\\_p@charter.net](mailto:carol_p@charter.net)

**Education:** Lynn Kellogg, [rvas.ed@gmail.com](mailto:rvas.ed@gmail.com) & Sooney  
Viani, [sooneyviani@gmail.com](mailto:sooneyviani@gmail.com)

**Field Notes:** Jeff Tufts, [tallahto@aol.com](mailto:tallahto@aol.com)

**Field Trips:** Russ Namitz, 541-294-2063,  
[namitzr@hotmail.com](mailto: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](mailto:fgpalmer@charter.net)

**Programs:** Katy Reed, 541-245-5095

**Publicity:** Carol Mockridge, [mockridge50@hotmail.com](mailto:mockridge50@hotmail.com)

## CHAPTER COMMUNICATIONS

**E-mail Address:**

[roquevalleyaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:roquevalleyaudubon@gmail.com)

**The Chat:** [chateditor@gmail.com](mailto:chateditor@gmail.com)

**Webmaster:** Jeff Tufts, [tallahto@aol.com](mailto:tallahto@aol.com)

**Web Site:** [www.roquevalleyaudubon.org](http://www.roquevalleyaudubon.org)

**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 Letter, cont.

### Education:

- Nate Trimble managed our "Birding in Schools Program" very successfully this year. We received good feedback from his presentations, and he got such a good response from local schools that he could have done several more presentations if we could have managed the necessary bookkeeping requirements. Solving this issue is on the Board's agenda for next year.
- The Board agreed to pay for bus transportation for local schools attending bird-related programs at North Mountain Park.
- We have promised \$1,200 to SOU's Environmental Education students' "Fall in the Field" program for schools needing financial help in attending their classes at the Deer Creek Center.
- Siskiyou Field Institute has money left in the ongoing scholarship fund we provide.
- Lynn Kellogg continued to present the RVAS program to local third grade classes.
- Sooney Viani, Sally Peterson, and Karl Schneck led groups of elementary students on bird walks for the *Finding Home* program at Coyote Trails. Sooney also led bird walks for a Bird Nerds Service Learning program at North Mountain Park.

### Member Services:

- We had good demand for both *Birding Hotspots* and *Birds of Jackson County* and printed additional copies of both.
- We initiated a Facebook page for RVAS.
- All eight of our monthly chapter presentations were well-attended and enjoyed.
- We continued the FeederWatch programs at both North Mountain Park and Coyote Trails.
- All of our field trips this year were almost filled to capacity. To encourage participation next year, we will host more trips that are closer and shorter.

*President's Letter continued on page 3*

## The Chat – June 2016

*President's Letter continued from page 2*

- *The Chat* continued to provide information on upcoming programs, conservation issues, and field notes on Jackson County birds.
- The Rogue Valley Birds Listserv, maintained by RVAS, continues to serve as the essential online resource for bird observations in Jackson County.
- Christmas Bird Counts in both Ashland and Medford were well-attended, with 60 people in the Medford count and 54 in the Ashland count.
- Several teams participated in Birdathon 2016 and recorded a total of 185 species.
- The First Wednesday counts at Agate Lake continue to be popular, with more than twenty people participating on some occasions.

All in all, we initiated some new partnerships and programs, continued most of the old ones, and have plans for a few new ones next year. Stay tuned!

Linda

### **Ashland Parks and Recreation Classes**

#### **Summer Saturday Morning Bird Walks**

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 spend the summer in the Rogue Valley. Binoculars and field guides will be available for check-out. Pre-register online at [www.ashland.or.us/register](http://www.ashland.or.us/register) or call the Nature Center at 541.488.6606.

AGES All ages welcome  
DATES June 11 | July 9 | August 13  
TIME 8—9am  
COST Free  
INSTRUCTORS are local volunteer birders

#### **Growing Pollinator Gardens**

Learn the basic requirements for creating a pollinator garden for butterflies, bees and hummingbirds. Gain an understanding of design elements to consider and the reasons to create a pollinator garden. Learn about some of our native plants that pollinators love, several of the sources for obtaining those plants and how to receive recognition from the City of Ashland for your garden. Also included: a list of resources to learn more and a short tour of North Mountain Park gardens to identify some of the native plants. Pre-register online at [ashland.or.us/register](http://ashland.or.us/register) or call the Nature Center at 541.488.6606.

AGES 12—Adult  
DATE Sunday, June 12  
TIME 2—4pm  
COST \$5

INSTRUCTORS Kristina Lefever and Shari Shattuck are both on the Bee City USA Ashland Subcommittee and are gardeners. Shari is also a beekeeper.

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

During a normal spring, an **American Avocet**, a **Willet**, and a **Solitary Sandpiper** would be main attractions at the Kirtland settling ponds. But, when a **Little Stint** shows up and stays for more than three days and is the object of numerous photographers, you can forget normal.

The diminutive Eurasian shorebird—very similar in appearance to our local “peep”—is the 340th species officially recorded in Jackson County and is the first addition to the list since a White-winged Dove visited a feeder in White City in May 2011. Little Stint is a code 4 rarity on the ABA checklist. No other species on the Jackson County checklist is rated that high.

First seen on May 11 and reported as a possible Semipalmated Sandpiper, the Little Stint came under close scrutiny the following day by an observer (RN) familiar with the species. It was subsequently photographed extensively by several local birders and its frequent proximity to one or two Western Sandpipers afforded many opportunities to compare field marks of the two members of the *Calidris* genus.

The Little Stint was last seen on May 14, and it's estimated that during its stay as many as forty birders took advantage of the chance to add it to county lists, state lists and life lists. Several made the trip from the northern half of the state.

There are six official records of Little Stint in Oregon, two of which are from 2015. The Kirtland bird will almost certainly be accepted as the seventh record. The Oregon list also includes two records of Long-toed Stint and twelve of Red-necked Stint. All three species, as well as Temminck's Stint, are native to Europe and/or Asia. The latter three are code three rarities on the ABA checklist.

The appearance and subsequent identification of the Little Stint at a time when few sandpipers were present at Kirtland raises an interesting question regarding *Calidris*

rarities. Are observers more likely to discover such a bird when it's one of a small number of individuals (and thus more likely to be carefully scrutinized), or are the odds better when there are large flocks and thus a greater numerical chance of such rarities being present?

A Little Stint was seen in Santa Clara County April 22—at the south end of San Francisco Bay—and comparison of the photographs of that bird with those of the Kirtland bird prompted some observers to speculate that it's the same individual.

Even if you missed the Little Stint, there were plenty of interesting shorebird sightings



Little Stint by Jim Livaudais

from Kirtland during the period covered in this report. Three **Black-necked Stilts** stopped by May 6 (GS), and one was there on May 8 (CB). A single female American Avocet showed up Apr 20 (RN). Most of that species seen in Jackson County are found at one of the mountain lakes (usually Howard Prairie).

One **Black-bellied Plover** was at Kirtland Apr 30 (GS), and a Solitary Sandpiper was there May 2 (GS). It may have been the same Solitary that was in the Denman pond adjacent to Agate Road Apr 29-30 (GS), and perhaps the same bird that was in the Ousterhout Farm area May3-4 (BH).

Kirtland hosted a Willet May 4 (BH), a **Sanderling** Apr 23-27 (FL), as many as 14 **Pectoral Sandpipers** May 12 (RN), and a **Short-billed Dowitcher** Apr 20-21 (RN).

*Field Notes continued on page 5*

*Field Notes continued from page 4*

Small numbers of **Wilson's** and/or **Red-necked Phalaropes** were seen regularly at Kirtland through the first three weeks of May.

With local reservoirs nearly full, shorebirds can't find much in the way of mudflats at those locales. Despite that, there was one Pectoral Sandpiper, one Red-necked Phalarope, two **Greater Yellowlegs** and three **Western Sandpipers** at Agate Lake May 20 (CB).

The chase for the Little Stint indirectly produced perhaps the second best sighting of the period in this area when a visiting birder from Portland (SF) spotted a **Swainson's Hawk** flying overhead while she and a friend were birding on Roxy Ann May 14. It was a light-morph adult.

Shorebirds weren't the only highlight of birding at Kirtland. A **Blue-winged Teal** pair was there May 10 (BH), and one or two of that species were seen off-and-on through May 19. It's believed that the birds were moving back and forth from the Rogue River. Also at Kirtland was a single **Redhead** Apr 20 (CB).

**Eared Grebes** were in short supply through the winter and early spring, but seven were spotted at Agate Lake Apr 23 (FL) and nine (all in breeding plumage) were there May 4 (RVAS). Lost Creek Lake had 45 **Western Grebes** Apr 25 (RN).

**Bonaparte's Gulls** began visiting Kirtland in late April in small numbers, and a few were there almost daily. All were adults in non-breeding plumage. Six were seen at Lost Creek Lake May 11 (RN).

Less frequent visitors to Kirtland were **Forster's Terns**. Three were there May 2 (GS), and two were seen May 8 (CB).

The open area northeast of the Medford Airport runway is traditionally the best—maybe only—spot to find **Short-eared Owls** in Jackson County. But this spring, a Short-eared Owl was spotted hunting over the fields north of Avenue G May 1 (GS), and the bird was seen repeatedly during the subsequent week.

It's long been suspected that **White-throated Swifts** may breed on the cliffs of Lower Table Rock, and one was seen by many birders coursing over the Lower Table Rock trail May 17.

First **Black-chinned Hummingbird** report this year came from east Medford where one showed up at a feeder May 20 (GP).

Shrike sightings are infrequent at best during the winter months—when Northern Shrikes move into the area—and they are really unusual in late May. A single bird—deemed a “possible” **Loggerhead Shrike**—was seen in the Salt Creek Road area May 22 (CB).

**Purple Martins** tend to move through this area in late April and May so it's not unusual to have occasional reports. This year's list of sightings of these large swallows seems to be much longer than normal. They've been seen at Kirtland and near Lower Table Rock—those are normal locations—but also along Butte Falls Highway, near the PCT around Soda Mountain, on Roxy Ann, and in the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument.

**Bank Swallow** is the one species from the family that is fairly rare in Jackson County, and the first report for this year was a bird photographed near Lost Creek Lake May 21 (MBF). We can only guess at how many Bank Swallows pass through this area during migration unnoticed.

**Grasshopper Sparrows**, always of interest despite their drab appearance and quiet vocalizations, have been seen in three expected locations: Avenue G fields May 2 (CB), Gardner Road off Hwy 140 May 7 (RVAS), and the Imperatrice property May 13 (DA).

Our “winter sparrows”—Golden-crowned, White-crowned and White-throated—are usually gone from the valley by the first week of May, but a single **Golden-crowned Sparrow** was at Ashland Pond May 22 (MBF).

*Field Notes continued on page 6*

*Field Notes continued from page 5*

Although the bird was not positively identified, a possible **Lazuli Bunting** was reported from the Lower Table Rock trail May 15 by a visiting birder from Portland (JC).

Vanishing or degrading habitat has prompted considerable concern in California about declining numbers of **Tricolored Blackbirds**, but there was no shortage of these gregarious birds in Jackson County in early May. As many as 300-400 of them were congregating in the vicinity of the Ousterhout Farm just south of Eagle Point (BH).

Mid to late-spring usually brings scattered reports of **Yellow-headed Blackbirds**, and this year they've been seen singly at the Kirtland ponds, at Avenue G, near Emigrant Lake, and at Lost Creek Lake.

Plenty of **Great-tailed Grackle** sightings—they were seen by six of the eight teams competing in Birdathon—with most of them in the Kirtland-Avenue G-Denman area. One Grackle was heard at North Mountain Park May 2 (KM).

Although the location was a bit south of the territory covered in this report, we're going to include mention of an adult male **Hooded Oriole** that was seen May 13 just below the Iron Gate Reservoir dam. This bird was found by Stewart Janes, who for many years wrote this column; for him, we'll gladly stretch the Jackson County border a few miles south.

Thanks to all whose sightings contributed to this report: Dick Ashford, Camden Bruner, Jess Crawford, Shawneen Finnegan, Bob Hunter, Frank Lospalluto, Kristi Mergenthaler, Russ Namitz, Gary Palmer and, Gary Shaffer. (RVAS) indicates birds seen during a Rogue Valley Audubon event, and (MBF) denotes birds seen during KBO's Mountain Bird Festival.

### Coyote Trails Update

The Coyote Trails "Finding Home" program is nearing the end of its 6th year. Throughout the school year, Coyote Trails brings Nature Connections skills and activities into eight Jackson County Title 1 fifth-grade classrooms. At the end of the year, Coyote Trails in Medford hosts a culminating field trip.

Sooney Viani and Sally Peterson both generously donated their time to lead birding stations at the field trips for Orchard Hill Elementary and Jackson Elementary. The students got to use binoculars (some of them for the first time!) to see the birds up close. They identified and learned about robins, sparrows, swallows, finches, red-tailed hawks, orioles, mallards, geese, and much more. Karl Schneck also volunteered to lead one of these stations at a field trip in late May.

In summary, Coyote Trails would like to send a big "HOOOOWWWLLLL!" of a thank you to Sooney, Sally, & Karl.

## Fall in the Field at SOU

By Katie Boehnlein, Fall in the Field Coordinator

Registration is well underway for *Fall in the Field* 2016! Each year the graduate students of the MS in Environmental Education program at Southern Oregon University offer unique field-based programs for students in grades 2-8. These consist of day programs (at Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument and Ashland Pond) or overnight programs (at Deer Creek Center in Selma, OR). This year, students will uncover the “Wild Within,” exploring connections and realizing their role in natural communities. Programs will engage students in citizen science, service learning, and standards-based lessons focusing on ecosystem interconnectedness and human impact on earth systems, all at a very affordable price.

RVAS has pledged \$1,200 in support of this project. The Rogue Valley Audubon Society has also generously offered scholarships for teachers wanting to attend overnight programs at Deer Creek Center! For registration information and other details, visit: <http://sou.edu/ee/fitfregistration.html> or contact [seecinginfo@gmail.com](mailto:seecinginfo@gmail.com).

## The Birds

They're back.....  
Circling high over the park,  
The dark buzzards patiently wait,  
Waiting for me to kick off and  
Give them an easy meal.  
They're not getting this old carcass  
yet!  
I thrust a single digit skyward....  
A lone bird against the menacing  
flock....  
And one by one,  
They left.

—Steve Bosbach



## **The Conservation Column**

**By Pepper Trail**

### **Good News for Seabirds!**

Let's close this year of conservation columns with some good news. Among my favorite group of birds are the seabirds, especially the petrels and albatrosses, those magnificent wanderers. Anyone who has been on a pelagic trip off the Oregon coast—or who has simply scanned the sea from one of our scenic headlands—knows that our state is home to a diverse array of seabirds. Some, like Common Murres, Tufted Puffins, and Marbled Murrelets, nest here. Others, like Northern Fulmars, Sooty Shearwaters, and Black-footed Albatross, feed in our rich waters during part of their great annual journeys. The foundation on which is marvelous community of birds is built are “forage fish”—anchovies, herring, smelt, sand lance—the small fish whose nutritious schools are a crucial link in the food chain, supporting not just birds but also a wide range of larger fish and marine mammals.

Now a new federal ruling, issued in April by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), has recognized the massive ecological impact of these small ocean dwellers and is protecting them from large-scale fishing off the West Coast. The statute makes dozens of forage fish species—the vast majority of the region's populations—off limits to commercial fishermen, who are increasingly targeting them to produce mass quantities of fishmeal for agriculture and aquaculture. Under the ruling, fishermen wanting to target any of the protected forage fish species will now be denied approval until they can prove that their impact on the species—and the broader ecosystem—is negligible.

The ban, which affects federal waters beyond three miles off the coast, is a result of nearly four years of advocacy work by several conservation groups, including the National Audubon Society, Audubon Society of Portland, Pew Trusts, and Oceana—plus the support of multiple commercial and recreational fishing groups, which recognize the importance that forage fish play in boosting other seafood stocks. Rogue Valley Audubon lent our voice to those in support of this important effort, which is being implemented by NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Council (NMFC). The restrictions protect seven types of forage fish off of California, Oregon, and Washington. This 280,000-square-mile area is particularly biodiverse and rich in nutrients, thanks in part to the California Current, which runs south from Canada to Baja and causes major upwellings in the Pacific.

### **More Fish in the Sea**

The NOAA decision follows on the heels of a 2006 commercial fishing ban on krill in federal waters off the West Coast. The guidelines set a precedent that essentially “forged the path” for the forage-fish ban, says Anna Weinstein, Audubon California's seabird and marine program director. The ensuing benefits are huge for forage fish, which are struggling under the combined effects of climate change, ocean acidification, pollution, and overfishing. One major concern is that the exact factors driving sudden population declines—like the infamous Pacific sardine collapse of the 1940s—are often poorly understood. Overfishing, for one, can suddenly tip a population over the edge, with severe ramifications for the species that feed on it.

*Conservation Column continued on page 9*

*Conservation Column continued from page 8*

“Too often we’re responding to species where there’s a risk of them going extinct,” says Ben Enticknap, Oceana’s Pacific campaign manager and senior scientist. That’s what makes this ruling unusual: It proactively covers many forage species at once, and uses an ecosystem-wide conservation approach.

For Audubon, the ban also represents a monumental victory for seabirds. Over the course of the long decision-making process, Audubon California, the Audubon Society of Portland, and Audubon Washington contributed research on the importance of forage fish for birds, and mobilized public support for the regulation. “To me, it showed the power of our network,” says Gail Gatton, executive director of Audubon Washington. “Instead of being a bunch of individuals working on it, we were a connected group.” NOAA reports that it received more than 90,000 comments and letters in support of the ban.

The ruling protects some of the most important prey options for seabirds: round herring, thread herring, Pacific saury, silversides, smelts, Pacific sand lances, and pelagic squid species. Before, these species weren’t even part of any conservation plan. “These seven groups had fallen under the radar,” says Joe Liebezeit, avian conservation manager with the Audubon Society of Portland. But changing that amounts to a massive ecological win. “Combined with the previous measures to protect krill, this new ruling safeguards roughly 70 percent of all forage fish—by weight—in the California Current,” says Oceana’s Enticknap.

Certain climate-threatened species will benefit directly from the new regulations. The Black-footed Albatross, for example, preys on the now-protected neon flying squid, and the Rhinoceros Auklet eats sand lances, which are also covered by the fishing ban. Weinstein reckons that in addition to an estimated 30 local bird species, another 60 to 80 migratory species that flock to the West Coast on a seasonal basis will benefit.

### **And It Could Get Even Better...**

A bill introduced in Congress this winter would heighten U.S. involvement in the protection of migratory seabird populations placed at risk by some international fishing operations. Rogue Valley Audubon has signed on to a letter of support for this important legislation.

The Albatross and Petrel Conservation Act (H.R. 4480), introduced by Representative Alan Lowenthal (D-CA) to the House Natural Resource Committee Feb. 4, would ratify the International Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels in the United States.

Albatross and petrel populations are under severe threat due to habitat loss, invasive predators, marine pollution and fisheries bycatch – the incidental take of non-target species in fisheries equipment. Approximately 100,000 albatross are caught in longline fisheries equipment and drown each year. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature recognizes 15 of the 22 species of albatross and half of all species of petrel as threatened by extinction.

By ratifying ACAP, the U.S. would have more international influence and resources that are necessary to protect migratory seabird populations. Former President George W. Bush asked the Senate to approve the treaty in 2008. Since then, President Obama has listed the agreement as a “priority,” but Congress has yet to take action.

*Conservation Column continued on page 10*

*Conservation Column continued from page 9*

If the bill is passed, the United States will join 13 other nations in mitigation efforts. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service would be authorized to improve sea-bird conservation efforts through research, habitat restoration, invasive species control, and development of public awareness programs. Let's hope that this much-needed legislation is passed, capping a year of much-needed good news for seabirds.

## The Importance of Native Plants and Trees to Insect-Eating Birds

By Vince Zauskey

I recently read a timely article in the April-May, 2016 edition of the National Wildlife Federation magazine titled "Growing A Better Bird Feeder." Written by Mark Wexler, the article was about a study Doug Tallamy did in southeastern Pennsylvania after he purchased an abandoned farm. Tallamy examined the leaves on many of the Japanese honeysuckle, autumn olive and other nonnative plants that had invaded his newly-purchased, 10-acre property, and found very few signs of leaf damage.

Tallamy began a study that eventually showed native plant and flower species provided a much more bird-friendly habitat

for birds versus areas with non-native plants, lawns and exotic landscaping. It sounds like a "no brainer," but one comment by landscape ecologist Amy Belaire and colleagues at the University of Illinois caught my attention. After surveying 25 Cook County communities in Illinois during peak breeding season for warblers and other insect-eating birds, Belaire noted, "our findings showed that when it comes to native bird diversity, having a neighborhood



Yellow-rumped Warbler feeding nestlings by Jeff Foott (courtesy USNPS)

with many wildlife-friendly elements in yards is more important than having a neighborhood surrounded by parks or forest preserves." Belaire's research also found that native tree species attract twice as many bird species as nearby neighborhoods lacking such vegetation.

*Native Plants continued on page 11*

*Native Plants continued from page 10*

Because this has been a pretty fabulous Spring here in the Rogue Valley, with some rain-soaking events producing lush leaves, a variety of flowers, shrubs, crawling and flying insects (and a lot of pollen...cah, chooooo!), you may have already noticed some migratory birds or permanent residents searching for food or maybe a nest site on your property. In March and April, I noticed tiny, yellowish caterpillars on my parked car. In early May, I had slender, green caterpillars that had dropped off the leaves of overhanging trees and a couple of these insects were crawling on my car. Insects are not only important for birds that may have migrated hundreds of miles, mainly from Mexico, either to establish a nesting area or move further north, they are particularly important for feeding young. Many of us use bird feeders to attract and feed fall and wintertime birds, such as juncos, towhees, chickadees, nuthatches and sparrows. Planting your yard with native vegetation may bring more than one Yard Bird to your property—and possibly their offspring in late Spring/early Summer. Additionally, long-range migrants may pass through your yard foraging for food prior to heading south.

A vast study by Tallamy, the National Wildlife Federation and the U.S. Forest Service resulted in a database, scheduled for release this spring. The database will supposedly enable gardeners and others to search on-line, based on zip code, for native plants inherent to your area. Attracting birds, butterflies and bees is also an integral part of this study. The census material will be available initially for 3,000 counties across the U.S. Go to [www.nwf.org/nwfgarden](http://www.nwf.org/nwfgarden) for more information.



MacGillivray's Warbler by Glenn Bartley (courtesy National Audubon Society)

My conclusion from reading this article is yards that are planted with native vegetation and trees can be little islands of habitat. Interconnected with other yards, these islands may provide a few acres of viable habitat for birds, butterflies and bees. If you have several acres, planting native vegetation and trees should eventually bring more winged creatures to your property, including migrants and resident birds.

This leads me to an interesting bird sighting I had on May 11, in the vegetation on the "ditch trail" on upper Clay Street in Ashland. I have previously noted mi-

grants this spring such as Cassin's and Warbling Vireos, Nashville, Audubon and Hermit Warblers. But on this day I kept hearing a warbler I knew was different. Trying to see movement is trickier in trees now, as these types of birds quickly forage for insects. I was definitely challenged. I tried repeatedly to spot the singing bird in a small, scraggly willow tree with no success. A few minutes later, I returned, and the bird was still singing. Finally, I caught a little movement in the branches and leaves about 20 feet away. I quickly found the spot with my binoculars and there it was: a MacGillivray's Warbler with a large, green caterpillar easily 1 ½" long and ⅛" in diameter. It was still singing while trying to consume the caterpillar in its tiny bill.

## Birdathon 2016: A Record Year!

Eight teams—a record number for the RVAS Birdathon competition—set out on the evening of Friday, May 6, to see how many species they could see and/or hear in Jackson County in a 24-hour period, and when the results were tabulated a record total of 185 had been spotted by one or more teams.

The total of 182 recorded by the six teams that competed in 2014 was the previous record. Two teams new to the competition (The Professional Amateurs and We Just Wanna Have Fun) were among the eight. The ProAms represented the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife offices headquartered at Denman Wildlife Area.

The “Big Three”—Binosaurs, Great Grays, and Falcons—figured to battle for first place honors, and it was the Binosaurs, reversing last year’s finish, who took top spot with 159 species. The Great Grays, first or tied for first in five of the previous six years, were second with 152. Falcons, Birdathon record-setters in 2012 with 162 species, tallied 147 this year, taking third place.

Other competing teams (in order of finish) were the Wandering Tattlers (109), Old World Warblers (86), Owlflaw Biker (81), Professional Amateurs (65) and We Just Wanna Have Fun (58).

Binosaurs captain Norm Barrett, recognizing that a crafty combination of strategy and effort would be needed to take the title away from the Great Grays, allowed the more senior members of his crew to get much-needed post-midnight bedrest. While the old guys were snoozing, Russ Namitz and co., fueled by youthful enthusiasm and lingering resentment over last year’s narrow loss, soldiered on into the wee hours of the morning, racking up crucial owls while flying the banner for unholy sleep deprivation.

When the clock struck 6:00 Saturday evening, the Binosaurs had registered a remarkable nine owl species, including Flammulated, Spotted and Great Gray.

The Binosaurs’ complete list was notable both for their unusual finds (Redhead, Solitary Sandpiper, Franklin’s Gull, and Clark’s Nutcracker), and their surprising misses (WildTurkey, Rufous Hummingbird, Peregrine Falcon, Black Phoebe, Northern Mockingbird, and Golden-crowned Sparrow). Amazingly, Binosaurs were the only one of the eight teams that *didn’t* get Wild Turkey.

But the Binosaurs also found eleven species that none of the other teams spotted. Great Grays had six such unique sightings. The Professional Amateurs were the only group to spot a Cedar Waxwing. And a special salute to Tim Johnston, who competed as a one-man motorless team (Owlflaw Biker) and was the only one to find Great Egret and Northern Harrier.

The total of 185 species seen and/or heard by one or more teams included ten that were not found in 2015 or 2014. This group included Northern Pintail, Redhead, Solitary Sandpiper, Franklin’s Gull, Flammulated Owl, Short-eared Owl, Barred Owl, Gray Flycatcher, Clark’s Nutcracker, and Purple Martin.

Testimony to the wide-ranging nature of the eight teams’ searches is the fact that every regularly expected species was seen by at least one group. Perhaps the only disappointment of the count was that a few shorebird species usually found at Kirtland in early May (Pectoral Sandpiper, Wilson’s Phalarope, Red-necked Phalarope) were not present when the big event arrived.

*Birdathon 2016 continued on page 13*

## **The Chat—June 2016**

*Birdathon 2016 continued from page 12*

Joining Norm Barrett on the winning Binosaur team were Jim Livaudais, Russ Namitz, Howard Sands and Gary Shaffer.

The Great Grays were led by captain Bob Hunter, and the rest of his crew were Gretchen Hunter (manager), Brian Barr and Frank Lospalluto.

Captain Pepper Trail, John Alexander, Stewart Janes and Ben Wieland made up the team for the Falcons.

Here are the other team members:

Wandering Tattlers: Sooney Viani (capt.), Kate Cleland-Sipfle, Carol Mockridge and Goly Ostorvar.

Old World Warblers: Maggi Rackley (capt.), Edith Lindner, Lynn Kellogg, Katy Reed, and Kathy Simonsen.

Owltlaw Biker: Tim Johnston.

The Professional Amateurs: Steve Niemela (capt.), Dan Van Dyke, Susan Riemer, Mark Vargas and Matthew Vargas.

We Just Wanna Have Fun: Wendy Gere (capt.), Mike Guest, Melody Noraas, and Shelley Tanquary.

Special thanks to Birdathon Chair Katy Reed for making all the arrangements for this year's event and hosting the post-count dinner.

### **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 summer. 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](http://www.roguevalleyaudubon.org/First_Wednesday_Count.html)

June Walk: Wednesday, June 1

July Walk: Wednesday, July 6

August Walk: Wednesday, August 3

## 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](http://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:

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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.*

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**Fall RVAS Programs**

**Sept 27:** "Conservation of Coastal Birds," by Paul Engelmeyer, Manager of the Ten Mile Sanctuary near Yachats

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

**Nov 22:** TBA

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