

The Chat

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Rogue Valley Audubon Society
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Deadline for the March issue is February 20.



RVAS FEBRUARY PROGRAM
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 27 at 7:00 PM

"The Birds of Patagonia"
Presented by BRANDON BREEN

Patagonia is a region within Chile and Argentina that occupies the southernmost portion of South America—and it is one of the most magnificently scenic landscapes on earth. In this presentation I share photos and experiences from a hiking and bird-watching trip I took there in February of 2015, and I also provide an overview of this remote and bewitching place. The talk includes glaciers, parakeets, turquoise waters, condors, buzzard-eagles, and even the secretive Chucao Tapacula, a bird whose voice, according to Chilean poet Pablo Neruda, “contains all the world’s loneliness.” I hope you can make it for this informative photo slideshow and tour of one of earth’s true gems.

Brandon Breen is a writer and conservation biologist who lives in Ashland, Oregon. Brandon has worked on numerous avian research projects throughout the U.S. and abroad, focusing on such species as the California and Andean condors, the Turkey Vulture, and the Gray-crowned Rosy-finch. He completed his BA at Bates College and his MS at the University of Minnesota. Brandon is currently writing his first children's novel while also working on the Mindful Birding Project, which aims to increase awareness of ethical birding guidelines.



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

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

Letter from the Board

This is the first newsletter since our spirited holiday party and two successful Christmas Bird Counts. I'm always amazed how we come together as a birding community to celebrate and give of our time and money to work for the protection of our birds. Thank you, and let's recommit to accomplishing our goals in 2018. It will take many volunteers. If you would like to give back, we would welcome your participation on one of our many committees.

Please join me in welcoming Sarah Norton as our newest board member serving in the one-year student position. Sarah is a graduate student in Environmental Education at Southern Oregon University. She is also one of our student interns for the Birding in the Schools Program.

Lastly, I'm very happy to announce that Tom Pratum is our new webmaster. He and his wife Peggy are new RVAS members, and they wasted no time in offering to help out. Tom brings vast experience in website development and is working already on making our new website even better.

On behalf of the RVAS Board, I hope to see you at the next chapter meeting.

Carol Mockridge, President

Volunteer Opportunities

If you want to become a little more involved with RVAS activities, we have a lot of opportunities for you this month. Please contact Linda Kreisman at linda@ashlandhome.net if you are interested.

Birdathon coordinator: Birdathon is May 5–6. Many teams come back year after year. The coordinator's responsibilities include reserving the room for the dinner/re-cap meeting, letting our membership know the details, and serving as the official registrar of team names and members. Katy Reed, our wonderful past Birdathon coordinator, is available to show you how to get it going.

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Volunteer Opportunities continued from page 2

RVAS tabling coordinator: Every year, there are several events in the area where organizations are invited to have tables so the public can learn about their purpose, programs, etc. In the past these events have included Rogue Valley Bird Day (May 18, 2018) and the Salmon Festival in the fall at North Mountain Park, Earth Day, and various events sponsored by KS Wild. The tabling coordinator keeps track of events and finds RVAS members to sit at the table. Nala Cardillo, our past coordinator, developed a nice, very portable display. She is available to train the new coordinator.

Breeding bird survey coordinator: Barbara Massey organized one of these summer surveys several years ago. It's like a Christmas Bird Count in June. She felt it was well-received and useful. If you would be interested in helping to get this started again, Barbara would be happy to give you more information.

Dipper Watch in Lithia Park: The January Dipper Walk found five birds on Ashland Creek this year. Two of them are the birds banded in 2016, so we have a history of when and where and with what mates they have nested before. At the moment they seem to be in the process of choosing nest sites and mates for this year. If you would like to be involved in helping to monitor their progress, visit <https://lithiadipperwatch.com/>

Bird Surveys: Two survey opportunities are currently open and listed on the website in the volunteer section. One is a [raptor study](#) being conducted by a SOU graduate student. The other is a citizen science [Short-eared Owl survey](#) conducted by KBO. Check out details at roquevalleyaudubon.org.

Jackson County Field Notes: December 2017 and January 2018

By Frank Lospalluto

This time around we will take a brisk walk with some notable birds that were spotted as 2017 rolled into 2018. Happy New Year and Happy New Bird!

Snow Geese have been around in small numbers through the winter. Thirty-four were spotted at Agate Lake during the first Wednesday walk on Dec. 6 (LW, MO, JC, SD). And three or four were out at Emigrant at the turn of the year (KM, KS). One was spotted in Talent along Foss Lane Jan. 3 (RA), and most recently, a flock of eight to 10 were in the fields near the new Ashland

rest stop along I-5 (KH, FL).

Two **ROSS'S GEESE** had a short stay at Whetstone Pond Jan. 17 and early morning Jan. 18, first spotted by Oregon birding celebrity Noah Strycker (TM). **Tundra Swans** are back in the pasture along Table Rock Road near the big bend by the Rogue River Ranch, with 14 being spotted Jan 22 (KS). They seem to show up there every winter and stay around for a while. A flock of 17 was up near Lily Glen in mid-December, and a few were at Hyatt Lake Jan. 13 (RA, SP).

Two **Cinnamon Teal** were found at Whetstone during the Medford CBC Dec. 16 (BH).

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The very handsome **Northern Pintail** have been seen in small numbers: 16 were at Whetstone in early December (RA). A total of 29 were found in a number of sectors during the Medford CBC (KM, DG). One was at Kirtland Ponds Jan. 13, with 20 at Emigrant Lake Jan. 4 (TM, JC).

Canvasbacks are reliable at Mingus Pond during the winter months (LP, TM, BH). A **Redhead** was viewed on a private pond from Givan Ranch during the Medford CBC (HS). **Barrow's Goldeneyes** are back up on the Upper Rogue by Lost Creek. Six were found on the Medford CBC and one at Keene Creek Reservoir for Ashland CBC. A **RED-BREASTED MERGANSER** was found at Lost Creek Reservoir Jan. 6 (BH).

Buckhorn Springs was a hotspot for **Ruffed Grouse**, with one on the Ashland CBC and one found Jan. 17 (KM, BH). A **Sooty Grouse** was found during the Ashland CBC (FL). Males of both species start advertising reliably in March.

Four **Horned Grebe** were on Emigrant Lake Dec. 6; three were on Howard Prairie Jan. 5; and three were at Lake Selmac Jan. 7 (JK, CM, FL). An **Eared Grebe** was on Emigrant Dec. 11 (FL). Separating first winter Horned Grebes from Eared Grebes can be challenging at times, especially when viewing from a distance, as the first winter Horned can have a dusky neck like the Eared. This writer has stumbled on that ID many times. Horned Grebes in winter are generally more black and white looking. Horned have a larger, flatter head with thick necks, while Eared are more round-headed with thinner necks. The bill on the Horned appears larger and is white-tipped.

A lone **Western Grebe** has been at Whetstone since early December. A late **American White Pelican** was found during the Medford CBC in Sam's Valley (GP, LK).

A **Green Heron** has been lurking around Ashland Pond this January (SD, GS, TM). Whetstone Pond is the roost location of choice for a half a dozen **Black-crowned**

Night Heron.

Turkey Vultures have been spotted around the valley the last two months. A couple were seen along Dead Indian Memorial Dec. 15 (KS). A few seem to overwinter every year now. A local endemic Turkey Vulture has also been reported in the Ashland area, the very rare **Pepper's Turkey Vulture** (LK, KM).

Speaking of overwintering, an **Osprey** has been seen regularly fishing out at Emigrant this winter by numerous observers. A **White-tailed Kite** was observed out at the city of Ashland Imperatrice Property Jan. 5 and 6 (RT, SP).

A **Northern Goshawk** was found on the Medford CBC (SJ, CM). That doesn't happen every year. Two **Ferruginous Hawks** were seen on the Medford CBC as well. There has been one seen regularly the last few weeks near the TNC Whetstone Savannah along Newland Road. There have been at least two **Rough-legged Hawks** regularly seen this winter: one at the Imperatrice Property and one up at Howard Prairie. Another Rough-legged was reported from Tou Velle Jan. 13 (MG).

Seven **Sora** were detected during the Medford CBC. The group that counted at Whetstone Pond had great views of two of the birds.

A single flyover **Sandhill Crane** was seen Dec. 10 over Imperatrice and a single over Talent Dec. 14 (NT, JC). In a couple of weeks flocks of cranes will be heading back north.

Spotted Sandpiper remain scattered about along the Rogue and some lakes. **Greater Yellowlegs** and **Long-billed Dowitchers** have been spotted as well. A flock of 70 **Least Sandpiper** was at Kirtland Ponds Dec. 23 and again on Jan. 11, along with a few **Dunlin** (GS, FL). A single Western Sandpiper was at Kirtland Jan. 11 (FL).

A **Ring-billed Gull** was reported from Agate Lake and Emigrant Lake in December; 21 were at Emigrant Dec. 6 (JK), and one was seen during the Medford CBC.

Field Notes continued on page 5

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A few small flocks of **Band-tailed Pigeon** were seen recently: 17 in Talent Jan. 3 and 16 in Ashland near North Mountain Park (SD, KS).

A **Barred Owl** and a **Northern Saw-whet Owl** were found during the Ashland CBC. Northern Saw-whet males often begin singing in late January.

Fifty-seven **Anna's Hummingbirds** were detected during the Medford CBC and 33 were found during the Ashland CBC. There were reports of Anna's already having nested and produced a first brood over in Coos County on the coast. The **COSTA'S HUMMINGBIRD** in Merlin was still coming to the feeder in December (DV).

The Emigrant Lake **RED-NAPED SAP-SUCKER** near picnic area E has continued through December and into January with multiple reports.

A high number of 14 **Peregrine Falcons** were recorded for the Medford CBC; likely this speaks to the success of the massive recovery effort.

Black Phoebes and **Say's Phoebes** have been regularly reported over the last two months. Black Phoebes breed in the valley and Say's are normal winter visitors. There typically is an uptick in Say's Phoebe numbers in February as they start to move toward breeding areas.

A **Northern Shrike** continues at Agate Lake; first seen in November, it was also spotted Jan 19 (KS). Another Northern Shrike was seen and photographed near Howard Prairie Jan. 2 (TM). Three Northern Shrikes were recorded on the Medford CBC. A **Tree Swallow** was seen at Emigrant Lake during the Ashland CBC. While uncommon, it is not unusual to see a few Tree Swallows or Barn Swallows in December or January.

A **Pygmy Nuthatch** was observed near North Mountain Park Jan. 2 (RK). One was near Hyatt Lake Dec. 15 (FL). A **Rock Wren** was up in the rock quarry along Highway 66 and counted on the Ashland CBC (BH). Two **Mountain Bluebirds** were seen in the mountains above Wagner Creek Jan. 13

(KM). The Montague area in Siskiyou County is a good place to find this species in the winter.

An **Orange-crowned Warbler** was seen and photographed in Ashland at a suet feeder Dec. 28 (RT). Oddly there have been no recent Townsend Warbler reports this winter, none on ebird and no detections during the Ashland or Medford CBCs. Some **Lark Sparrow** sighting have crossed the wires recently. Four were counted on the Medford CBC and five on the Ashland CBC. In January birds were seen at Whetstone Savannah and Rogue River Preserve and 16 birds were reported at Givan Ranch (HS, KM).

The **HARRIS'S SPARROW** that was visiting south Medford in November continued through December and January. One Harris's was recently spotted along Hammel Road Jan. 17 (GS, NB).

A **Western Tanager** was photographed in Talent Dec. 14 (GV). A **Yellow-headed Blackbird** was seen in a feedlot along Brophy Road Jan. 5 (BH).

And finally, a **COMMON REDPOLL** was found and photographed near the TID ditch on the Imperatrice Property by Tiffany Manger Jan. 4. They have been seen in a number of western Oregon locations, so it was nice one graced us with its presence in Jackson County.

Thanks to everyone who shared their observations either on the RVbirds list or ebird, including Norm Barrett, Gary Shaffer, Bob Hunter, Janet Kelly, Karl Schneck, Tiffany Manger, Dennis Vroman, Jon Cox, Michael Guss, Stephanie Danyi, Kristen Horton, Kristi Mergenthaler, Karen Hussey, Greg Vinyard, Ron Ketchum, Shannon Rio, Kate McKenzie, Nate Trimble, Roxanna Tessman, Carol Mockridge, John Casad, Stewart Janes, George Peterson, Lyn Kellogg, Rene Allen, Sammie Peat, Dave Garcia, Linda Kreisman, Christine McCullough, Pepper Trail and Howard Sands.

All errors and omissions are my own.
Peace.

The Chat – February 2018

By Sonney Viani

Thank you, all participants of the Holiday Potluck and Auction Event on December 2, 2017. The evening was a success! The space was delightfully decorated, the event well attended, good food was shared, Jim Livaudais and Pepper Trail were informative and entertaining, the Warblers warbled and a lightning speed clean-up was accomplished. The event raised \$3,200 for bird conservation and education.

Thank you, donors. Here is the long list of supporters:

Ashland Food Co-op, Bloomsbury Books, Branson's Chocolates, Dagoba Chocolates, Four and Twenty Blackbirds, The Grange, Grizzly Peak Winery, Nala Cardillo, The Neuman Hotel Group, Northwest Nature Shop, Sally and George Peterson, Platt Anderson Cellars, Rocky Point Resort, Rogue Valley Roasting Co., Siskiyou Field Institute, Sun God Medicinals & Breeze Botanicals, and Wild Birds Unlimited

The creative and generous artists:

Joan Brown, Bernadette DeLallo, Mike Guest, Cheryl Kempner, Marge Maddux, Barbara Massey, Nate Trimble and Deb Van Poolen

Field Trippers:

Dick Ashford, Harry Fuller, Bob and Gretchen Hunter, Jeanine Moy and Pepper Trail

And a hearty thanks to all the bidders!



The Warblers performing at the Annual Holiday Party.
L-R: Kate Cleland-Sipfle, Larry Leichter, Sooney Viani, Sally Peterson and Nick Viani.

RVAS BIRDING FIELD TRIPS AND EVENTS

FIRST WEDNESDAY BIRD WALKS AT DENMAN WILDLIFE REFUGE

*****NOTE THE CHANGE IN VENUE!*****

Murray Orr will continue to lead his monthly bird walks, but at Denman Wildlife Refuge instead of Agate Lake. 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 parking area accessed from Agate Road in White City. Participants will need an ODWF parking permit. These can be purchased at the ODWF office, Bi-Mart, or Sportsman's Warehouse in Medford (Delta Waters and Highway 62). Walks begin at 8:30 am and end before noon.

February Walk: Wednesday, February 7

March Walk: Wednesday, March 7

April Walk: Wednesday, April 4

IMPERILED FORESTS BIRD WALK

Saturday, March 31

Leaders: Nathan Trimble (RVAS), Jeanine Moy (RVAS + KS Wild), George Sexton (KS Wild Conservation Director)

Join us on a collaborative hike hosted by RVAS and Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center. We will tour a couple of mature conifer forest locations adjacent to the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument. In known habitat for Great Grey Owl and Northern Spotted Owl, we'll search for nests and watch for songbirds in a couple of sites proposed for BLM logging: the Griffin Half Moon and North Landscape proposed timber sales. KS Wild will discuss the implications of the proposed timber sales, and how to get involved to protect owl habitat. Meet at Rite-Aid in Ashland at 8:00 am for carpool; we'll return by 2:00 pm. Expect moderate walking, walking off-trail on flat but uneven terrain. Make sure to bring layers of clothing, hiking boots, binoculars (we'll have a few to lend), snacks + lunch + water. Sign up for the hike at kswild.org

PROJECT FEEDERWATCH SCHEDULE

Coyote Trails (Medford) PFW

2931 S. Pacific Highway, Medford

Thursdays: Noon – 1:00 pm; open to the public

Feb 8, Feb 22, Mar 8, March 22

Fridays: Noon – 1:00 pm; open to the public

Feb 9, Feb 23, Mar 9, Mar 23

North Mountain Park (Ashland) PFW

620 N. Mountain Ave., Ashland

Fridays: 9:00 – 10:00 am; counts done by one person;

not advertised to the public

Feb 2, Feb 16, Mar 2, Mar 16

Saturdays: 9:00 – 10:00 am; open to the public

Feb 3, Feb 17, Mar 3, Mar 17

The Conservation Column

By Pepper Trail

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) is the world's most comprehensive law protecting birds. Enacted in 1918 and revised several times since, it covers all North American native bird species with the exception of upland game birds (turkeys, grouse, and quail), making it illegal for anyone to "take, possess, import, export, transport, sell, purchase, barter, or offer for sale, purchase, or barter, any migratory bird, or the parts, nests, or eggs of such a bird except under the terms of a valid permit issued pursuant to Federal regulations." For decades, the law has been considered to be a "strict liability statute" – that is, it applies to incidental "take" of birds as well as to deliberate killing. This is what has made it possible to impose fines and compel remediation on oil companies whose spills kill seabirds, electric companies whose power lines electrocute hawks, and wind companies whose turbines kill eagles.

On the Friday before Christmas, when it was sure to attract little press coverage, the Trump administration released a new legal memorandum that tosses aside this long-established and essential protection, stating that the killing of migratory birds violates the MBTA only when "the actor [is] engaged in an activity the object of which was to render an animal subject to human control." By this "standard," the next big oil spill – say, in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, which is now open for oil drilling as part of the Republican tax bill – would not violate the MBTA, no matter how many birds die. Wind turbine projects would no longer need to consult with the US Fish and Wildlife Service about ways to minimize their impacts on birds. A lot more hawks and eagles will be electrocuted by unprotected power lines.

Here is the National Audubon Society statement on this catastrophic decision:

"Christmas came early for bird killers. By acting to end industries' responsibility to avoid millions of gruesome bird deaths per year, the White House is parting ways with more than 100 years of conservation legacy," said David O'Neill, Audubon's chief conservation officer, in response to the Trump Administration's decision to no longer enforce the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) in cases of incidental bird deaths.

"Gutting the MBTA runs counter to decades of legal precedent as well as basic conservative principles—for generations Republicans and Democrats have embraced both conservation and economic growth and now this Administration is pitting them against each other. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act is one of the most important conservation laws we have.

"We will engage our 1.2 million members to defend the MBTA from this and any other attack on the laws that protect birds."

Congress passed the MBTA in 1918 (2018 will be its centennial year) in response to public outcry over the mass slaughter of birds, which threatened egrets and other species with extirpation. The law prohibits killing or harming America's birds except under certain conditions, including managed hunting seasons for game species. The law protects more than 1,000 bird species in part because it requires industries implement commonsense best management practices like covering tar pits and marking transmission lines.

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Facts and figures on industrial causes of bird mortality in the United States:

- Power lines: Up to 175 million birds per year (Source: http://www.fs.fed.us/psw/publications/documents/psw_gtr191/Asilomar/pdfs/1051-1064.pdf)
- Communication towers: Up to 50 million birds per year (Source: http://www.fs.fed.us/psw/publications/documents/psw_gtr191/Asilomar/pdfs/1051-1064.pdf)
- Oil waste pits: 500,000 to 1 million birds per year (Source: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16988870>)
- Gas flares: No reliable mortality estimates, but an infamous 2013 incident in Canada incinerated an estimated 7,500 birds (Source: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/7-500-songbirds-killed-at-canaport-gas-plant-in-saint-john-1.1857615>)

Unfortunately, this is not the only terrible news related to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. In Congress, H.R. 4239 – the “SECURE American Energy Act” – would change the MBTA to cement the Trump administration’s radical new interpretation and permanently end the government’s ability to address major sources of bird mortality from industrial activities. This change would represent the most significant rollback of the MBTA in its 100-year history. It would dramatically reduce the incentive for industries to implement best practices that save birds, and would limit the accountability and recovery from events and activities that kill substantial numbers of birds. For example, after the Gulf of Mexico oil spill, which killed more than one million birds, BP pled guilty to violations of the MBTA, paying \$100 million to recover damages to birds impacted by the spill. These funds are being distributed through the North American Wetlands Conservation Act to restore habitat for waterfowl and other birds.

What you can do:

Rogue Valley Audubon has signed on to a letter from the American Bird Conservancy opposed to this new policy. I urge all RVAS members to read more about the Administration’s attack on the Migratory Bird Treaty Act at:

<http://www.ccbbirds.org/2018/01/03/using-the-sword-of-damocles-to-decapitate-the-migratory-bird-treaty-act/>

And here’s a press release from the National Audubon Society about the decision:

http://www.audubon.org/news/the-white-house-turns-its-back-americas-birds?ms=network-eng-email-ea-x-20180119_chapter_leader&utm_source=ea&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=20180119_chapter_leader

Then, call Representative Walden and Senators Wyden and Merkley and urge them to oppose any changes to the Migratory Bird Act, and specifically the “SECURE American Energy Act.” And while you’re at it, you might also urge them to oppose any changes to the Endangered Species Act!

Representative Greg Walden

Medford office: 541-776-4646 D.C. office: 202-225-5774

Senator Ron Wyden

Medford office: 541-858-5122 D.C. office: 202-224-5244

Senator Jeff Merkley

Medford office: 541-608-9102 D.C office: 202-224-3753

Medford CBC Re-Cap

By Bob Hunter

The Medford Christmas bird count was on December 16th this year. We had 12 teams and 58 participants out in the field. It was cold and clear in the morning and many of the lakes and ponds were at least partially frozen, but there wasn't any fog and it warmed up as the day progressed.

There were 131 species counted on count day with the addition of a Harris's sparrow at Tom Phillips' feeder in Medford during the count week for a count total of 132 species. 34,322 birds were counted overall. The total number of birds was down a bit, as the huge flocks of starlings and robins didn't materialize this year—though Pepper tried.

There were record numbers of several species this year: 14 Peregrine Falcons (previous high: 11); 57 Anna's Hummingbirds (previous high: 33); 252 Savannah Sparrows (previous high: 233); 12 Northern Mockingbirds (previous high: 11). In addition, two bird species were seen for only the second time in the Medford CBC. A Red-necked Grebe was seen by Stewart Janes' team and an American White Pelican was seen by Lynn Kellogg's team.

Gull numbers continue to be down, with only one Ring-billed Gull seen by Tom Phillips' team. Last year we didn't have any. This year, Rock Wrens were recorded in four different sections: the two Table Rocks, Agate Lake and Section D (the SE portion of the count circle). There were only 23 Lewis's Woodpeckers recorded (the count high is 300), while there were a near-record 342 Acorn Woodpeckers (346 is the count high).

Pepper Trail and Chris Uhtoff braved the blackberries and rough terrain in Kelly's Slough to come up with the only counts of Greater White-fronted Goose, Pileated Woodpecker, Barrow's Goldeneye and Varied Thrush. Howard Sands found the only Spotted Sandpiper in Norm Barrett's section. Norm's team also found the only Redhead. Stewart Janes' section again recorded the most species (89) and also saw the only Northern Goshawk, Red-necked Grebe, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Cackling Geese, and Lark Sparrows. Bob Hunter's and Frank Lospalluto's team picked up the count's only Cinnamon Teal, Western Grebe, and Black-crowned Night Heron at Whetstone Pond, and also picked up the only counts of Northern Shrike in their section. Sooney Viani's team recorded the only White-throated Sparrow and Mountain Chickadee for the count, and Bob Quaccia's team picked up a Northern Pygmy Owl on Lower Table Rock.

Thanks to all the team leaders and participants for another successful Medford CBC.

Falcons vs. Hawks: A Surprise Winner

By Vince Zausky

Dec. 16, 2017 Medford Christmas Bird Count

We had pretty chilly weather when we began around 8:15 a.m.—24 degrees with some fog. It was warmer by late in the morning and probably hit the mid-50s by 2:00 or 3:00 p.m. We usually have a lot of waterfowl at the upper sewage ponds, but the main pond was frozen. The second pond barely had water and that's where the waterfowl were concentrated—mainly Mallards, a couple of Pintails and Shovelers, but get this: 114 Green-winged Teals! And we probably missed a few, as they were hard to count. (This was the most I've ever seen in one place, and a high number for our count.)

Earlier we had seen a Peregrine Falcon perched nearby on a large, metal electric pole/tower and gazing over its domain. We saw it fly from the river earlier in the morning, which was scary because there are duck hunters blasting along the Rogue. As we walked along the ponds, Todd Miller said, "Look!" As we looked to our right, we saw three or four Mallards flying over the frozen pond with the Peregrine flying after them.

One duck lagged behind; the Peregrine gained on it and then snatched it right out of the air. That happened about 100 feet from us, just above eye level. The Peregrine couldn't fly far with the duck dangling from its talons but managed to land on a dike nearby and started to kill it. While it was doing that, a Harrier did a fly-by over the Peregrine. But the amazing encounter was an immature Red-shouldered Hawk we saw perched earlier, about 1/8 to 1/4 mile away.



Immature Red-shouldered Hawk (courtesy Jim Wallhaupt, flickr)

Suddenly, the Red-shouldered flew in hard, straight towards the dike/Peregrine/dead duck and drove the Peregrine off its prey. The Peregrine was VERY upset and started *kack, kack, kacking* repeatedly and began diving on the Red-shouldered Hawk from about 50 feet above. I really thought the Peregrine was going to kill the Red-shouldered, as it came very close to its head several times. But nope.

It did the *kacking* and diving about 10 times and then gave up, flew back to the tower and left the duck to the Red-shouldered, who really didn't do anything for maybe five or 10 minutes and then started eating. Two Red-tailed Hawks were soaring nearby so the Peregrine decided to harass them be-

cause the Peregrine Falcon, I believe, wanted this entire hunting area to itself. It flew off the pole, above the Red-tails and *kack, kacked* at them repeatedly, stooping on them occasionally.

The duck on the dike was lunch (probably dinner too) for the immature Red-shouldered Hawk. Pretty brave bird—must have been real hungry?!

ASHLAND CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT HIGHLIGHTS

By Carol Mockridge

Total species: 115

Additional count week species: 3

Participants: 68

Weather: Dense fog to partial clearing

Temperature: 30 - 48 degrees

The Ashland Christmas Bird Count continues to deliver. While visibility was a challenge, there were few complaints, since the temperature was mostly above freezing and the rain stopped in the morning. Many area leaders were energized this year by gaining access to new prime birding areas on private land. Here are some highlights reported by area leaders.

Area 1: "We continued to gain access to more private properties, which is very important in this agricultural area. We even had one landowner join us as a full-fledged team member for the day! We missed the White-tailed Kite for the first time, even though our area includes property where they have bred in the past. We also missed Rough-legged Hawk—a disappointment, because I had seen the bird just a few days earlier (outside count week)."

- Dick Ashford

Area 2: Reported the only Tundra Swans, Virginia Rail, Wilson Snipe and Barn Owls.

Area 3: "Of the 48 species seen, favorites for our eight-person team included mergansers and a kingfisher at Ashland Pond, Bewick's Wren along Bear Creek, Cooper's Hawk at Water Street Park, and Lincoln's Sparrows near the Dog Park. Notable absentees included California Quail, Red-breasted Sapsucker and Pine Siskin."

- Nala Cardillo

Area 4: "Candace Burton and I had both North Mountain Park and River Walk across the street for our Ashland Christmas Count territory (which was incorporated into Norm Barrett's area). I'm looking and listening along the Bear Creek side of River Walk (and sighted my second Black Phoebe on rocks in Bear Creek) when I hear Candace telling me to come up to her right away: 'I think I have an owl.' I identified the bird as a first winter/juvenile Barred Owl roosting in some trees opposite Bear Creek. I am not 100% sure it might not have been a cross-bred bird between a Spotted and Barred Owl, as it seemed to be quite brown with a spotted head (the only way to truly tell a crossbred bird is by capturing it and taking a blood sample, per my previous work with BLM in the early 1990's). Target species missed at both locations: Downy Woodpecker, Pine Siskin, and House Finch."

- Vince Zauskey

"With seven each, Red-shouldered Hawks were as common as Red-tailed Hawks in Area 4. We started the day with a cooperative Hutton's Vireo at 15 feet and ended with a Peregrine Falcon. In between was filled with lots of robins, starlings, California Scrub Jays and a Great Horned Owl."

- Norm Barrett

Ashland CBC continued on page 13

Ashland CBC continued from page 12

Area 5: "Highlights began by eating New York-style egg sandwiches with coffee while watching the birds at Ruby Whalley's birdfeeder, enjoying the company of a flock of about 20 Chestnut-backed Chickadees above Lithia Park and getting our first-of-day Hairy Woodpecker and Varied Thrushes. Later we saw Wild Turkeys, Eurasian Collared-Doves, Oak Titmice, and other birds around Hargadine Cemetery."

- Brandon Breen

Meanwhile, Bob Quaccia led another group in Area 5 up Ashland Creek and spotted a record six American Dippers.

Area 7: "When Peter and I both got the flu the day before CBC, we were very happy we had a large team of experienced birders so we could give them the map of Area 7 and turn them loose. The two of us spent the day coughing on each other and leisurely birding in bits of private land where we had permission. Our best bird of the day was a Merlin sitting on a fence post in front of us!"

- Linda Kreisman

Area 8: "Seeing the Red-naped Sapsucker and Tree Swallows were highlights, as was seeing the American Bald Eagle. The chili was good during our lunch break, and for some of our group seeing Pine Siskins up close was a highlight."

- George Peterson

Area 9: Reported the only Common and Barrow's Goldeneyes and a Rock Wren.

Area 10: Once again, Frank led his team by skis, bike and car to find the hard-to-get only Northern Saw-whet Owl, White-headed Woodpecker, Sooty Grouse and Red Crossbills, among other mountain species.

The Greater White-fronted Goose, Pygmy Nuthatch and Turkey Vulture were also seen during the count week.

Thanks to all who participated, including Carol Mockridge and Emmalisa Whalley, the event coordinators. And a big shout out to El Tapatio Restaurant for quickly feeding over 50 cold and hungry people who attended the compilation dinner. View a spreadsheet of all species on the RVAS website under News & Events/Christmas Bird Counts.

Bird-Centric Events from Around the Region

PRESENTATIONS AND WALKS WITH WILD BIRDS UNLIMITED

Nesting Season in Your Backyard

Nesting season is just around the corner...are you ready to be a bird landlord? We will talk about avian architecture, choosing an appropriate nesting box, the different stages of the nesting season, behaviors to watch for, and how to deal with potential predators and problems.

Please come by the store or call 541-772-2107 to reserve your seat.

DATE: Wednesday, February 28

TIME: 6:00—7:00 pm

PLACE: Wild Birds Unlimited, 961 Medford Center, Medford

COST: Free

PRESENTER Laura Fleming

Bird Walk to Agate Lake

Meet at the Wild Birds Unlimited store and carpool over to Agate Lake in White City. We will look for early spring migrants and shorebirds along the lake. Wear appropriate, layered clothing and boots that can go through mud and water. Bring binoculars, along with a field guide and notebook/pen to record species seen, as desired. This will be an easy walk for beginners through advanced, ages 12 years and older. Registration is required, as space is limited to 15 participants. Please come by the store or call 541-772-2107 to reserve your space.

DATE: Wednesday, February 21

TIME: 10:00 am

PLACE: Wild Birds Unlimited, 961 Medford Center, Medford

COST: Free

LEADER Erin Linton

New for 2018! Chickadee Chat at Wild Birds Unlimited

Calling all "bird nerds"! Join us for a bi-monthly get together to talk about birds! We'll drink some Bird Friendly coffee or tea, join with fellow birders, and "chat." We'll start with a discussion of a current event from Cornell Lab of Ornithology, or perhaps a good book we've just completed and then go in depth and really learn about a particular species of bird. We will hold two chats a month: one on a Wednesday morning at 10:30 am and again on a different Wednesday afternoon at 3:30 pm. Come to share, learn and have fun with fellow bird nerds! Our bird to discuss in February will be **Jays: do you love them or hate them?**

DATE: Wednesday, February 14 and Wednesday, February 28th

TIME: 10:30 am (February 14) and 3:30 pm (February 28)

PLACE: Wild Birds Unlimited, 961 Medford Center, Medford

COST: Free

LEADER Laura Fleming

Bird-centric Events continued on page 15

Bird-Centric Events from Around the Region

ASHLAND PARKS AND RECREATION CLASSES AND WORKSHOPS

Learning Common Backyard Birds

Using photos, stories, bird songs and fun facts, we will learn about the birds that live all around us in the Rogue Valley, some right in our own backyards! Some key birds we'll study: Robin, Acorn Woodpecker, Red-tailed Hawk, Scrub Jay, Screech Owl, Mallard, Great Blue Heron, Chickadee, Flicker, Crow, Bald Eagle and a few special guest birds. *Please register online at ashland.or.us/register or call the Nature Center at 541-488-6606.*

DATE: Wednesday, February 21

TIME: 6:30—8:00 pm

PLACE: North Mountain Park, 620 N. Mountain Ave, Ashland

COST: \$15

INSTRUCTOR Shannon Rio is a wildlife educator and serves on the Board of the Klamath Bird Observatory.

2018 WINTER WINGS FESTIVAL

Winter birds at their finest! Winter Wings brings together birders and photographers of all stripes to learn and explore with top notch professionals and enthusiastic local guides. The Klamath Basin is renowned for its massive wintering population of Bald Eagles, but is prime habitat for many other raptors including owls, as well as a stunning abundance and diversity of waterfowl. The 2018 Festival will feature three dynamic keynoters: Author and woodpecker specialist **Stephen Shunk**, wildlife photographer **Moose Peterson**; and author and instructor with the Cornell Lab, **Kevin McGowan**. **Registration opens December 16.**

DATE: Thursday, February 15 through Sunday, February 18, 2018

PLACE: Oregon Institute of Technology, 3201 Campus Drive, Klamath Falls, Oregon

WEBSITE: www.WinterWingsFest.org



Linda Kreisman and puppy Cider relax in the garden on their new, stylish granite bench, which she won at the Annual Holiday Party auction. The bench was donated by Laura Fleming, owner of Wild Birds Unlimited.

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 and participating in society activities. 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 or go to www.roguevalleyaudubon.org and sign up with your PayPal account.

RVAS Membership Form

Please fill in your information:

Name(s): _____

Street: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Email: _____ **Phone #** _____

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.*
- ☐ *Send a monthly paper copy of *The Chat* newsletter (I don't have Internet access).*
- ☐ *Please contact me about volunteering for society activities (see RVAS website for list of opportunities).*

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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2018 RVAS Program Schedule

February 27:
"Birds of Patagonia"
Presented by Brandon Breen

March 27:
Presentation by KS Wild, TBD

April 24:
"Lake Abert: Its Salinity and the Effect on
Its Birds"
Presented by Ron Larson



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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.

