The Chat

Number 449 March 2019

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



RVAS March 2019 Program TUESDAY, March 26 at 7:00 PM

Local and Worldwide Bird and Wildlife Images

Presented by Jim James

As a small boy Richard E "Jim" James moved from Montana to Oregon with his family in the early 1940's and was brought up on the Oregon coast and the Rogue Valley where he and his wife, Valerie, raised their four children. Except for a number of years spent in many Western and Midwestern states as well as Alaska, while he was in the Air Force and in medical training as a physician and orthopedic surgeon, Jim has lived in Oregon most of his life. Jim spent most of his time as a boy fishing, hunting, hiking, and observing animals in the wilderness and later working summers in the woods while attending high school, college, and medical school.



Fifty years ago while in the Air Force, he and his family moved to Alaska and it was there, living in one of the last great wilderness areas in North America, that he first became seriously interested in nature photography. He continued to develop a keen interest in wildlife photography, which has become a serious passion over the past 20 years. He switched from slide film to digital about eight years ago. Except for occasional minimal digital enhancement, Jim does not digitally engineer his images.

Now retired, Jim spends his free time with his family and eight grandchildren as well as photographing wildlife throughout the world. He hopes to bring a better understanding and enjoyment of some of God's most unique and beautiful creatures to others through his pictures.

Birdathon 2019: It's not too late!

What: RVAS fundraiser, fun-raiser and friendly competition When: May 3 (6:00 pm) to May 4 (6:00 pm) Where: All of Jackson County

Hopefully Gretchen Hunter's hilarious and informative article in last month's Chat inspired you to grab some buddies and form a team; however, it's not too late to get in on the fun. Contact Gretchen at (541) 613-5940 (phone or text) or email her at gretchenhunter@embarqmail.com

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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

A Trip to Kruger Park

Now and then we get to fulfill a dream. Last December one of mine came true as I traveled with my husband and daughter to the immense Kruger Park in South Africa. For so long I had dreamt of seeing African elephants in the wild; along the way I became a birder.

Our unofficial birding guide was Riel Franzsen, a professor at the University of Pretoria. He's been to Kruger Park over 100 times in his life, so he knew exactly where to view and how to identify by call a spectacular variety of bird species. We started in northern Kruger and immediately saw my target bird, the unusual Hamerkop. On an early morning drive we saw a Giant Eagle Owl and Red-Crested Korhaan. We viewed six species of storks in one day, and gawked at innumerable raptors, including the magnificent Martial Eagle and exotic Bateleur. Summer visitors to Kruger include the gorgeous Woodland Kingfishers and European Rollers. We saw the heaviest flying bird in the world, the Kori Bustard, as well as the chunky Southern Ground Hornbill. Each day as we drove, we saw a dizzying array of different species of shrikes, thrushes, cisticolas, larks, starlings, barbets, swallows, and cuckoos.

In Kruger one is forbidden to get out of one's vehicle except in designated areas. However, since "your car is your blind," many of the birds and mammals of the park are unconcerned with vehicle traffic. Giraffes, elephants, antelopes, zebras, wildebeest, and buffalo casually graze while cars drive by them. On one night drive, we saw a lioness resting in the middle of the road.



I added about 140 bird species to my life list over the course of the trip. Whilst the travel time to South Africa is daunting, I highly recommend birding in Kruger Park!

Susan Stone, RVAS Treasurer

RVAS BIRDING FIELD TRIPS

First Wednesday Bird Walks at Denman Wildlife Refuge

Leader: Murray Orr

Murray Orr will continue to lead his monthly bird walks at Denman Wildlife Refuge through 2019. 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 in the parking area accessed from Agate Road in White City. Participants will need an ODFW parking permit. These can be purchased at the ODFW office, Bi-Mart, or at Sportsman's Warehouse in Medford (Delta Waters and Highway 62). Walks begin at 8:30 am and end before noon.

March Walk: Wednesday, March 6 April Walk: Wednesday, April 3 May Walk: Wednesday, May 1

Imperatrice Property Bird Walk Leader: Nate Trimble

Winter in the Rogue Valley offers great opportunities for viewing a wide variety of raptors. The Imperatrice Property offers one of the best raptor viewing opportunities in the Ashland area as well as beautiful views of Ashland and both sides of the valley. It is a City of Ashland owned parcel of land located on the east side of I-5 at the end of East Ashland lane near the Ashland Greenhouses. The property offers wide open spaces perfect for raptor viewing with

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the opportunity to see Golden Eagles, Rough-legged Hawks, Prairie Falcons, and Ferruginous hawks among other raptor species. Visitors can hope to see excellent views of a large number and diversity of raptors. This property is also a great location to see grassland birds such as Western Meadowlarks, Savannah Sparrows, Lark Sparrows, and Says Phoebes.

We will meet at the property entrance at noon and spend 2-3 hours hiking around. Accessing and exploring the



property will involve some uphill hiking, likely muddy conditions, and exposed and windy terrain, so dress warmly and come prepared to exercise and get dirty. There is space for parking at the corner of East Ashland Lane and Irish Lane as well as on the side of the road of Irish Lane. Please do not park at the Greenhouses and be aware of any "no parking" signs if you park on the roadside. Check the RVAS website if weather looks bad. I hope to see you all out there! You can email Nate

at nateltrimble@hotmail.com with any questions.

Date: Sunday, March 17 **Time:** 12:00—3:00 pm

February Field Notes

By Frank Lospalluto

Winter settled in these last weeks. However, the sun is higher in the sky and Rufous Hummingbirds should begin to reappear at our local feeders.

Tundra Swans are still being seen near what used to be called the Rogue River Ranch between Upper and Lower Table Rock. Seventeen were reported from nearby Feb. 16 (JB). A **Eurasian Wigeon** was reported on the pond at Rogue Valley Country Club off of N. Phoenix Rd. Feb. 11 (GS) and another was on the pond at the Stoneridge Golf Club off 140 Feb. 17 (LdB). Another was seen near Lower River Rd. outside Grants Pass Feb. 15 (DV).

Sooty Grouse males have started their singing, though the recent round of snowstorms has dampened their enthusiasm temporarily. They can be found in conifers around our area even down to 2000 ft. elevations. Listen for the six-syllable hooting, deep and resonant that can often be heard a quarter mile away.

Two **Eared Grebe** were spotted on a pond near the Givan Ranch Park Feb. 20 (LP).

Three **Band-tailed Pigeon** were seen in Lithia Park Feb. 4 (LP), two were outside Jacksonville Feb. 17 (SS) and one was in the Jacksonville Woodland Feb. 22 (GS).

Sandhill Cranes have been spotted migrating through our area lately. About 100 birds were seen over the flanks of Grizzly Peak Feb. 12 (GZ) and another hundred were over Agate Lake Feb. 16 (HS).

A **Greater Yellowlegs** was out at Kirtland Ponds Feb. 3 (KM). A pair of **American Bitterns** has been seen quite often out at Ave G ponds the last two months. Two **Green Herons** were in the same area Feb. 6 (LKW). A single Green Heron was near the Rogue Valley Manor Feb. 15 (AG).

White-tailed Kites are still being seen near Butler Creek Rd. outside of Ashland, with one most recently observed Feb. 7 (AP).

A **BURROWING OWL** was found out at Agate Lake during a valley snow squall Feb. 9 (JC). It has continued over the last two weeks spending a lot of time hunkering down under an old dock that is up on the mudflats. It is fairly close to the same area where one was found last March.

A possible **Red-naped Sapsucker** has been visiting a residence in Shady Cove with its presence first noted Feb. 10 (CP).

A small flock of **Horned Larks** has been out at Agate Lake the last few weeks. They may well be a wintering flock of the 'streaked' subspecies (E. alpestris strigata) that is listed as federally threatened under the

Endangered Species Act. This subspecies breeds up in the Willamette Valley and Puget Sound lowlands. They have not only been on the mudflats of Agate but do circulate and forage in some of the adjacent pastures and fields nearby (personal observation fdl).

Small flocks of **Tree Swallows** have been regular over ponds at Denman and elsewhere all month. A **Northern Mockingbird** has continued in the E. Nevada St area near Ashland Feb. 12 (GZ).

Sixteen **American Pipits** were at the Medford Airport Feb. 20 (AL) and 30 were outside Williams in a pasture Feb. 21 (DV).

A lone **Cassin's Finch** was in the Little Applegate Feb. 19 (MH). Six **Red Crossbills** were in Sam's Valley Feb. 16 (JB).

Lark Sparrow have been seen in small flocks, with five being reported from Rickard Pond near Kershaw Rd. Feb.15 (JK). Fifteen were at Givan Ranch Jan. 30 (HS, GS), and a remarkable 20 were in a Talent backyard Jan. 22 (JC). The AMERICAN TREE SPARROW continued out at Denman Ave G. ponds, having moved with its mixed species cohort to near Ave H. Feb. 10, 12, and 20 (HS, FDL).

Thank you to all the observers this month including: Howard Sands, Jon Cox, Janet Kelly, Gary Shaffer, Judy Balfour, Christy Pitto, Andrew Partin, Marion Hadden, Dennis Vroman, Glen Zimmerman, Alex Lamoreaux, Lauren diBiccari, Lucky Penny, Susan Stone, Kristi Mergenthaler, Auker Guzzetta and Jeff Tufts.

All errors and omissions are my own. Peace.



Burrowing Owl. Credit: Karl Schneck

Global Decline in Bird Populations and the Impact from Overexploitation

By Emily Lind

According to BirdLife International's 2018 State of the World's Birds, 40% (about 4,000) of bird species worldwide are in decline. Major causes to the global decline of birds include agriculture, logging and deforestation, invasive species, climate change, and overexploitation. Overexploitation comes in many forms: trapping for the cage-bird trade, hunting for food and cultural artifacts, and killing for tradition and superstitions.

Asia is the main contributor to overexploitation with a rampant songbird-keeping tradition (BirdLife International 2018). In 2015, 19,000 birds of 206 species were counted in an Indonesian market over the course of three days (Chng et al 2015). One of the targeted species is the Black-winged Myna, an IUCN Red List Critically Endangered Species.

Across the Mediterranean migrating birds are being killed for consumption. Methods commonly used include audio lures, mist nets, shooting, and birdlime (a sticky substance spread on branches). Hundreds of thousands of songbirds are being killed in Serbia, Romania, and Bulgaria, then smuggled across Hungary, Croatia, and Slovenia into Italy every year to be served as a delicacy (TRAFFIC 2008). Blackcaps are the targeted species in this region.

In Indonesia and Thailand, the Helmeted Hornbill is being hunted for its solid, carveable, casque (block of keratin). Between 1999 and 2007 13 African Hornbill species representing hundreds of individuals were imported into the

United States (Trail 2009). Helmeted hornbill casque is likely going for more in Chinese markets than elephant ivory (Environmental Investigations Agency).

Right here in the United States, finches are being smuggled in for underground singing contests in New York City. In 2018, 70 live finches were found in hair rollers in a duffel bag coming in to JFK airport from Guyana, and 200 finches were smuggled in from South America (OCCRP 2018).

In Florida, between 2012 and 2016, Fish and Wildlife Service agents confiscated hundreds of birds of dozens of species from online sellers near Miami. Known as "Operation Ornery Birds," birds illegally traded included Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Blue Grosbeaks, Northern Cardinals, Bobolinks, and Painted Buntings (Kloer 2018).



Eurasian Blackcap. Courtesy Wikimedia

The most peculiar case is taking place in Mexico, where some people believe hummingbirds (*Chuparosas*) have supernatural powers, such as making someone fall in love with you. It is also believed that eating hummingbird heart in soup or tea is the most powerful treatment for cardiac illness and epileptic seizures (Ebersole 2018). In 2014 you could buy a *Chuparosa* in Texas for \$45, or 35 for \$770. So far, 300 birds representing 20 species have been confiscated and investigated at the US Fish and Wildlife Service, National Fish and Wildlife Forensics Laboratory in Ashland, Oregon (Ebersole 2018).

As populations of popular species are depleted from one country, trappers are sourcing the same species from other countries. Passerines captured from the wild frequently die within a few days (Alves 2012). Therefore, estimates are under-representing the true number of birds captured from the wild (CITES 2019).

So what is being done about it? Organizations such as CITES - Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species and TRAFFIC are working on the issue. Their missions are to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals does not threaten the survival of the species in the wild.

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The IUCN upgraded many Asian songbird species into higher endangered categories (IUCN 2016), and BirdLife International and Hong Kong Bird Watching Society created a poster to increase awareness to the general public to not buy songbird cuisine and to report illegal activities (Chan 2017). The Hornbill Research Foundation is paying poachers and locals to protect hornbills instead of kill them. (Bale 2018).

The National Audubon Society is fighting to protect the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) of 1918. This law makes it illegal to capture, hunt, possess, sell, or transport any migratory bird, nest, or egg without a permit. The MBTA protected the birds in the Florida cases (Operation Ornery Birds). Current legislation does not want to hold industries accountable for "incidental" bird deaths, such as oil spills (National Audubon Society 2018).

What can we do about it? It's tough to know what we can do as individuals to stop the global overexploitation of birds. Continuing to provide healthy bird habitat here at home, sharing these facts within and beyond our social networks, refusing to buy illegal wildlife products, and donating money or resources to organizations that are fighting this issue are great places to start.

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The Conservation Column

By Pepper Trail

Hey, how about some GOOD news for a change? No, I'm not kidding!

In February, the Senate passed the most important package of public lands conservation legislation in a decade, the Natural Resources Management Act (S. 47). This huge 662-page measure included lands in every state and passed 92-8—an extraordinary degree of bipartisan support.

The bill was strongly supported by Senators Wyden and Merkley, and included long-sought protections for Oregon lands and rivers. It would:

- Create the Devil's Staircase Wilderness by designating roughly 30,000 acres of remote lands in the Oregon Coast Range.
- Permanently protect the Chetco River—a critical source of drinking water and habitat for endangered salmon in southwest Oregon—from mining and mineral extraction.
- Designate 250 miles of prime Oregon salmon- and steelhead-producing rivers and streams as part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, including: about 120 miles of Rogue River tributaries; a 21-mile stretch of the Molalla River; 18 miles of Jenny Creek, which flows through the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument; 21 miles of Wasson Creek and Franklin Creek in the Siuslaw National Forest; and several important tributaries of the Elk River.
- Protect an additional 40 miles of Rogue River tributaries from mining and future dam installations.
- Designates nearly 100,000 acres of Forest Service land north of the North Umpqua River as the "Frank and Jeanne Moore Wild Steelhead Special Management Area" and ensures the river, and the surrounding area, will protect steelhead habitat and preserve recreation opportunities for generations to come.

The bill also permanently reauthorized the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Up until now, the LWCF required repeated reauthorization from Congress to remain in existence, and inaction from Congress left the program to expire twice in the last three years. Funded by a portion of offshore oil and gas leases and at no cost to taxpayers, it returns \$4 in economic value for every one dollar it invests in federal land acquisition.

"No other conservation program has invested so much in our public spaces at absolutely zero cost to the taxpayer," said David Yarnold, president and CEO of National Audubon Society.

Since it was created in 1964, the Land and Water Conservation Fund has received strong bipartisan support from Republicans and Democrats. Altogether, \$18.4 billion has contributed to the protection of some of the nation's most iconic natural treasures from the Everglades National Park in southern Florida to the Painted Desert in Arizona's Petrified Forest National Park to the iconic Blue Ridge Parkway that traverses Virginia and North Carolina. It has

helped protect some of our most vulnerable birds across the country—from Golden-winged Warbler habitat in North Carolina to wintering areas for Bald Eagles in Washington State.

Here in Oregon, LWCF has invested approximately \$304 million to expand public access to lakes and streams, build sports fields, trails and local parks, conserve working forests and protect Oregon icons. From the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument, Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, Oregon Coast Wildlife Refuges and West Eugene Wetlands, to the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area and Fort Clatsop National Memorial, LWCF funding has helped protect Oregon's most precious public lands.

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Conservation Column continued from page 7

The Senate legislation also reauthorized the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act. This partnership-based program has benefitted 4.5 million acres of habitat across the hemisphere for the hundreds of migratory bird species that nest in the United States and spend the winter in Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, or South America.

Unfortunately, the bill includes the controversial Alaska Native Vietnam Veterans Allotments Act (S. 785), which could transfer as much as 448,000 acres of public lands in Alaska to private ownership. National Audubon has stated: "While Audubon respects the legislation's goals, we remain concerned about the approach to privatizing parcels of Alaska's public lands in ways that could break up important protected wildlife habitat." More information on this can be found at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2019/02/13/big-alaskan-land-giveaway-tucked-into-sweeping-conservation-bill/

The House of Representatives is expected to take up the legislation in the coming weeks, and passage is widely expected.

Siskiyou Crest Timber Sale Stopped in Court

There was also an important conservation victory for our region in the courts in January. The following is a press release by KS Wild:

In late January, Judge Troy L. Nunley halted plans for post-fire, clear-cut logging in northern California's Klamath National Forest. The court held that the Seiad-Horse timber sale project would illegally and irreparably harm aquatic resources with increased sedimentation, violate the Northwest Forest Plan's restrictions on large snag removal from a late-successional reserve, and violate the National Environmental Policy Act for failing to analyze the effects of the project.

"We wish the Klamath National Forest would join with stakeholders and communities to reduce fuels around homes and ranches in Siskiyou County rather than pushing an extreme backcountry clear-cutting agenda," said Susan Jane Brown of the Western Environmental Law Center. "This legal victory will halt destructive old-growth clear-cutting in the backcountry while allowing strategic fuels work along roads and near private property." Following the 2017 Abney Fire, the Klamath National Forest authorized over 1,200 acres of clearcut "salvage" logging in the Sei-ad-Horse timber sale located within a protected "late successional reserve" that is not part of the timber base.

While surrounding national forests focused on emergency wildfire recovery and hazardous fuels reduction efforts along strategic roadways and near homes and communities, the Klamath National Forest threw out the rulebook and proposed logging in botanical areas, inventoried roadless areas, late successional reserves, essential wildlife habitat, and streamside riparian zones.

"We want to work with the Forest Service to thin dense second-growth timber plantations that exacerbate fire behavior," said George Sexton, conservation director for KS Wild. "The Seiad-Horse timber sale would have increased fire hazard by removing old-growth forests and replacing them with dense tree farms. The court's ruling protects wildlife, watersheds, and nearby communities from an egregious timber grab."

"This is a win for Klamath River salmon and clean water" noted Kimberly Baker, Executive Director of the Klamath Forest Alliance "While this is a preliminary stage in the proceedings, we appreciate the court's detailed and salient ruling."

"For years the Klamath National Forest has ignored needed fuels work in the wildland urban interface zone while pursuing post-fire clearcutting in the backcountry. That ends now," said Tom Wheeler, executive director of the Environmental Protection Information Center. "Let's change course and all pull together to protect forests and communities."

Sounds like a plan, wouldn't you say?

BIRD-CENTRIC EVENTS FROM AROUND THE REGION

PRESENTATIONS AND WALKS WITH WILD BIRDS UNLIMITED

Chickadee Chat: Nesting Season

Erin Linton will talk all about nesting season this month. No registration is required, just show up to learn, share, and have fun with fellow bird nerds!

DATE: Wednesday, March 6 and 20

TIME: 10:30 am (Mar. 6); 3:30 pm (Mar. 20)

PLACE: Wild Birds Unlimited, 961 Medford Center, Medford

COST: Free

Bird Walk: Denman Wildlife Area

Erin Linton will be leading a bird walk to **Denman Wildlife Area** on E Gregory Rd. Meet at Wild Birds Unlimited at 10:00 am, wear layers of clothing appropriate for the weather and good walking shoes that can get wet and muddy. Bring binoculars, a field guide, water and any snacks desired, along with paper and pen or smart phone to record/eBird species seen. As space is limited to 15, please reserve your spot today by calling the store at 541.772.2107 or by coming in to register.

DATE: Wednesday, March 13

TIME: 10:00 am

PLACE: Wild Birds Unlimited, 961 Medford Center, Medford

COST: Free LEADER Erin Linton

Monthly Educational Talk: Vesper Meadow

The Vesper Meadow Education Program is embarking on a journey of rewilding, and you are invited! The primary outpost is a rare upland wet meadow in the Cascade-Siskiyou region, where the headwaters of both the Klamath and the Rogue Rivers spring forth on the Dead Indian Plateau. It is home to rare species like the Mardon Skipper and Oregon Vesper Sparrow, as well as charismatic creatures like Great Grey Owls, River Otter, and herds of elk. Vesper Meadow is steeped in rich cultural history of the Latgawa people, and those even more ancient. Join Program Director Jeanine Moy as she discusses the launch of a community-powered ecological rewilding of this upland wet meadow near Howard Prairie Reservoir. 2019 will be the launch for exciting education programs and everyone is invited to participate in stewardship efforts, biological monitoring, and inspired art programs. Come learn how you can join in the experience of restoration and monitoring efforts to protect imperiled species, native plants, and biodiversity.

DATE: Wednesday, March 27

TIME: 6:00—7:00 pm

PLACE: Wild Birds Unlimited, 961 Medford Center, Medford

COST: Free

PRESENTER: Jeanine Moy

ASHLAND PARKS AND RECREATION EVENTS AND CLASSES

Project FeederWatch

Help count birds that visit the feeders at North Mountain Park while learning to identify species with expert birders. The information collected will be submitted to Cornell University's FeederWatch project, a nationwide citizen science bird monitoring effort. Pre-registration is not required for this free program. This is a great opportunity for all-level birders to get acquainted with local birds and mingle with other birders under a covered pavilion.

DATE: Alternate Saturdays: March 2, 16, 30

TIME: 9:00—10:00 am

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

COST: Free

LEADERS Local birding experts

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Bird-centric Events continued from page 9

ASHLAND BREEDING BIRD COUNT 2019

Reviving the Breeding Bird Count effort made in 2012, **Barbara Massey** is spurring a long-term community survey to learn about bird species in our region and how they are shifting their vital spring habits in response to a changing climate. Counts will be conducted in independent groups of 2-5 people, within a 10 miles radius of Ashland (corresponding to the Christmas Bird Count areas). Nate Trimble and Jeanne Moy are coordinating this event - please let them know if you have further questions. They will send maps and more information to interested participants.

If you are able to join this important event, please RSVP to AshlandBreedingBirdCount@gmail.com . Please let Jeanine or Nate know if you have a specific area or group members you prefer, otherwise they will pair you up with some friendly faces! Jeanine and Nate will send updates to the RSVP list and details as the date approaches. Also, for now and future years, you can stay in touch with this effort through the facebook group: Ashland Breeding Bird Count

DATE: Sunday, June 9

PLACE: Ashland COST: FREE

LEADERS Jeanine Moy and Nate Trimble

Rogue Valley Audubon Society Membership Form

Mail check to: Rogue Valley Audubon Society, PO Box 8597, Medford OR 97501 or join online with PayPal at www.roguevalleyaudubon.org
Welcome to the flock! We are a dedicated group.

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Regular	Membership (\$20)Printed newsletter (\$20)Total Donation (amount)
Name(s):	
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Calling all birders...

June 9th, 2019 sunrise 'til noon

Join this community survey to collect data about bird species in our region and how they are changing vital spring habits in response to a changing climate. Complimentary to the Christmas Bird Count, the survey will be within a 10 mile radius of Ashland, Oregon.

Participants must have some prior experience with bird field identification.

Celebration and refreshments will follow the survey.



More info. and sign up:

Nate Trimble or Jeanine Moy at

AshlandBreedingBirdCount@gmail.com



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