

A voice for education and conservation in the natural world
Rogue Valley Audubon Society
www.roguevalleyaudubon.org

Deadline for the February issue is January 20



RVAS ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY

When: Saturday, December 14, 6:00 pm

Where: Lidgate Hall, Congregational Church, Medford

Come and enjoy great food and community as we raise money to support the Vaux's Swifts migrating through our valley.

POTLUCK: Bring a dish to share and your own place settings.
RVAS will provide non-alcoholic beverages.

FEATURING

Photos from around the world from Jim Livaudais
and Emcee Pepper Trail

Items available during the live auction include photographs, paintings, field trips, wine, and more. Please bid generously!

Help is always needed!

Table set-up at 4:00 pm * assisting with potluck set-up * helping with the payments at
end of the evening * evening clean-up

Contact Lynn McDonald at (541) 708-0532

January 2020 Chapter Meeting: TUESDAY, January 28 at 7:00 pm

Presenter: Jennifer Guerrero, the Program Manager for the
Oregon Marbled Murrelet Project

Details to come! Please check the RVAS website.

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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

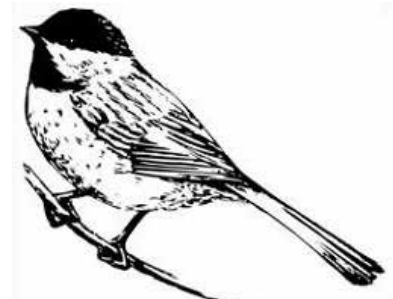
I have been a member of RVAS for about seven years and have been on the board for five. I am impressed. This is an outstanding organization operated entirely by volunteers and offering a huge opportunity for activities, involvement and education to members and to the community. The second page of *The Chat* lists 23 involved individuals providing those activities.

Here is a partial list of activities offered by these volunteers: Field trips, bird surveys, adult and child education programs, Project FeederWatch, Christmas Bird Counts, Birdathon, Dipper Watch, the holiday party, the annual picnic, volunteer opportunities, *The Chat* newsletter—which contains extensive field notes, conservation updates, and information about other events in the region—and finally, our monthly chapter meetings, which provide excellent speakers and an opportunity to get together and share experiences.

As members, our level of involvement and activity is up to us. We can do several activities, get involved in some of the committees, go to the meetings or just read *The Chat* and do our own birding. This organization allows everyone to have their own meaningful experience. It's an open organization that lets you choose what is meaningful for you.

I would like to suggest another level of meaningful experience for you: join the board. Over the years, it was the board that designed all those activities we can choose to get involved in. It was the board that recently worked on the expansion of the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument and helped purchase the Rogue River Preserve. The board is now involved in the campaign to preserve the chimney at Hedrick Middle School that is crucial for the Vaux's Swifts. This will be a long-term project that will need the support of the membership. The future is sure to bring new challenges such as climate change that will require local action. Let your love of birding take you to a place where you can make a difference. Please contact me if you would like more information about serving on the board: 541-621-6876 or jdeason39@gmail.com.

Jon Deason



Ashland Christmas Bird Count 2019

The Ashland CBC will take place on **Saturday, December 28**. The count circle is centered at the northwest corner of Emigrant Lake, so the count area includes both the northeastern slopes of Mount Ashland and the western slopes of the Cascades (as far east as Little Hyatt Lake). Also in the official area are the steep Siskiyou Mountain woodlands, extensive farmland, grassland, oak savannah habitats in the eastern section, and the entirety of the city of Ashland with its parks, gardens and riparian habitats.

Birders who wish to count birds that visit their backyard feeders are also encouraged to join the Ashland CBC lineup. CBC feeder watch instructions and a tally sheet can be obtained by contacting Carol Mockridge (contact information below). Newcomers are always welcome to participate in this traditional citizen science effort.

The teams will meet from 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm to report how the day went and to tally the birds. The meeting will be at El Tapatio Restaurant, 1633 Highway 99 in Ashland. Everyone is welcome to come to the tally even if you do not participate.

The Ashland CBC is coordinated by Carol Mockridge and Emmalisa Whalley. To join a counting group or for more information, contact Carol Mockridge at mockridge50@hotmail.com or 360-829-7505 by **December 21**.

Medford Christmas Bird Count 2019

This year the Rogue Valley Audubon Society's Medford Christmas bird count will be on **Sunday, December 15**. This important event gives everybody an opportunity to be part of the biggest citizen science effort in the New World. From mid-December through early January tens of thousands of volunteers throughout the Americas take part in an adventure that has become a family tradition among generations. Audubon and other organizations use data collected in this longest-running wildlife census to assess the health of bird populations and to help guide conservation action.

The area for the Medford Christmas Bird Count is a circle 15 miles in diameter, centered a mile or so west of the junction of Hwy 140 and Hwy 62 in White City. The circle has been carved up into 15 sections. Each section is entrusted to an experienced leader who makes the decisions as to times and routes. Some leaders welcome newcomers to their teams. Others may prefer to team up with experienced, hardy birders who can cope with difficult terrain and a fast pace. Hardcore birders go from dawn to dark in all weather, which is sometimes wet, foggy, and cold.

Those who live in the count circle and have bird feeders can do a feeder watch and add their sightings to the count. CBC feeder watch instructions and a tally sheet can be obtained by contacting Bob Hunter (contact information below). Birds not seen in the count circle on the count day can still be included in the count if seen during the count week, which is from December 12 through December 18th.

The teams will meet from 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm to report how the day went and to tally the birds. The meeting will be at Jackson Creek Pizza, 317 E Main St, Medford. Everyone is welcome to come to the tally even if you did not participate. If you are interested in participating contact Bob Hunter at: bobhunter@embarqmail.com or 541-778-3310.

WANTED: Experienced Birder to write Field Notes for *The Chat*

This informative monthly column provides a valuable service to RVAS members by documenting bird species that arrived in Jackson County during the previous month and where they were seen. The column is also a place for unusual observations and/or ID tips—make it what you want it to be! If you are interested in taking over the Field Notes column, please email the editor at chateditor@gmail.com

Community Scientists Needed for Short-eared Owl Surveys!

By Nate Trimble

The Klamath Bird Observatory is partnering with Intermountain Bird Observatory to carry out the **Western Asio Flammeus Landscape Study (WafLS)** in Oregon. This citizen science project, now spanning eight western states, is designed to gather information to better evaluate the population status of the Short-eared Owl. The Oregon Conservation Strategy has identified the Short-eared Owl as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need and the National Audubon Society Climate Initiative has identified the species as Climate Endangered. This survey is a critical starting point to fill information gaps for this species in Oregon. Results will directly influence high-value conservation actions by state and federal agencies. We are looking to recruit a set of dedicated volunteers to help complete this state-wide survey.



Volunteers will enjoy rural Oregon at twilight while completing two road-based surveys during late winter and early spring. The surveys consist of driving on secondary roads, stopping at 8 to 11 points to complete a five-minute survey. At each point volunteers will record detections of Short-eared Owls as well as some brief habitat information. The entire survey is completed within 90 minutes. Training material will be provided and no experience is necessary to volunteer. Participants will need to follow field and data entry protocols, have use of a vehicle, smartphone or GPS device, and be able to identify a Short-eared Owl.

For any questions, please contact Nate Trimble at nlt@KlamathBird.org

To sign up and for more information, visit the program website:
<https://www.avianknowledge-northwest.net/citizen-science/short-eared-owls>



Block party on Florence St. in Medford on Sept. 7, 2019 to watch the Vaux's Swift's drop into the neighborhood roost. Credit: Carol Mockridge

Living in Harmony with Swifts

By Carol Mockridge

Alice McIver has lived near Hedrick Middle School in Medford for most of her life. When her parents bought the 100-year-old house on Florence Avenue around 1991, Vaux's Swifts probably had used the chimney for roosting and nesting for generations. She recounts that her parents never really talked about the swifts living in the family's chimney. "My parents instilled an attitude in us not to get in the way of things unless there's a good reason," McIver said. Coexistence was routine in the spring, summer and fall. Fires in the fireplace waited until the swifts had gone south for the winter. Lucky for the swifts, since most other nearby chimneys had been capped over the years, leaving the McIver chimney the only available roost on the block.

"When the babies hatch in the spring, they are really noisy and I have to turn up the volume on the TV. Otherwise, the adults are quiet except for a swooshing sound as they descend into the chimney in the evening," McIver said.

Although an official count was never done, numbers of birds coming back in the spring to nest and roost vary from year to year. "Four years ago, the numbers were really big. The swirling birds blackened the sky. The next year, there were far fewer. This year, the numbers were more but not up to 2015 level," McIver recounted.

In the fall of 2019, I heard from Karen Matthews (formerly Hussey) about the roost and decided to do a nightly count. I was interested in finding out what relationship this chimney has to the Hedrick roost. When I started counting on August 23, there were already 440 swifts entering the chimney. On the other hand, the Hedrick Middle School chimney was not used until Aug. 25, even though there were flocks circling at dusk long before. I could see them all head over to the McIver chimney at dusk. Swifts continued to use the McIver chimney even when large numbers consistently began to use the Hedrick chimney. The Hedrick chimney was used until Oct. 5.

In recognition of her outstanding stewardship, the RVAS board awarded Alice McIver a small conservation grant to clean her chimney.

For a day-by-day account of the McIver site (listed as residence near Hedrick) and Hedrick Middle School chimneys' 2019 data, see the Vaux's Swift page on the RVAS website under Our Work/Conservation.



Alice McIver in front of the second most popular Vaux's Swift roost in the Rogue Valley.
Credit: Carol Mockridge

Vaux's Swifts 2019 Southbound Migration in Jackson County

Medford Voorhies Mansion - 1
Jacksonville Nunan Estates - 350
Medford Iglesia Adventista - 75
Residence near Hedrick - 12,352
Hedrick Middle School -36,299



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 in 2020. 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.

December Walk: Wednesday, December 4

January Walk: Wednesday, January 1

February Walk: Wednesday, February 5

****TIME TO RENEW!** Rogue Valley Audubon Society Membership Form**

Your **\$20 membership** includes:

Educational and social membership meetings (free and open to members and the public)

The Chat online 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

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.

____ Regular Membership (\$20) ____ Printed newsletter (\$20) ____ Total Donation (amount)

Name(s): _____

Address _____

City, State: _____ Zip _____

Email (required to receive online newsletter and other RVAS announcements): _____

Phone# _____

Rogue Valley Audubon Society will not share your information with any other organization.

- ☐ Check here if you wish to be sent a printed copy of The Chat by U.S. mail. Add \$20 to membership check.
- ☐ Check here if you wish to volunteer for Rogue Valley Audubon.
- ☐ Check here to opt out of all electronic communications from Rogue Valley Audubon.

BIRD-CENTRIC EVENTS FROM AROUND THE REGION

EVENTS AT WILD BIRDS UNLIMITED

Monthly Educational Talk: Knowing Your Bird Parts and ID Markers

What makes a bird a bird? How do you tell them apart? To correctly identify birds, it is helpful to know some of the structural and visual characteristics that differentiate them. Join Max McClarnon for a talk about songbird body parts, feather groups, and identifying behaviors. Reserve your seat today by calling the store at 541.772.2107 or by coming in to register.

DATE: Wednesday, January 8
TIME: 6:00—7:00 pm
PLACE: Wild Birds Unlimited, 961 Medford Center, Medford
COST: Free
LEADER: Max McClarnon

Chickadee Chats: The State of Our Birds

Erin Linton will lead a chat about **The State of Our Birds** and what we can all do to help. No registration is required, just show up to learn, share, and have fun with fellow bird nerds!

DATE: Wednesday, January 15 and 29
TIME: 10:30 am (January 15) and 3:30 pm (January 29)
PLACE: Wild Birds Unlimited, 961 Medford Center, Medford
COST: Free
LEADER: Erin Linton

Bird Walk: Emigrant Lake

Erin Linton (Jan. 22) and Max McClarnon (Jan. 25) will be leading a walk to **Emigrant Lake** in Ashland this month. Wear layers of clothing appropriate for the weather and good walking shoes that can get wet and muddy. Bring a lunch, water, and any snacks desired along with binoculars, a field guide, paper/pen or smartphone to record 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, January 22 and Saturday, January 25
TIME: 10:00 am
PLACE: Wild Birds Unlimited, 961 Medford Center, Medford
COST: Free
LEADER: Erin Linton

ROGUE VALLEY BIRDS AND BEERS

Want to talk birds and meet fellow birders? Join us at the BricktownE Brewing Co for a casual gathering and some brews. Birds and Beers is hosted by RVAS. No reservations necessary; just show up!

DATE: Thursday, December 19
TIME: 6:30—11:00 pm
PLACE: BricktownE Brewing Co., 44 S. Central Ave, Medford
COST: Free
HOST: Emily Lind



Bird-centric Events continued on page 8

BIRD-CENTRIC EVENTS FROM AROUND THE REGION, continued

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. All-level birders can learn about local birds and mingle with other birders under a covered pavilion. RVAS is a sponsor of this important project. ***Pre-registration is not required for this free program.***

DATE: Alternate Saturdays: Dec. 7, 21; Jan. 4, 18; Feb. 1, 15, & 29; Mar. 14

TIME: 9:00 — 10:00 am

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

COST: Free

INSTRUCTOR: Local birding experts

Winter Bird Walk

The winter season is a great time to see the birds that spend the winter in our valley. Stroll through North Mountain Park with expert birding volunteer Vince Zauskey and learn to identify birds by sight and sound. Participants should dress for cold weather and bring binoculars (some binoculars will be available to borrow). All levels welcome. *For more information call the North Mountain Park Nature Center at 541.488.6606*

DATE: Saturday, January 11

TIME: 8:30 — 10:00 am

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

COST: Free

INSTRUCTOR: Vince Zausky

21st ANNUAL AMERICAN DIPPER COUNT

The 21st Annual American Dipper Count on Ashland Creek will occur on Saturday, January 4th. The meeting place will be on the Ashland Downtown Plaza at 9:00 am. We will walk up on both sides of the creek counting dippers from Water Street to the top of Lithia Park. For more information contact Bob Quaccia at bquaccia@hotmail.com or (541) 261-6440.

DATE: Saturday, January 4

TIME: 9:00 am

PLACE: Ashland Plaza

COST: Free

INSTRUCTOR: Bob Quaccia

41st WINTER WINGS FESTIVAL

Each year the Klamath Basin Audubon Society (KBAS) produces the annual Winter Wings Festival celebrating the largest wintering population of bald eagles in the lower 48 states as well as the abundance of all the birds that make the Klamath Basin home. KBAS welcomes birders and wildlife enthusiasts to monthly programs, field trips, and other activities that enhance the appreciation of the spectacular beauty of the Klamath Basin.

This year's keynote speakers include Nathan Pieplow, author of the Peterson Field Guide to Bird Sounds; Gerrit Vyn, wildlife photographer and cinematographer for the Cornell Lab of Ornithology; and Rosemary Mosco, nature cartoonist and writer. Registration opens at 9:00 am on December 7; plan to register early for the best choices. The smaller field trips may sell out almost immediately. If you don't get your first choices in December or January, check back in early February to see if cancellations may have created openings for some of your desired choices. For more information and to register, visit www.winterwingsfest.org

DATE: Thursday, February 13 through Sunday, February 16

PLACE: Oregon Institute of Technology, Klamath Falls, Oregon

COST: Varies

The Conservation Column

By Pepper Trail

As I write this, it's shortly before Thanksgiving, and I'm thinking about the conservation of Oregon's most magnificent native fowl. No, not the turkey, which as I'm sure all Auduboners know, is NOT native to Oregon, but rather an introduction by ODFW to provide hunters with another target. No, I'm talking about the Greater Sage-Grouse, native to the sagebrush country of eastern Oregon and much of the Interior West.

The Bad News

Last March, the Department of the Interior and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) chose to make dramatic changes to the 2015 sagebrush management plans agreed upon by more than 10 states in the Interior West, making it even easier for oil and gas companies to lease and drill in sage-grouse habitat. National Audubon, along with the National Wildlife Federation and the Wilderness Society, found that the Department of the Interior failed to prioritize oil and gas leasing and drilling outside sage-grouse habitat, as the 2015 and 2019 sagebrush management plans mandate. Between January 2017 and March 2019, the BLM issued leases comprising almost 1.6 million acres and 2,553 drilling permits in sage-grouse habitat.

National Audubon has now documented three consecutive years of sharp declines in five states that hold more than 80 percent of the population. Sage-grouse numbers are known to swing widely, but the losses are too big to be explained by those roughly decade-long boom-and-bust cycles, according to Clait Braun, a retired biologist who studied the birds for the Colorado Division of Wildlife.

The new figures, based on spring counts at the Greater Sage-Grouse mating areas known as leks, are "very worrisome," Braun told *Audubon* magazine. "There's no way to sugarcoat it." The Idaho population, for example, has plunged by 52 percent since 2016, with a 25 percent loss this year alone. Oregon likewise lost a quarter of its sage-grouse in the past year, following two years of more modest declines. In Nevada, the population has shrunk by one-third over the past three years, while Wyoming—which has more of the birds than any other state—lost 28 percent of them since last year. And although the numbers for one of Colorado's six lek counts aren't yet final, those with complete data show a 69 percent contraction since 2016.

Advocates have long warned that continued development in sage-grouse habitat—along with increasingly destructive wildfires that wipe out huge tracts of sagebrush—could eventually trigger a listing under the Endangered Species Act. But now that potential safety net has some grouse-sized holes. On August 12, the administration finalized new rules for implementing the Act that would, for the first time, allow economic factors to be considered in listing decisions—a change that could have major implications for a bird that does its famous mating dance atop oilfields. The changes, which environmental groups have sued to stop, also end the policy of automatically granting threatened species the same safeguards as endangered ones, so sage-grouse could potentially be listed as threatened but receive little actual protection.



Male Greater Sage-grouse
Courtesy Wikipedia

Conservation Column continued from page 9

A New Hope

This October, Judge B. Lynn Winmill, a Clinton appointee to the U.S. District Court for the District of Idaho, sided with environmental groups challenging revisions to the Obama-era Greater Sage-Grouse protection plans, approving an order blocking the Bureau of Land Management from implementing the revisions on 51 million acres of grouse habitat. The ruling required BLM to revert to evaluating leases under sage grouse plans the Obama administration finalized in 2015. .

Following the ruling, BLM Nevada quietly posted on its website that it had removed parcels covering 332,247 acres of land from its Tuesday lease sale for "further analysis" as a result of Winmill's injunction. The change was listed under "Errata #3" on the state BLM page and was not publicized by the agency. More recently, BLM has cancelled additional lease sales in Colorado, Nevada, and Utah.

Conservation groups lauded the move, while urging BLM to take more permanent action to stop lease sales on the birds' habitat. Other state offices could defer or cancel leases as more sales approach in December.

"Now BLM needs to keep doing the right thing: No more oil and gas leasing in greater sage-grouse habitat or anywhere else," Kelly Fuller, energy and mining campaign director at the Western Watersheds Project, wrote in an email. "To protect human life, wildlife, and habitat, BLM must stop all new oil and gas leasing. It is time to keep fossil fuels in the ground," she continued. Conservation groups opposing the Bureau of Land Management's actions say a recent slate of deferred lease sales in Colorado, Nevada and Utah illustrate the problems with the Trump administration's aggressive push to encourage energy development on public lands.

"The broader pattern we've seen from this administration has been a headlong rush to get as much remaining sage grouse habitat under lease as possible," said Michael Saul, a senior attorney at the Center for Biological Diversity's public lands program. He said the Trump administration's "energy dominance" approach has led BLM to violate federal laws like the National Environmental Policy Act.

"That needs to stop," Saul said. "They are not simply a real estate sales agency. Under congressional statute, they have multiple obligations, which include duties to conserve wildlife habitat."

As I enjoy my Thanksgiving turkey this year, I will give thanks for the efforts of conservationists who love and continue to fight for the Greater Sage-Grouse and all our native birds, in this most challenging of times. That includes all RVAS members. Here's to more hard-won victories in 2020!

Report from the OAC Fall conference

By Carol Mockridge

I represented RVAS at the Oregon State yearly conference of Audubon conservation representatives in Eugene. While the final report is not out yet listing the top goals for the upcoming year, I would like to tell you about chapter projects that piqued my interest.

Audubon Society of Lincoln City was granted a large PEW Charitable Trust grant to work with the state as they update the 1994 Rocky Shores Management Strategy. This small chapter reached out to the group for advice as they go about hiring their first paid employee.

Salem Audubon Society continues to work on construction of the Ankeny Hill Nature Center in partnership with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Friends of the Willamette Valley National Refuge Complex. It is due to open in the summer of 2020.

Portland Audubon spoke passionately about their work to protect the Tillamook, Clatsop and Elliott State forests and the Marbled Murrelet and Spotted Owl.

Lastly, I received some excellent advice that will help us during our planning phase to save the Hedrick Middle School chimney for the Vaux's Swifts.

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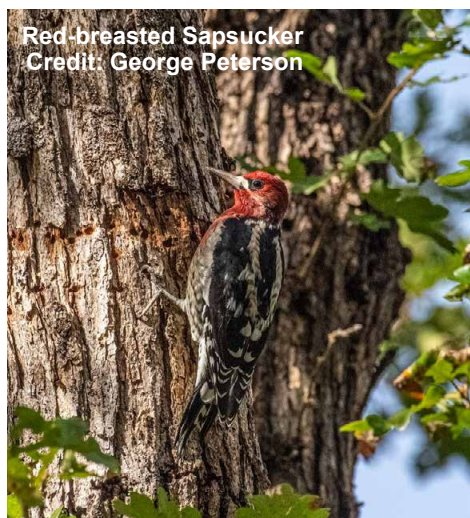


Coming Soon!

Holiday Party
Saturday, Dec. 14, 2019

Medford Christmas Bird Count
Sunday, Dec. 15, 2019

Ashland Christmas Bird Count
Saturday, Dec. 28, 2019



20% OFF One Regularly-priced Item

*Valid 1/2/20 thru 12/31/20 at the Medford, OR WBU
store. One discount per purchase. Not valid on previous
purchases, optics, gift cards, DSC memberships, or sale
items.

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ROGUE VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

THE CHAT

Newsletter of the
ROGUE VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY
Post Office Box 8597
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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.

