



**February Chapter Program**  
**Tuesday, February 25 at 7:00 pm**  
**“The Applegate Siskiyou:**  
**Wildlands, Wildflowers and Biodiversity”**  
**Presented by Luke Ruediger**



Luke Ruediger has lived his entire life in southern Oregon and has dedicated himself to the region's ecology, biodiversity and the protection of wild landscapes. He is a self-taught naturalist and fire ecologist with significant experience in the backcountry of the Klamath Siskiyou. In 2013, he published a hiking and natural history guide for the Siskiyou Crest titled, *The Siskiyou Crest: Hikes, History and Ecology*. He also runs the [Siskiyou Crest Blog](#). He has worked professionally conducting ecological restoration and environmental advocacy work in the Klamath-Siskiyou Mountains for the last 20 years. Currently he works for the [Applegate Neighborhood Network](#), a community and conservation-based organization in the Applegate Valley. He also runs the Siskiyou Field Office for [Klamath Forest Alliance](#) and runs their [Klamath Siskiyou Fire Reports](#) Program.

## OFFICERS and DIRECTORS

**President:** Carol Mockridge, 360-829-7505  
[mockridge50@hotmail.com](mailto:mockridge50@hotmail.com)

**Vice-President:** George Peterson,  
[sgpeterson@msn.com](mailto:sgpeterson@msn.com)

**Secretary:** Erin Ulrich  
[eulrich44@gmail.com](mailto:eulrich44@gmail.com)

**Treasurer:** Susan Stone  
[weaverstone86@gmail.com](mailto:weaverstone86@gmail.com)

Jon Deason  
Laura Fleming  
Wendy Gere  
Nate Trimble

[jdeason39@gmail.com](mailto:jdeason39@gmail.com)  
[wbumedford1@gmail.com](mailto:wbumedford1@gmail.com)  
[wendy.gere@gmail.com](mailto:wendy.gere@gmail.com)  
[nateltrimble@hotmail.com](mailto:nateltrimble@hotmail.com)

## COMMITTEE CHAIRS

**Archivist:** Linda Kreisman, [linda@ashlandhome.net](mailto:linda@ashlandhome.net)

**Annual Picnic:** Wendy Gere, [wendy.gere@gmail.com](mailto:wendy.gere@gmail.com)

**Birdathon:** Gretchen Hunter, [gretchenhunter@embarqmail.com](mailto:gretchenhunter@embarqmail.com)

**Chat Editor:** Juliet Grable, [chateditor@gmail.com](mailto:chateditor@gmail.com)

**CBC-Ashland:** Carol Mockridge,  
[mockridge50@hotmail.com](mailto:mockridge50@hotmail.com) & Emmalisa Whalley

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

**Conservation:** Pepper Trail, [ptrail@ashlandnet.net](mailto:ptrail@ashlandnet.net) &  
Juliet Grable, [julietgrable@gmail.com](mailto:julietgrable@gmail.com)

**Education:** Erin Ulrich, [eulrich44@gmail.com](mailto:eulrich44@gmail.com)

**Field Notes:** Frank Lospalluto  
[fdlospalluto@gmail.com](mailto:fdlospalluto@gmail.com)

**Field Trips:** Nate Trimble, [nateltrimble@hotmail.com](mailto:nateltrimble@hotmail.com)

**Holiday Party :** Lynn McDonald

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

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

**Outreach & Tabling:** Laura Fleming,  
[wbumedford1@gmail.com](mailto:wbumedford1@gmail.com)

**Membership:** George Peterson, [sgpeterson1@msn.com](mailto:sgpeterson1@msn.com)

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

**Publicity:** Wendy Gere, [wendy.gere@gmail.com](mailto:wendy.gere@gmail.com)

**Volunteers:** Linda Kreisman, [linda@ashlandhome.net](mailto:linda@ashlandhome.net)

## CHAPTER COMMUNICATIONS

**E-mail:** [roquevalleyaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:roquevalleyaudubon@gmail.com)

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

**Webmaster:** Tom Pratum [tkp9551@gmail.com](mailto:tkp9551@gmail.com)

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

**Facebook:** [https://www.facebook.com/](https://www.facebook.com/RogueValleyAudubonSociety/)  
RogueValleyAudubonSociety/

**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

If you have been paying attention, you can't escape the fact that our earth is in trouble. Runaway climate change; our air, water, flora, and fauna, all under attack; biodiversity in steep decline; and most recently, a report that shows our birds have seen an almost 30 percent decline in their population numbers since 1970. It's enough to make you want to stay in bed and pull the covers over your head. However, no matter how overwhelming it seems, there are things we all can and must do in our own backyards to turn these events around.

Each and every day we must all be mindful and make a concerted effort to change our destructive habits. These seven simple actions to help birds (as outlined by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology) are a great place to start:

- 1) Make your windows safer for birds
- 2) Keep cats indoors
- 3) Reduce your lawn; plant natives
- 4) Avoid pesticides
- 5) Only drink shade grown, certified "bird-friendly" coffee
- 6) Use less plastic
- 7) Do citizen science, such as eBird, Project FeederWatch, or the Christmas Bird Count

Spread the word, and be a voice for the earth and all of its diversity. Pledge to always vote for the environment. Volunteer with your local Audubon chapter. Step up—we need each and every one of you! There is much to be done. Remember: without the health of the earth, nothing else really matters.

Laura Fleming

## RESOURCE:

### Oregon Breeding Bird Atlas now online

The first and largest comprehensive baseline survey of Oregon's birds - the Oregon Breeding Bird Atlas can now be viewed for free on the Oregon Birding Association's website:

<https://oregonbirding.org/wp-c...>

The BBA is compiled from field surveys by over 800 volunteers from 1995 through 1999.

## Ashland Christmas Bird Count 2019 Summary

By Carol Mockridge

How many American Robins can you see in one day? On Dec. 28, 2019, the Ashland Christmas Bird Count recorded 33,852. The resulting cacophony made it extremely hard at times to locate our local species lurking in the foliage. It was quite an event. Again this year, we enjoyed dry, fairly clear weather. Temperatures ranged from 22 to 45 degrees. A total of 43,909 individual birds and 118 species were recorded by 62 participants who drove 152 miles and walked 52 miles. Two more species during the count week brought the total to 120.

New area leaders Kent Patrick Riley, Shannon Rio, Noah Burg, Jamie Trammell and André Carvalheas joined our regulars. Dick Ashford's **Area 1** Team saw seven raptors species, including a Northern Harrier and a Prairie Falcon engaged in a *pas de deux*. Shannon Rio's **Area 2** KBO Team listed their highlights as a Merlin eating a junco, a murmuration of starlings, and watching a Rough-legged Hawk kiting at historic Billings Ranch. Janet Kelly's **Area 3** Team, birding around Ashland Pond and neighborhoods, found the only Brown-headed Cowbird on the count. Their most interesting species were two Red-shouldered Hawks and one Peregrine Falcon.

**Area 4** Team Leaders Kent Patrick Riley and Vince Zauskey (North Mountain Park only) bagged the only Wilson's Snipes and one Virginia Rail. The team birded even while eating a hot lunch at Kent's house overlooking his great habitat.

**Area 5** Team got off to a fast start by Stewart Janes identifying about 20 species before the team left the starting point. Leader Carol Mockridge scouted some new areas this year which yielded seven Merlins. A different hybrid Red-naped Sapsucker was seen on Terrace St. at the same location as last year. When stopping at Bill and Lynn MacDonalds's house, it was hard to drive through 66 Wild Turkeys and 20 California Quail. Finally, the team was invited onto Lee French's property to watch a Western Screech Owl come out of his roosting box at 4:30 p.m.

**Area 6** Team Leaders Noah Burg and Jammie Trammell eloquently described the overwhelming number of robins as "A carpet of robins" or a "A surfeit of robins." They noted their most interesting species as Townsend's Warblers, Hutton's Vireo and Band-tailed Pigeons. **Area 7** led by André Carvalhaes reported a mixed flock of Chestnut-backed and Mountain Chickadees, a Great Horned Owl by the road and a flock of Lewis's Woodpeckers.

**Area 8** team highlights included a Common Loon on Emigrant Lake, "close personal contact" with the count's only Rock Wren, and an American Bald Eagle chasing a Cackling Goose.

Bob Hunter's **Area 9** team recorded the only Barrow's Goldeneye in addition to 42 other species. A Ruffed Grouse was added during count week. Frank Lospalluto in **Area 10** once again found the hard-to-get Northern Saw-whet Owl, Cassin's Finch, White-headed Woodpecker and later, a Evening Grosbeak for count week.

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



Frank Lospalluto captured this shot of the Red-naped x Red-breasted Sapsucker.



## Dippers Delight Viewers during Annual Dipper Count

By Bob Quaccia

An average number of participants (15) found a slightly below-average number of American Dippers on the 21st Annual American Dipper Count along Ashland creek in Lithia Park. Three Dippers were sighted on the 1.75 miles of creek, down from a 20-year average of 4. Dipper sightings have been sparse this fall, perhaps relating to the low flow of water from a below-average rainfall. In fact, the week before the count no dippers were seen on the creek. In place of the dippers, a plethora of American Robins were seen lining the creek, noisily bathing and cavorting. Fortunately, the official count day was not “bath day” for the robins and none were seen.



Credit: Peter Kreisman

The first Dipper sighted was near the playground trying to devour a “small fry,” that is, a steelhead/trout fry. This was an unusual sighting for us as our local dippers usually dine on insect larvae. Fish are more commonly on the menu where they are more plentiful. The dipper beat the fish on a rock in the middle of the creek and made several attempts at swallowing it whole. Unsuccessful, it continued to rough it up and get a few bites. Eventually it managed to get it down, head first.

The next two birds were much further upstream and paired up. They were seen by the large concrete reservoir below the dam that makes a swimming area on the creek. They seem to be claiming this territory and perhaps will try to nest under the nearby bridge below the dam. They were seen a few days before defending that area from a single

bird who most likely was the piscivore we saw downstream. We watched the pair taking turns singing lustily between preening and feeding.

If you want to get in on the action next year, put the first Saturday in January on your calendar. See you there!



Credit: Peter Kreisman



Credit: Pepper Trail

## Field Notes for Jackson County

### By Frank Lospalluto

The turning calendar with its promise spurs birders anew. The county listers find joy in every new addition. Other birders rejoice in the incidental joy of each sighting, of being outside in the cold air or inside watching the feeders.

**Snow Geese** have been seen often since late last year into this year at the south end of Emigrant Lake. They have also been reported from Brophy Rd. this month (JK, BH). **Greater White-fronted Geese** have been seen loafing at Whetstone Pond recently (HS, SP). Another flock seemed to be alternating between Emigrant Lake and the Oak Knoll Golf Course.

A lone **Trumpeter Swan** heralded the arrival of 2020 at Agate Lake on Jan. 1 (AK).

**Tundra Swans** have been seen along Table Rock Rd. at the big bend near the base of Lower Table Rock of late (NB, JL).

A **Eurasian Wigeon** found just after New Year's continues on the south end of Emigrant. (VZ) Another was seen with a flock of American Wigeon out along Brophy Rd. Jan. 15 and another was at Agate Lake Jan. 3 (JK, JC). Finally, one was seen near Ousterhout Farm Jan. 18 (BH). **Greater Scaup** are being seen along with **Barrow's Goldeneyes** and **Common Goldeneyes** at the Holy Waters near Lost Creek Dam (JL, NB). This is always a hotspot for the handsome Barrow's.

A **Sooty Grouse** was spotted up Long Branch Rd. outside Shady Cove Jan. 20 (AP). This is a species that occurs lower in elevation than many realize if the habitat is there. The males will start advertising early next month.

A **Horned Grebe** has been out on Lost Creek Lake since Jan. 2 (RB) while an **Eared Grebe** was spotted on the Holy Waters Jan. 11 (AG).

A few **Band-tailed Pigeons** have been overwintering with six ringing in the New Year on N. Valley View Rd. in Ashland (KS).

Both **Virginia Rail** and **Sora** have been detected around the Denman WMA this month. Virginia Rails utilize the smallest of wetlands and make a go of it.

Fourteen **Dunlin** were at Kirtland Ponds Jan. 1 (JK). A **Greater Yellowlegs** was at Whetstone Pond Jan. 2 (JK). A **Spotted Sandpiper** was on the Rogue River near the old Gold Ray Dam site the same day (JK).

A **Pacific Loon** that was found in December continued at Emigrant Lake into this month. Eight **Common Loons** were reported by an experienced out of town birder Jan. 10 at Emigrant as well.

A couple of **American White Pelicans** are overwintering at both Agate Lake and Whetstone Pond and have been seen by many. There have been reports of them across the state this winter. This is not normal.

Winter is a good time to glimpse **Black-crowned Night-Heron** roosting in the willows along Whetstone Pond.

**Turkey Vultures** have become a normal winter sighting; four were along Meadows Rd. Jan. 4 (ZK). A **Rough-legged Hawk** was hunting the fields on Billings Farm early in the month and was seen from Ashland Pond by a number of birders. Rough-legged Hawks were also still around Vesper Meadow early in January before the latest snows. A **Ferruginous Hawk** has been in the Agate Lake area over the last few weeks.

On Jan. 13 Janet Kelly observed a **Burrowing Owl** out at Agate Lake near the east end of the rock dam by an old abandoned dock. This is in the same area as the bird from last winter, likely the same bird. The bird has been difficult to relocate as it may be more wary of human activity than last year, or it may be hunting more at night. Though our most diurnal owl, its prey base may be most active after dark. It is also vulnerable to any number of avian predators, from falcons to Great Horned Owls. Agate Lake does not lack for raptors—or birders—during the winter. The owl's survival depends on its vigilance. The genus name, *Athene*, comes from Athena, the Greek name for the goddess of wisdom. The species name, *cunicularia*, is from the Latin for "miner" or "burrower." While in all other North American owls the female is larger (a phenomenon known as reversed sexual dimorphism), in the Burrowing Owl it is the male who is larger.



Burrowing Owl  
Credit: Janet Kelly

A **Barred Owl** has been reported from numerous locations this winter. Many birds likely disperse into the riparian areas along the creeks and irrigation canals and into parks and wooded properties in the valley. One, apparently an Oregon Ducks fan, was seen in Jacksonville Jan. 1 (NS).

*Field Notes continued on page 6*



*Field Notes continued from page 5*

The stunning leucistic **Acorn Woodpecker** near the entrance gate to Grizzly Peak Winery outside Ashland continued into 2020.

There were numerous **Merlin** sightings during CBC season and early in January. The abundance of American Robins might be contributing to their conspicuousness. Mid-January with its falling snow levels seems to have precipitated an abundance of raptor reports from around the valley, from Prairie and Peregrine Falcons to both Golden and Bald Eagles. An adult **Bald Eagle** was seen carrying nesting material near Agate Lake Jan. 12.

**Northern Shrike** and **Say's Phoebe**, both wintering species in our area, have been reported. Northern Shrike was at a couple of Denman locations and one was seen near Whetstone Savanna (LH, JK, BH). Say's Phoebes have been noted on the Imperatrice Property, Whetstone Savanna, Agate Lake, and a few places in between. Look for an uptick of them in February when they start moving back toward breeding areas.

Three **Tree Swallows** and a lone **Barn Swallow** were at Denman Ave G. ponds Jan. 6 (JK).

Two **Rock Wren** have been at the rock dam at Emigrant Lake and two have been found along the rock dam at Agate Lake.

**Northern Mockingbirds** have been spotted at a number of locations around Denman WMA and continue at Ousterhout Farm (BH, JK).

Good numbers of **Purple Finches** have been reported

this month. Many of these birds breed further north and visit our balmy valley during the winter.

Two **Lark Sparrows** were at Rogue River Preserve Jan. 19 (KM) and 13 were at Jackson County Sports Park Jan. 22 (JK). One **White-throated Sparrow** was at Ashland Pond Jan. 1 (CM) and one was at the feeders at North Mountain Park Jan. 3 (AP).

A **Yellow-headed Blackbird** was reported from Eagle Point Golf Course Jan. 12 (AG). Two **Great-tailed Grackle** were spotted along Kirtland Rd. Jan. 8 (JL, NB).

A male **Common Yellowthroat** was found Jan. 2 at Ashland Pond (NB). **Townsend's Warblers** have been quite numerous and conspicuous this winter. It's not uncommon to find a few during the winter but this year has been exceptional.

And finally, a pair of **Western Tanagers** has been in Jacksonville all month, not normal at all for this time of year (CG).

Thanks to all who shared their observations including Janet Kelly, Bob Hunter, Andrew Partin, Norm Barrett, Howard Sands, Jim Livaudais, Gary Shaffer, Carol Mockridge, Jon Cox, Kristi Mergenthaler, Noah Burg, Andy Kleinhesselink, Cheryl Garcia, ZiaFukuda, Vince Zauskey, Leslie Hart, Alex Lamoreaux, Anne Goff, Marion Hadden, Sammie Peat, and Karl Schneck.

All errors and omissions are my own. Peace.

### 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.

February Walk: Wednesday, February 5

March Walk: Wednesday, March 4

April Walk: Wednesday, April 1

George Peterson photographed this American Kestrel and a Merlin during Murray Orr's January walk at Denman Wildlife Area in Medford.



## Medford Christmas Bird Count 2019 Summary

**By Bob Hunter**

The 2019 Medford Christmas Bird Count was a huge success. Seventy-one people and as many as 17 parties were in the field counting 115,246 individual birds and 128 species on count day. There was a total of 130 party hours during the daylight covering 435 miles by car, foot and golf cart. Norm Barrett's and Alex Lamoreaux's teams and Frank Lospalluto also did some pre-dawn and after dark owling that helped yield a high count of great horned owls this year: 28, compared to a previous count high of 10. (Frank counted 17 Great Horned Owls himself.)

A Western Tanager was seen by Bob Hunter's team, marking only the second time one has been seen in the Medford CBC. Lynn Kellogg's and George Peterson's teams found a lone Ross's Goose, which had only been seen in three previous counts. Pepper Trail's team counted 169 Double-breasted Cormorants in the Kelly's Slough area, bringing the total number to 228, a count high. It was a good year for American Robins with a new count high of 56,543. I was assured by team leaders that these birds were all individually counted.

This year yielded some other count highs as well: 449 Acorn Woodpeckers, compared to a previous high of 346; 98 Oak Titmouse, compared to a previous high of 85; eight Eurasian Wigeon, tying the previous high; and two Orange-crowned Warblers, tying the previous high. Eighteen Red-breasted Sapsuckers and 34 Black Phoebe's both came within one of their previous high counts, and 28 Brown Creepers came within two of the previous high.

Stewart Janes's team had the count's only Townsend's Solitaire and Redhead. Vince Zauskey's team found four great-tailed grackles and Tom Phillips's team had a lone Loggerhead shrike. After having no gulls for the count over the past few years, this year Alex's team had a single Ring-billed Gull, so we didn't go gull-less. Shorebird numbers were low with only a single Least Sandpiper and a single Spotted Sandpiper. One Dunlin was seen during count week, but not on count day. Only one Ring-necked Pheasant was seen and again there were no White-tailed Kites.

## BIRD-CENTRIC EVENTS FROM AROUND THE REGION

### EVENTS AT WILD BIRDS UNLIMITED

#### Monthly Educational Talk: Developing a Backyard Sanctuary for Your Native Orchard Mason Bees

Jim will discuss how to establish and maintain a healthy population of mason bees in your backyard.

Jim is the owner of Knox Cellars Mason Bees and lives in Bremerton, WA. He has given over 114 specific talks on Orchard Mason Bees since 1993. Reserve your seat today by calling the store at 541.772.2107 or by coming in to register.

**DATE:** Wednesday, February 5  
**TIME:** 6:00—7:00 pm  
**PLACE:** Wild Birds Unlimited, 961 Medford Center, Medford  
**COST:** Free  
**LEADER** Jim Ullrich

#### Chickadee Chats: Certifying Your Backyard Habitat

Erin Linton will lead a chat about **Certifying Your Backyard Habitat** with the National Wildlife Federation this month. No registration is required, just show up to learn, share, and have fun with fellow bird nerds!

**DATE:** Wednesday, February 12 and Wednesday, February 26  
**TIME:** 10:30 am (February 12) and 3:30 pm (February 26)  
**PLACE:** Wild Birds Unlimited, 961 Medford Center, Medford  
**COST:** Free  
**LEADER** Erin Linton

#### Bird Walk: Denman Wildlife Area

Erin Linton (February 19) and Max McClarnon (February 22) will be leading a walk to the **Denman Wildlife Area** in White City 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, February 19 and Saturday, February 22  
**TIME:** 10:00 am  
**PLACE:** Wild Birds Unlimited, 961 Medford Center, Medford  
**COST:** Free  
**LEADER** Erin Linton and Max McClarnon

#### Fledgling Camp (for children Grades 1—5)

Bring your children/grandchildren and join Erin Ulrich at the store for storytelling and games for the younger crowd.

This month's focus: **"Nesting Season"**

No registration is required.

**DATE:** **Saturday, February 8**  
**TIME:** 11:00 am—noon  
**PLACE:** Wild Birds Unlimited, 961 Medford Center, Medford  
**COST:** Free  
**HOST** Erin Ulrich

*Bird-centric Events continued on page 9*



## 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: 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

### 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](http://www.winterwingsfest.org)**

**DATE:** Thursday, February 13 through Sunday, February 16  
**PLACE:** Oregon Institute of Technology, Klamath Falls, Oregon  
**COST:** Varies

### **\*\*PLAYA GREAT BASIN NATURAL HISTORY WEEKEND WITH PEPPER TRAIL\*\***

The Summer Lake basin is one of Oregon's hidden treasures - home to extraordinary birds, incredible scenery, fascinating geology, and some of the most important archaeological sites in North America. This June, Pepper Trail is offering a natural history weekend in this amazing place - with wonderful accommodations at the PLAYA residency center. If you love Eastern Oregon - or want to explore it for the first time - don't miss this opportunity. Why not sign up with a small group of friends? For more information, go to <https://playasummerlake.org/event/birding-the-oregon-outback/> or email Pepper at [ptrail@ashlandnet.net](mailto:ptrail@ashlandnet.net)

**About PLAYA:** Located at the northwestern edge of the Great Basin in south-central Oregon, PLAYA sits at the base of Winter Ridge, which rises to 7,200 feet. PLAYA's campus, at an elevation of 4,200 feet, borders Summer Lake to the west and includes a large pond, wetlands, grass fields, and walking paths. Summer Lake is 20 miles long and five miles wide and is defined as a *playa*, which is a seasonal desert lake, shallow in the winter and spring, and dry in the summer and fall. Weather varies with wind, snow, rain, and sun. Since its founding, the nonprofit LAYA has provided residencies to hundreds of artists and scientists. The 75-acre property includes six fully equipped and spacious cabins, two fully equipped live/work studios, three studio/research spaces (including one shared living quarters), a large open shed/studio, and outdoor field research areas.

**DATE:** June 12--14, 2020  
**PLACE:** Summer Lake, Oregon  
**COST:** Varies depending on date of registration and occupancy; see website  
**INSTRUCTOR:** Pepper Trail

## The Conservation Column

### By Pepper Trail

Let's start off 2020 with a summary of some conservation victories over the past year. This summary is from National Audubon, and it reminds us that even in the most challenging political environment, determined advocacy for birds and other wildlife can achieve great results. But, of course, threats remain on many fronts, and we also provide a summary of Audubon's top national priorities for the coming year.

*This year our conservation leaders, bird advocates, college students, ambassadors, volunteers, and scientists accomplished amazing things. Collectively, more than 151,400 of us took almost 620,000 online actions on behalf of birds. All of the accomplishments listed below come from the hard work and dedication of our members, chapters, volunteers and staff.*

– National Audubon Society

### Victories

#### **Victory for Birds, Parks and Taxpayers**

In February, the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act passed, permanently reauthorizing the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and reauthorizing the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (NBCA).

Since 1964, LWCF has helped conserve seven million acres of land across the United States, with projects in all 50 states and nearly every county. It has helped safeguard numerous Important Bird Areas, such as California's Point Reyes National Sea Shore, has protected Cerulean Warbler habitat in Arkansas and wintering areas for Bald Eagles in Washington, and is helping to restore the Everglades. Thanks to LWCF, every year we see the expansion of our network of protected land, improvement in our access to outdoor recreation, and more essential places for birds protected from development.

#### **Drought Contingency Plan Will Help Protect 40 Million People and 400 Species of Birds**

In April, Congress passed the Drought Contingency Plan, landmark legislation that addresses impending water shortages on the Colorado River. As temperatures continue to rise and the West becomes increasingly arid, the Colorado River Basin will become an even more important resource for economies and cities in the basin, as well as the millions of acres of farmland and birds like the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher and Yellow Warbler. Audubon worked strategically throughout the basin to build coalitions, engage bird-friendly businesses, create beer collaborations with breweries, and forge relationships with local, state and federal leaders. As the new plan is implemented, Audubon will continue to work with the Bureau of Reclamation, the basin states, and our partners in Mexico.

#### **Gulf Restoration Plan Helps Communities Recover from the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill**

Shortly after Audubon released its blueprint for Gulf restoration, we secured funding for five of the projects in the plan. In 2010, thousands of Common Loons and Black Terns were killed in the BP oil disaster before they were able to migrate back to their breeding grounds in the Upper Midwest. Restoration of nesting habitat for Common Loons in Minnesota and Black Terns in North and South Dakota will help these migratory species, which spend their winters in the Gulf of Mexico. Additionally, Audubon received funding to expand our Coastal Stewardship Program to the winter season in Mississippi, successfully advocated for the restoration of a historic nesting ground for Brown Pelicans on Queen Bess Island in Louisiana, and installed breakwaters along the remaining miles of unprotected shoreline at Richard T. Paul Alafia Bank Bird Sanctuary in Hillsborough Bay, Florida.

*Conservation Column continued on page 11*

*Conservation Column continued from page 10*

## **Ongoing Battles**

### **Defense of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act in Court, in Congress, and in California**

After the Department of the Interior announced an unprecedented rollback of bird protections under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act in late 2017, Audubon continued to push back and defend the law, achieving important wins this year. In the courts, alongside our partner organizations and eight states, we won a significant ruling in our federal lawsuit. The court rejected the federal government's effort to dismiss the case, allowing it to move forward. Additionally, the U.S. House held a committee hearing on draft MBTA legislation that would reinforce bird protections under the law in which Audubon testified in support of the MBTA and the legislation. And in California, the state passed a bill championed by Audubon that strengthens California's protections for migratory birds in light of the federal rollback.

### **Congress Works to Save Seabirds**

For the first time ever, Congress introduced a bill to protect forage fish—the preferred prey of most seabirds—called the Forage Fish Conservation Act (HR 2236). This bipartisan legislation came to be in part thanks to Audubon volunteers who contacted their members of Congress through letters, LTEs, and op-eds, and in person meetings.

In April, Audubon hosted a #SaveTheSeabirds fly-in where 30 Audubon volunteers traveled to Washington, D.C. to educate their members of Congress about how seabirds have declined 70 percent since 1970, and about the work needed to reverse this trend, which includes protecting forage fish like shad and anchovies. And in June, the House Natural Resources Committee passed the Albatross and Petrel Conservation Act. This legislation, championed by Audubon, would implement a treaty that advances international efforts to conserve these legendary and imperiled species. It marks the first time that Congress has advanced this important bill, which now moves to the full House for consideration.

### **Conservation Groups Oppose Arctic Drilling and Seek Permanent Protections in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge**

For years, Audubon has fought to safeguard the Arctic Refuge, a vital nursery to millions of birds from all 50 states, from destructive oil and gas development. In March, 312 scientists sent a letter to the U.S. Department of the Interior opposing oil and gas leasing in the Refuge. Additionally, members from conservation groups like Audubon Alaska, Alaska Wilderness League, and the Association of Retired U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Employees worked together to pen a 431 page critique of the Bureau of Land Management's Environmental Impact Statement, and more than 41,000 Audubon members sent in comments opposing lease sales in the Refuge. On September 11, members of the U.S. Senate introduced the Arctic Refuge Protection Act that, if passed, would designate the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Coastal Plain a wilderness area, preventing any oil or gas drilling in the area. This bill came just one day before the U.S. House of Representatives voted to pass the Arctic Cultural and Coastal Protection Act, which would repeal the leasing program along the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Both bills are major steps toward protecting the Refuge.

### **Audubon and Coalition Partners Fight to Protect Threatened Sage-Grouse**

In March, the Department of the Interior and Bureau of Land Management 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. While a court has put these new plans on hold, Audubon is continuing to fight back against the ongoing threats to sage-grouse and their habitat. Upon closer inspection, Audubon, along with 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 Bureau of Land Management issued leases comprising almost 1.6 million acres and 2,553 drilling permits in sage-grouse habitat.

*Conservation Column continued on page 12*



### ***Conservation Column continued from page 11***

Despite these challenges, the state of Wyoming took the lead in sage-grouse conservation, with ongoing support from stakeholders like Audubon. Governor Mark Gordon of Wyoming issued a new Greater Sage-Grouse Executive Order, with a mandate that maintains the level of protections from the 2015 management plans. The Executive Order prioritizes increasing and improving sage-grouse habitat that will subsequently benefit more than 350 species of wildlife.

### **Meanwhile, in the Rogue Valley...**

In addition to serving as part of National Audubon's network on issues like these, Rogue Valley Audubon continues to work on important issues for bird conservation in southern Oregon.

Among our top priorities:

- Defending BLM lands surrounding the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument from industrial logging;
- Advocating for responsible forest management, especially in relation to fire policy and fuels reduction;
- Working to preserve the important Vaux's Swift roost at Hedrick Middle School in Medford;
- Advocating for threatened Oregon species, especially the Greater Sage-Grouse and Marbled Murrelet; and
- Monitoring the never-ending struggle to provide adequate water for the Klamath Basin National Wildlife Refuges.

2020 will be another busy year, but I'm confident that, working together, we will be able to derail the worst proposals to come out of Washington – and even achieve some lasting victories!

## **Nandina Berries and Birds**

**By Juliet Grable**

RVAS member Sonney Viani recently sent me an article that appeared in Mother Nature Network. Titled "Why Nandina Berries and Certain Birds Don't Mix," the story highlights the danger these colorful berries pose to certain species such as Cedar Waxwings.

*Nandina domestica*, known commonly as "sacred bamboo" or "heavenly bamboo," is native to China and Japan but is a common ornamental shrub here in the U.S. It is popular in part for its bright red berries, which are eaten by birds and other animals when other food sources dry up in winter.

Nandina berries contain cyanide and other alkaloids that produce hydrogen cyanide (HCN), which can be poisonous if eaten in large quantities. While the berries don't pose a problem for robins, mockingbirds, or most other birds that turn to them once pickings are slim, cedar waxwings have a feeding strategy that leaves them vulnerable. From the article:

"Other birds don't eat as much or as rapidly as cedar waxwings," said Rhiannon Crain, project leader for the Habitat Network with The Nature Conservancy and Cornell Lab of Ornithology. "Cedar waxwings completely stuff every possible part of their body with berries. They will fill their stomach and their crop with berries right up into their mouth until they can't fit another berry inside of them."

Food for thought next time you visit the plant nursery.



Credit: Emmanuel Douzery

**NORTHWEST**  
**nature shop**  
SINCE 1985

Intriguing gifts, toys, and  
tools for discovering the  
natural world.



for the explorer

for your garden

for the scientist

\*The Northwest Nature Shop proudly sponsors the Ashland Independent Film Festival!

154 Oak Street, Ashland, Oregon 97520  
(541) 482-3241 | [www.northwestnatureshop.com](http://www.northwestnatureshop.com)  
Mon-Sat 10am to 6pm and Sun 11am to 5pm

## Upcoming Programs

**March 24**

Ariel Gaffney, USWS Forensics Lab  
Topic TBA

**April 28**

Mel Clement  
"Finding and Photographing the Great  
Gray Owls of the Cascades"



**Wild Birds Unlimited**  
Nature Shop

## 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.

961 Medford Center, Medford, OR 97504  
541-772-2107

# ROGUE VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

## THE CHAT

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

\*This is the last issue you will receive unless  
you have renewed at the \$40 level.\*

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](mailto: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.

