

A voice for education and conservation in the natural world  
Rogue Valley Audubon Society  
[www.roguevalleyaudubon.org](http://www.roguevalleyaudubon.org)

*Deadline for the April issue is March 20*



**March Chapter Program**  
**Tuesday, March 24 at 7:00 pm**  
**“The Fascinating World of Forensic Ornithology”**  
**Presented by Ariel Gaffney**



Ariel Gaffney will explain how she got into forensic ornithology and will discuss some of the work she has been doing at the lab on identification of Bald and Golden Eagles. The lab is developing a new tool for identifying some of their more difficult feathers.

**About Ariel**

I am a forensic ornithologist at the U.S. National Fish & Wildlife Forensic Laboratory in Ashland Oregon. I earned my Bachelor of Science degree in 2013 in Integrative Biology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. It was there that I fell in love with birds, research and fieldwork while working on a chickadee hybridization project. I earned my Master of Science degree studying the behavior, physiology and genetic adaptation of hummingbirds from the University of New Mexico. In 2017, I moved up here to Ashland, Oregon to accept the position at the forensics lab! I am a certified Wildlife Forensic Scientist, through the Society for Wildlife Forensic Science (SWFS) and in my free time, you can find me hiking, camping, kayaking or birding.

**Birdathon 2020 is Coming!**

**Birdathon is...**

- a) a chance to celebrate Southern Oregon's spring migration in the company of other birders
- b) a competitive sport
- c) an important fundraiser for the Rogue Valley Audubon Society
- d) all of the above

**Birdathon returns on Friday, May 1.** If you've never participated in this annual event, why not make 2020 your year? The object of Birdathon is for sponsored teams to count as many species as possible within a 24-hour period. Teams can range widely or stick close to home, so long as they stay in Jackson County. Gretchen Hunter will once again be coordinating Birdathon. For more information or to register your team, contact Gretchen at [gretchenhunter@embarqmail.com](mailto: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

### Wanted: RVAS Treasurer

Hello Members! We need a new treasurer starting in July 2020. The treasurer task is fulfilling and plays an integral part in the smooth functioning of our Audubon group. This is a satisfying and core position. Keeping track of membership subscriptions, donations, paying the bills and sticking to our budget enables our group to support our local native birds and their habitats here in the Rogue Valley. By being the treasurer, I've gained insight into the depth of the excellent work the Rogue Valley Audubon Society does: helping save chimneys for migrating Vaux's Swifts, educating the public about birding and ways to assist native birds, supporting citizen science efforts, and contributing to other environmental projects related to birds here in our area. If you are interested in becoming treasurer for the Rogue Valley Audubon Society, please get in touch with me at [weaverstone86@gmail.com](mailto:weaverstone86@gmail.com). Thank you!

Susan Stone, RVAS Treasurer

### Thank you Juliet

The board sincerely thanks Juliet Grable for her five years of expertly serving as editor of *The Chat* newsletter. Pulling each issue together is not an easy task and seems to come back around so soon each month. I know our members look forward to reading about RVAS news, events and issues that make us such a dynamic chapter. Juliet will continue as co-chair of the Conservation Committee.

Carol Mockridge, President

### Editor's Note

I have truly enjoyed serving as editor of *The Chat*, and helping make this valuable resource available for our members and others. A sincere thanks to everyone who has contributed articles and photos over the years, with special thanks to regular contributors Pepper Trail, Jeff Tufts, Frank Lospalluto, and Carol Mockridge.

I am pleased to announce that Kate Halstead will be taking the reins as the new editor of *The Chat*. I will be working with Kate to ensure a smooth transition. As always, send submissions, including photos, to [chateditor@gmail.com](mailto:chateditor@gmail.com)

Juliet Grable

## RVAS Offers Kids Audubon Adventures

By Erin Ulrich

As part of our educational outreach, we are now offering Audubon Adventures to elementary school teachers. We will be sponsoring 10 kits for the first 10 teachers who let us know that they want this program in their classroom.

What is Audubon Adventures? It's an environmental education curriculum created by the National Audubon Society and geared for 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade students. It is developed by professional environmental educators and can be integrated into a number of different subject areas: science, math, language arts, social studies, and the creative arts. Topics include: Sharing Our World with Birds, Getting to Know Birds, Wild About Birds. Each of these topics includes three learning modules with printed student magazines and a user guide for teachers. Extra online content is available for activities, printables, posters, quizzes, puzzles and games.

Audubon Adventures is a great way to introduce young students to the amazing world of birds. If you know an educator in Jackson County that would love to have this in their classroom, let them know!

Inquiries about the program can be sent to Education Committee Chair Erin Ulrich: [eulrich44@gmail.com](mailto:eulrich44@gmail.com)



## 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.

March Walk: Wednesday, March 4

April Walk: Wednesday, April 1

May Walk: Wednesday, May 6



## Field Notes for Jackson County February 2020

By Frank Lospalluto

A large flock of **Cackling Geese** numbering 340 was spotted off of Kirtland Rd. Feb. 7 (AL). A beautiful male **Cinnamon Teal** was at Kirtland Ponds Feb. 2 (JK).

Male **Sooty Grouse** are on territory and advertising for females now. Sometimes mistaken for an owl hooting, males sing from high up in Douglas fir trees and can be difficult to find on their perch.

A **Horned Grebe** along with an **Eared Grebe** was on Lost Creek Lake Feb. 14 (BH), the Eared Grebe had been reported earlier in the month Feb. 6 (JK).

**Band-tailed Pigeons** are beginning to be reported with some frequency from different parts of the county. Thirty were at a feeder out in the Little Applegate Feb. 15 (AJ).

**Rufous Hummingbirds** have made an early return to our area by a good ten days to two weeks. One was visiting a feeder in Medford and another was up Sardine Creek Feb. 20 (JT, MR). **Anna's Hummingbirds** are likely beginning to nest.

Seven **Sandhill Cranes** were reported from Vesper Meadows Feb. 17 (JM). A migrating flock of 100 birds was seen over the Howard Prairie area Feb. 23.

**Dunlin** along with **Least Sandpipers** were being seen at Kirtland Ponds throughout the month (GS, SP). A single **California Gull** was out at Emigrant Lake Feb. 16 (RN). Eleven California Gull were at Kirtland Feb. 23 (SP). Six **Common Loon** were on Emigrant Lake Feb. 15 (AC).

Numerous reports of **Turkey Vultures** started flowing in Feb. 8 (SP, JB). An **Osprey** was fishing off Takelma Park on the Rogue Feb. 7 (VZ). **Great Horned Owls** are beginning to nest and **Northern Pygmy-Owl** males are beginning to set up breeding territories. The **Burrowing Owl** was still present at Agate Lake and maintaining a low profile, as is her want (JK). **Merlin** reports have leveled off since December and early January though plenty of singles are still being seen.

**Northern Shrike** has been observed at a number of locations the last few weeks from the Imperatrice Property Jan. 31 (JK) to the Denman WMA Hall Tract Feb. 13 to Agate Lake Feb. 12 (DK) to Vesper Meadow Feb. 21 (LF).

A dozen or so **Horned Lark** were on the Imperatrice Property Jan. 31 (JK, AP). They favor the rocky areas up there in the short bunchgrass patches and have been detected off and on during the winter the last few years as the Imperatrice Property has generated more interest among birders.

**Tree Swallows** are back dipping and diving and



Anna's Hummingbird nest building  
Credit: Frank Lospalluto

gliding as they forage. A lone **Violet-green Swallow** was over the Imperatrice Feb. 23 (AP) and four were seen in the Denman/TouVelle area Feb. 24 (JK). A lone **Barn Swallow** was over Whetstone Pond Feb. 22 (AG, MM).

A **Canyon Wren** was heard Feb. 7 in the 'wren' area behind the RV park at Emigrant Lake Park (JK) and photographed nearby a week later Feb. 14 (DK). **Rock Wren** was in the same area Feb. 18 (AL) as well as being reported from a couple of other spots around Emigrant Lake the last few weeks.

Two **Evening Grosbeak** were reported from Lower Table Rock Feb. 12 (FE). Four **Great-tailed Grackles** were near the Knife River Plant on Kirtland Rd. Feb. 1 (HS).

**Townsend's Warblers** continue to be conspicuous this winter in home yards and along the Bear Creek Greenway. A female **Black-headed Grosbeak** was spotted at a feeder at the Rogue Valley Manor Feb. 9 (KW).

Thanks to all who shared their observations including Janet Kelly, Bob Hunter, Andrew Partin, Norm Barrett, Howard Sands, Jim Livaudais, Gary Shaffer, Vince Zauskey, Alex Lamoreaux, Anne Goff, Marion Hadden, Sammie Peat, Lee French, Kay Wylie, Nathan Pieplow, Max McClarnon, Jeff Tufts, Maggie Rackley, Russ Namitz, Andre Carvalhaes, Jeanine Moy, and Karl Schneck. Apologies to Ralph Browning for leaving him off of last month's list of observers.

All errors and omissions are my own. Peace.

## BIRD-CENTRIC EVENTS FROM AROUND THE REGION

### EVENTS AT WILD BIRDS UNLIMITED

#### Monthly Educational Talk: How to Build a Pollinator Garden to Protect Nature's Greatest Emissaries

Gerlinde Smith will discuss the importance of pollinators to our food system. She will review how to create or convert an existing garden to a chemical-free pollinator garden which supplies nectar and pollen to these vital insects. Gerlinde currently lives in Talent, where she had the first certified pollinator garden in town. She has been instrumental in making Talent the second certified Bee City USA affiliate in the nation. Reserve your seat today by calling the store at 541.772.2107 or by coming in to register.

**DATE:** Wednesday, March 18  
**TIME:** 6:00—7:00 pm  
**PLACE:** Wild Birds Unlimited, 961 Medford Center, Medford  
**COST:** Free  
**LEADER** Gerlinde Smith

#### Chickadee Chats: Nesting Season

Erin Linton will lead a chat 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 4 & 18  
**TIME:** 10:30 am (March 4) and 3:30 pm (March 18)  
**PLACE:** Wild Birds Unlimited, 961 Medford Center, Medford  
**COST:** Free  
**LEADER** Erin Linton

#### Bird Walk: North Mountain Park

Erin Linton (March 11) and Max McClarnon (March 21) will be leading a walk in North Mountain Park 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, March 11 and Saturday, March 21  
**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: "**Bird Habitats**"

No registration is required.

**DATE:** **Saturday, March 14**  
**TIME:** 11:00 am—noon  
**PLACE:** Wild Birds Unlimited, 961 Medford Center, Medford  
**COST:** Free  
**HOST** Erin Ulrich

*Bird-centric Events continued on page 6*

## 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:** Saturday, March 14 (This is the last date for this year's FeederWatch)

**TIME:** 9:00 — 10:00 am

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

**COST:** Free

**INSTRUCTOR:** Local birding experts

#### 10th ANNUAL DEAN HALE WOODPECKER FESTIVAL

Every year East Cascades Audubon Society (ECAS) sponsors the Dean Hale Woodpecker Festival, which is headquartered in beautiful Sisters, Oregon. The festival offers a fun, friendly, casual atmosphere that is all about the birds. Festival participants have a choice of 29 guided tours in search of 11 different woodpecker species and 200 other birds that make central Oregon a birding hot spot. The trips are affordable, limited in size and guided by two local volunteers. The proceeds support ECAS education and conservation projects. This is a very popular festival and most tours fill very quickly, sometimes within a day of registration opening. **Online registration opens April 1.** Tour details, registration and more information website:

<http://www.ecaudubon.org/dean-hale-woodpecker-festival>

Questions can be directed to [dhwf2020@gmail.com](mailto:dhwf2020@gmail.com) or Sherrie Pierce 541-548-4641.

**DATE:** June 4 - 7, 2020

**PLACE:** Sisters, 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 PLAYA 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 Juliet Grable**

This month's column highlights the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between conservation groups and the timber industry, which was signed in early February.

This breakthrough occurred when Governor Kate Brown stepped in to mediate a resolution between the two sides, each of which had been planning to introduce ballot measures this year.

Conservation groups were planning to introduce a ballot measure to reform the Oregon Forest Practices Act; supporting its passage was an item on the Oregon Audubon Chapters (OAC) Conservation Priority List.

I reached out to Bob Sallinger, Conservation Director for the Audubon Society of Portland, to explain the intent and significance of the ballot measure and subsequent agreement brokered by Governor Brown:

"Oregon Audubon Chapters made passage of the Oregon Forest Practices Act (OFPA) Reform Initiative on the November ballot a priority for 2020," he wrote. "The need for a ballot initiative was driven by decades of futility working through the Oregon Legislature and through the Oregon Board of Forestry to reform the OFPA, which provides some of the weakest standards for managing private forest lands in the Western United States."

In response to this ballot measure, the timber industry introduced three counter measures which sought to undermine the OFPA reform measure and Oregon's land use system in general.

"We were anticipating two very challenging battles this fall--one to pass our measure and another to defeat theirs," wrote Sallinger.

In early 2020, the Governor's office offered to try to mediate a resolution to this impending battle at the ballot box. Intense negotiations between conservation groups, represented by Oregon Wild, Wild Salmon Center and Crag Law Center, and timber companies resulted in the February agreement, in which both sides agreed to terminate their ballot initiatives.

In the agreement, signed on Feb. 10, the cooperating parties agreed to "pursue a science-informed policy development process, rooted in compromise, to evaluate and jointly recommend substantive and procedural changes to Oregon forest practice laws and regulations..."

The timber companies agreed to new restrictions and notification requirements on aerial pesticide spraying and to pursue a habitat conservation plan (HCP) for the OFPA within 18 months.

Portland Audubon has been the lead for Oregon Audubon Chapters in this effort and was a signatory to the agreement.

"We originally supported the ballot measure because at the time it represented the only real path forward to reform the OFPA," says Sallinger. "We are supporting this agreement now, because the threat of the ballot measure brought the timber industry to the table in a way that allows us to make immediate progress on pesticide issues and offers a viable pathway to much more comprehensive reform of the OFPA in the near future."

Read the full MOU here:

<https://assets.documentcloud.org/documents/6772961/Oregon-Strategy-MOU-Final-Executed.pdf>

Here's a link to a story that appeared in OPB about the agreement:

<https://www.opb.org/news/article/oregon-environmentalists-loggers-agreement-forests-avoid-ballot-fight/>

*Conservation Column continued on page 8*

*Conservation Column continued from page 7*

### A bill to limit aerial spraying

The centerpiece of the forest agreement is HB 4168, a bill that places stricter limits on aerial spraying. Companies spray herbicides from helicopters in order to kill plants that compete with tree seedlings following a clearcut. More than 800,000 pounds of herbicides were sprayed on forestland in 2008, the last year Oregon required amounts to be reported.

When sprayed aerially, toxic chemicals such as glyphosate, 2,4-D and atrazine can drift long distances and end up in streams, rivers, and other waterbodies that serve as drinking water sources or critical habitat for fish and other creatures.

HB 4168 would:

- Require timber companies and small-woodland owners to notify nearby residents when they aerially spray pesticides following a harvest.
- Prompt the development of technology that would be used to notify residents when spraying was to occur, and establish a system to send real-time warnings to residents.
- Creates a 300-foot no spray buffer zone around schools and homes. (The current setback is 60 feet.)
- Establishes stricter buffers around fish-bearing streams, increasing setbacks from 60 feet to 75 feet.
- Directs the state Board of Forestry to adopt rules regarding certain salmon species for the Rogue-Siskiyou region. (These rules were adopted for the rest of the state in 2017.)
- Establish 50-foot aerial spraying buffers on all headwater streams—waterways which feed into fish-bearing streams and rivers. No buffers exist for them currently.

One of the ballot measures backed by the environmental groups would have established a 500-foot aerial spraying buffer on all waters in the state. HB 4168 is a compromise, but it's better than no action. It's worth noting that the timber industry helped kill a similar proposal in 2015.

### Not a done deal

Unfortunately, the walkout by GOP Senators during the 2020 legislative session may jeopardize this fragile compact. The walkout, intended to prevent a vote on SB 1530, an historic cap-and-trade bill which limits greenhouse gas emissions, was triggered when the bill passed in the House subcommittee and was sent to the Senate for a vote. But the walkout—still ongoing, as of this writing—will also preclude a vote on many other bills, including HB 4168. As was noted, the agreement hinges on passing this legislation.

Some who are against cap-and-trade believe the governor was using the forest deal as leverage to help pass SB 1530. Here's an excerpt from a [follow-up story](#) that explores some of the politics:

The governor might insist cap-and-trade and the forest deal aren't connected. But Senate Minority Leader Herman Baertschiger, Jr., R-Grants Pass, sees a tie.

Initially, he said the historic forest management agreement undercut his ability to block the climate bill. A day later, his tone changed. Republicans aren't beholden to large corporate timber industries, he said. In other words: **he's willing to blow up the forest management deal if it means stopping cap-and-trade** (emphasis added).

"What they basically said is if you want the timber industry's pesticide bill to pass, you're going to have to stick around for cap-and-trade. And we simply can't do that," Baertschiger told conservative radio host Lars Larson Thursday. "So the timber industry didn't do us any favor. I don't know who was advising them politically, but I would give them their walking papers."

Sean Stevens with the conservation group Oregon Wild said it's unclear what happens if the aerial pesticide bill doesn't pass this session.

"From our perspective, we sincerely hope and expect that a landmark agreement of this magnitude can bring elected officials together by the end of session," he wrote in an email. "If they fail, we'll all have to reassess where we are at."



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## Upcoming Programs

**April 28**

Mel Clement

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

**May 26**

Annual RVAS Picnic at  
Tou Velle State Park



Chestnut-backed Chickadee  
Credit: Juliet Grable



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# ROGUE VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

## THE CHAT

Newsletter of the  
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