

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

Deadline for the June issue is May 20



Letter from the Board

Staying Engaged As Social Distancing Continues

We value our Audubon members and look forward to seeing you in the future. Your health and well-being are always our top priorities as we make choices about our activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. We also want to do everything we can to prevent community spread of the virus. With those priorities in mind, the 2020 Birdathon and the RVAS Annual Picnic are canceled for May. We are taking a wait-and-see approach with upcoming Rogue Valley Audubon Society sponsored field trips (check the website for updates). We will be back together again sharing our love of birds. Until then, we'll continue to communicate through our website and our June issue of *The Chat*.

One important way to stay engaged with the birding community in this time of social distancing is reading and posting on our Rogue Valley Birds listserv. We are currently looking for a couple of new volunteers to administer the site. It doesn't take much time and is well worth the effort to be able to share this daily information. To find out more, please contact me at mockridge50@hotmail.com.

Keep birding,

Carol Mockridge, President



Status of upcoming events

May Board Meeting - Canceled

Birdathon (May 2) - Canceled

Annual Picnic (May 26) - Canceled

Field trips - Check online calendar

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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.

RVAS BIRDATHON CANCELED

We are very sad to have to forego the Birdathon this year. Bob and I were working on a way to carry on while maintaining the important and necessary COVID-19 safety measures, but unfortunately the "Stay at Home" order is quite clear about the need to restrict travel to "essential" trips (<https://www.oregon.gov/newsroom/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?newsid=36240>).

Many of us avid birders find birding to be essential to maintaining our sanity, especially now. However, we believe that it would be unwise if RVAS were to encourage activities that violate the "Stay at Home" order. We don't need to have the Birdathon right now – we can and will reschedule later, after we can be sure to protect the health of ourselves, our families, our friends, and everyone else we share this beautiful place with.

-Gretchen Hunter

ASHLAND BREEDING BIRD COUNT 2020

Volunteers are needed for Barbara Massey's Ashland Breeding Bird Count, a long-term community science survey to learn about bird species in our region, and how they are shifting their vital spring habits in response to a changing climate. This project was started by long time Ashland birder Barbara Massey in 2012 and revived by her in 2019 with the hope of establishing an annual tradition in Ashland.

Counts will be conducted in independent groups of 2-5 people, within a 15-mile diameter circle of the Ashland area (corresponding to the Christmas Bird Count areas) and follow a similar procedure to the Christmas Bird Count.

If you are able to join this important event and/or would like additional information, RSVP to leaders Nate Trimble and Brandon Breen (see contact below). Let them know if you have a specific area or group members you prefer, otherwise they will pair you up with some friendly faces. Updates and details will be sent to participants as the date approaches.

***Note: this event will only take place if the Oregon COVID-19 stay at home order has lifted before the date of this survey, and we feel confident it is safe and responsible to carry out this event. Cancellation is a possibility if the COVID-19 situation has not improved significantly by late May.**

DATE/TIME: Saturday, June 6 2020; 6am-12pm

PLACE: Ashland Christmas Bird Count area

COST: FREE

CONTACT: AshlandBreedingBirdCount@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. **Note:** Due to COVID-19, field trips and other events may be canceled. Check the RVAS website for the latest updates.

May Walk: Wednesday, May 6 ****Final status TBD - Check the website for updates****

June Walk: Wednesday, June 3 ****Final status TBD - Check the website for updates****

A Message From the Webmaster

By Tom Pratum

On Saturday, April 11, at approximately 12 a.m., our website, roguevalleyaudubon.org, suffered a malicious intrusion of unknown origin. This first came to my attention later that afternoon, and I immediately redirected the website address to a temporary page while we regrouped and tried to determine the extent of the intrusion. At that time it was determined the primary intent of the event was to redirect the website to a server in Russia - however, in our age of globalization, that does not mean this was the origin of the intrusion. By 5 p.m. that afternoon, I had repaired the damage and the original website was back up. However, I did not clear the Google web search cache, nor was I able to clear the browser caches on your individual computers accessing our website. For that reason, a few members did observe the 'hacker page', and we very much apologize for that.



On Monday, April 20 another intrusion occurred whose intent was unknown, but appeared to be enabled by a backdoor installed by the original intrusion which was not caught by an original scan of the site. Fortunately, it appears that the effect of this intrusion was blocked by the web server. We were alerted to this by an automated service on the server, and I repaired and removed affected files. However, we have now signed up for two different scanning services which will scan our site on an ongoing basis for any malicious files.

Unfortunately, events like this are not that uncommon - even on well-maintained websites such as ours. I hate to say this, but the worldwide lockdown has resulted in a lot of idle time, which appears to - in some cases - have fallen into the hands of disreputable individuals.

Please let me know if you have any questions at all about this event that are not answered here.

(President's note - Kudos to Tom for catching this so quickly and having the discipline to routinely back up the website. I thank him for his continued surveillance of our website.)

Field Notes for Jackson County March 2020

By Frank Lospalluto

Free as a bird. April brings the rushing waves of migrants northwards. Old friends returning, calling and singing their life in joy, a rope, something we can grab.

Flocks of **Greater White-fronted Geese** have been flying northward from wintering grounds in California the last couple of weeks. A few **Ross's Geese** flew with one flock in the early dark over the Siskiyou Summit Apr. 15. (FL) Four **Cackling Geese** were still at Whetstone Pond Apr. 12. (MC) And a flock of 40 formed a tight raft on Howard Prairie Lake Apr. 11. (FL) **Cinnamon Teal** are now seen regularly around the valley with a few at Emigrant Lake, along with an **Eurasian Wigeon** which was still at Emigrant as of Apr. 3. (VZ) A male **'Eurasian' Green-winged Teal** or Common Teal was at Kirtland Ponds Apr. 5. This species is occasional and rare in our area. (AL)

The same day a hybrid Lesser Scaup x Ring-necked Duck was found at the ponds. (AL) A pair of **Redheads** was at Howard Prairie Lake Apr. 10. (MC) Four **Barrow's Goldeneye** were still on Lost Creek Lake Apr. 14. (BH) A **RED-BREASTED MERGANSER** was found on Holy Waters below Lost Creek Dam Mar. 31. (JK)

Sooty Grouse continue to sing and one birder was serenaded along Shale City Rd. Apr. 18. (DA) **Ruffed Grouse** observations around the county have risen as the males drum out their territories and entice the females with their vigor. (AP, AL, HS, BH)

Single **Eared Grebes** in breeding plumage were on Hyatt and Howard Prairie Lakes Apr. 10. (MC)

Vaux's Swifts are arriving and moving north. Thirty were over Ashland Pond Apr. 22 (LdB, AL) and 12 were on Grizzly Peak Apr. 23. (PK, LK) Besides their well-known association with masonry and brick chimneys, Vaux's Swifts are associated with old growth forests and legacy oaks both for roosting and nesting. They are also a species that have helpers at the nests where three or four adults will raise a brood.

A **Calliope Hummingbird** was up along Tolman Creek Rd. in the popular Calliope spot Apr. 19. (GS) And one was near Sardine Creek Rd. Apr. 23. (KS)

A **Black-bellied Plover** in breeding plumage briefly visited Kirtland Ponds before flying off Apr. 5. (TJ) A **Semipalmated Plover** was at the ponds Apr. 19. (BH) A female **RUFF** was found in the wetland west of Whetstone Pond in the evening Apr. 7. (MC) An exciting find and a county bird for a few birders and ho hum for a seasoned world birder (who still came out to take a photograph). A **Solitary Sandpiper** was found at Ave. G ponds Apr. 22. (AL)

A **Bonaparte's Gull** was at Agate Lake Apr. 3. (JK) And 11, most in breeding plumage, were at Hyatt Lake Apr. 10. (MC) Two **Caspian Terns** were at Kirtland Ponds Apr. 22. (AL) One was at Ave. G Apr. 25. (GS)

American Bitterns are active and vocal with their pumping calls. **Green Herons** are also back and active. Both species have been reported from multiple locations around the valley.



American Bittern
Credit: Gary Shaffer

Turkey Vultures and **Osprey** continue to migrate through our area. Many raptors are nesting or beginning to nest. Some are already brooding and raising young. **Great Horned Owls** are feeding nestlings, as are **Barn Owls**. An adult **Barred Owl** was spotted near Larsen Creek in East Medford Apr. 18; it's quite unusual for one to be in town this time of year. (TP)

Woodpeckers are active drumming out territories and excavating nest holes.

A **Hammond's Flycatcher** was outside Jacksonville on BLM lands Apr. 13. (AP) A **Dusky Flycatcher** was spotted at Ashland Pond Apr. 22. (LdB, AL) A **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** was in Lithia Park Apr. 18 and up Wagner Creek Rd. Apr. 19. (LdB, KM) Pacific-slope Flycatcher is one of the more abundant neotropical migrants but it is more likely to be heard than seen.

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A **Gray Flycatcher** was in the CSNM southwest of Pilot Rock Apr. 24. (FL) Gray Flycatchers migrate through our area late April into early May and can often be found where there are good chaparral patches. Viva La Chaparral! (ask any Blue-gray Gnatcatcher or California Towhee).

An **Ash-throated Flycatcher** was found in the Little Applegate Apr. 20. (MH) A **Western Kingbird** showed up in Ashland on Oak St. Apr. 13 with many more over the next week. (KMc)

A **Cassin's Vireo** was along Wagner Creek Apr. 17. (KM) A **Warbling Vireo** was near Ashland Pond Apr. 23. (DB)

Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were abundant during a hike along the East Applegate Ridge Trail Apr. 11. (PT) Two **House Wrens** were at the OSU Extension on Hanley Rd. Apr. 11. (MC) The **CALIFORNIA THRASHER** returned to the 855 Holton Rd. site and was spotted Mar. 29. Truly a drive-by bird if one rolls down the window. The E. Antelope Rd. **Sage Thrasher** was spotted again Apr. 12. (JK)

Townsend's Solitaires have been moving onto breeding territory in our local forests.

The third week in April saw an uptick in **Hermit Thrush** as more birds are moving through our area. Listen for some of the first breeders to start singing their hauntingly beautiful song during the crepuscular hours.

Two **Evening Grosbeaks** were along Little Applegate Rd. Apr. 18. (MH) **Cassin's Finch** are returning to higher elevations with at least 10 observed on Mt. Ashland Apr. 24. (FL)

A **Grasshopper Sparrow** was near Gardner Rd. Apr. 21. (BH) **Chipping Sparrows** are beginning to be seen widely in our area the last two weeks. As their songs are quite similar to Oregon Junco, it is fun to do a blind-fold test when in an area where both are singing. A few different **White-crowned Sparrow** subspecies move through our area, as Alex Lamoreaux posted about recently on RV birds. Thick-billed **Fox Sparrows**, which breed in the mountains here, are beginning to move in as Sooty Fox Sparrows, a visiting winter bird, move out. A Thick-billed Fox Sparrow was spotted in the Colestin Apr. 24. (KM) **Vesper Sparrows** are back. Jeanine Moy from Vesper Meadows reported 18 on Apr. 19.

A **Yellow-breasted Chat** was along Little Butte Cr. Apr. 23. (JK) A **Bullock's Oriole** was spotted outside Ruch and in Ashland Apr. 20. (AG, KMc) A male **Yellow-headed Blackbird** was at Ave. G ponds along with a male **Great-tailed Grackle** Apr. 22. (AL)

The warblers are returning! There has been a good movement of **Orange-crowned Warblers** recently. A dozen were spotted at the south end of Emigrant Lake Apr. 22. (FL) A **Nashville Warbler** was seen near Grizzly Peak trail Apr. 13 and above Ashland near the Granite St. Reservoir Apr. 16. (LP.KMc) A **MacGillivray's Warbler** was along Tolman Creek Rd. Apr. 21. (RK) Three **Common Yellowthroats** were at Ashland Pond Apr. 03. (KSi) A **Yellow Warbler** was at North Mountain Park Apr. 21. (JH)



Nashville Warbler
Credit: Frank Lospalluto

A **Black-throated Gray Warbler** was along Little Butte Creek Apr. 13. (BH) Five **Hermit Warblers** were in the forest around Wagner Creek Apr. 19. (KM) A **Townsend's Warbler** was on BLM lands in the Little Applegate Apr. 24. (MH) A **Wilson's Warbler** was near Agate Rd. Apr. 15. (HS)

A **Western Tanager** was along Little Applegate Rd. Apr. 17. (MH) A **Black-headed Grosbeak** was in Gold Hill Apr. 12. (MR) A **Lazuli Bunting** was spotted along Hamilton Rd. in Ruch Apr. 21. (AG)

Thanks to all who contributed sightings including: Janet Kelly, Bob Hunter, Andrew Partin, Howard Sands, Gary Shaffer, Vince Zauskey, Alex Lamoreaux, Anne Goff, Marion Hadden, Sammie Peat, Karl Schneck, Matt Cahill, Rene Allen, Kristi Mergenthaler, Lauren diBiccari, Kate Sipfle, Kate McKenzie, Maggie Rackley, Peter Kreisman, Linda Kreisman, Karen Sublette, Dick Ashford, and Dorsey Burger.

All errors and omissions are my own. Peace.

The Conservation Column

By Pepper Trail

Well, this has been a beautiful spring, hasn't it? Except for being too dry, and – oh, yes – the COVID-19 pandemic and the suspension of just about every normal activity. Well, even if organized field trips have been canceled, we can still take joy in solitary (or carefully socially-distanced) birding. I hope you are all getting out and celebrating the beauty and freedom of birds – I certainly have been.

Environmentally, the pandemic has provided a global respite from pollution, as burning of fossil fuels has precipitously declined. And there have been lots of stories of wildlife appearing in urban spaces that are now empty of people. Beyond that, I'm sorry to say I was unable to find positive conservation news for this month's column. Instead...

Environmental Mischief Under the Cover of the Coronavirus

Anyone following the news knows that the Administration's response to the coronavirus crisis has been disastrously delayed, contradictory, and just plain incompetent. But rather than focus all the government's resources on the pandemic, the Administration has used this period to continue its relentless rollback of environmental regulations. A good summary is here: <https://grist.org/politics/trump-is-sneaking-environmental-rollbacks-past-a-nation-in-quarantine/>

Here are a few specific examples of Administration actions since March:

Suspended enforcement of environmental rules, allowing powerplants, factories, and other facilities to determine for themselves if they are able to meet legal requirements on reporting air and water pollution (<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/26/climate/epa-coronavirus-pollution-rules.html>)

Finalized a rollback of fuel economy standards, that according the Administration's own calculations, will add almost a billion more tons of greenhouse gases emitted over the next five years (<https://www.vox.com/energy-and-environment/2020/4/2/21202509/trump-climate-change-fuel-economy-standards-coronavirus-pandemic-peak>)

Rolled back regulations limiting deadly emissions of mercury from power plants (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2020/04/16/epa-overhauls-mercury-pollution-rule-despite-opposition-industry-activists-alike/>)

Rejected stricter regulations on emissions of fine particulates, despite overwhelming evidence linking such pollutants to increased mortality from respiratory diseases like COVID-19 (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2020/04/14/epa-pollution-coronavirus/>)

Monsters That Will Not Die: The Pacific Connector Pipeline and Jordan Cove LNG Terminal

Meanwhile, in the midst of the global coronavirus pandemic and national health emergency, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) conditionally approved the Jordan Cove LNG export terminal and Pacific Connector fracked gas pipeline on March 19. The approval is conditioned on Pembina, the Canadian fossil fuel corporation behind the project, qualifying for critical permits from the state of Oregon, three of which have already been denied or withdrawn.

At a press conference following the announcement, FERC Chairman Neil Chatterjee stated, "[Jordan Cove LNG's] certification does include provisions to file documentation that it has received all applicable authorizations before construction begins on the pipeline."

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"It is outrageous that in this time of crisis, when many people cannot even leave their homes safely, the Federal Government is prioritizing a fracked gas pipeline and export terminal that local communities and the State of Oregon have firmly said no to," said Sandy Lyon, an impacted landowner in Douglas County. "Pembina can now attempt to use eminent domain against Oregon landowners, but construction cannot begin without state approval. We will stand firm against this project and we are counting on Oregon to do the same."



Coos Bay wetlands, courtesy USFWS

This decision led to some of the strongest opposition against the project from our elected officials to date, including from Senator Wyden and Governor Kate Brown. Governor Brown's statement concluded:

"I want to reiterate that I will not stand for any attempt to ignore Oregon's authority to protect public safety, health, and the environment. I have asked the state's lawyers to consider all appropriate legal action to assure that Oregon permitting processes will be followed. And let me be clear to the concerned citizens of Southwest Oregon: until this project has received every single required permit from state and local agencies, I will use every available tool to prevent the company from taking early action on condemning private property or clearing land."

Oregon controls state-owned lands and waters that would be affected by this project and has permitting authority under the Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, and Coastal Zone Management Act. After 15 years, Jordan Cove LNG has failed to qualify for any of the necessary state permits to dredge Coos Bay for an LNG export terminal and to trench across Oregon for a 230-mile fracked gas pipeline, threatening harm to tribal resources, private landowners, drinking water, and fishing grounds along the way.

"Pembina has been unable to secure any of the necessary state permits to build in Oregon because there's no getting around the fact that this project would pose an unacceptable threat to Oregon's communities and waterways and is clearly not in the public interest. It's disappointing that FERC failed to recognize this, and we plan to seek a rehearing on this misguided decision," said Sierra Club Senior Attorney Nathan Matthews. "Regardless, FERC's approval does nothing to change the fact that this fracked gas export terminal has no path forward and will never be built."

"FERC's approval does not change the fact that Oregon has denied this project. Pembina will never be able to show the state of Oregon that this project qualifies for permits under state laws that protect our communities," said Hannah Sohl, Executive Director of Rogue Climate, a southern Oregon community organization. "Oregonians from across the political spectrum will continue to stand united until Pembina cancels the proposed fracked gas pipeline and export terminal for good."

Following this decision, there was a 30-day window to appeal for a rehearing at FERC, and on April 20, the Klamath Tribes, impacted landowners, and over 25 organizations came together to respond to FERC's approval of the Jordan Cove LNG proposal. This rehearing request told FERC that they wrongly approved the Jordan Cove LNG export terminal and fracked gas pipeline and asked them to reconsider their decision. More rehearing requests have been filed, including from the State of Oregon, the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians, and the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians. These rehearing requests are an important first step towards challenging the federal approval of the Jordan Cove LNG project in court.

"Evidence in the record clearly indicates this Canadian gas project is anything but in the U.S. public interest," said Ron Schaaf, whose Klamath County land is on the pipeline route. "On behalf of landowners defending our rights, this decision will be challenged. Every American who cares about private property and state's rights should be paying attention to the facts of this case."

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Following FERC's conditional approval, Susan Jane Brown, Public Lands and Wildlife Director and staff attorney at the Western Environmental Law Center (WELC) stated, "The state has made clear this climate-destroying project will be too dangerous for Oregonians' clean water and air. If the federal administration sees fit to ram this project through against Oregonians' will, WELC and our allies are prepared to defeat the project in or out of the courtroom again."

Over 40,000 people sent comments to FERC opposing Jordan Cove LNG, and hundreds showed up in opposition at public hearings in Coos, Douglas, Jackson, and Klamath counties last summer.

[Thanks to Rogue Climate and the Sierra Club for information in this summary.]

New Cartoon Invites Us Into a Bird's Life

By Brandon Breen

A new cartoon series produced by the Ashland-based Mindful Birding Project and the Morrissey Family Foundation called *Bird Alert!* is now available. The series aims to entertain while highlighting the myriad ways humans often unwittingly make life more difficult for their avian neighbors. It skillfully introduces ethical birding guidelines and the practice of mindfulness among birders.

Mindful Birding is a charitable project of the Morrissey Family Foundation that presents ethical birding guidelines from around the world, and offers awards to birding festivals that advance nature conservation and demonstrate improved or superior ethics. The project has three goals: (1) increase the conservation contributions from America's birdwatchers, (2) increase awareness of ethical birding guidelines, and (3) encourage a practice of mindfulness among birders.

Season 1 of *Bird Alert!* is available on YouTube and can be viewed through the Mindful Birding homepage: www.mindfulbirding.org.



BIRDCENTRIC EVENTS FROM AROUND THE REGION

Due to COVID-19 and Governor Brown's orders, and to encourage adherence to recommendations for social distancing, we have suspended our listing of events for the time being.

City of Ashland Parks and Recreation:

Due to COVID-19 and social distancing measures in place, many of our events may need to be canceled or postponed. Please check <http://ashland.or.us/events> often as we navigate our 2020 Summer Events Schedule.

Wild Birds Unlimited:

The Wild Birds Unlimited Medford store is closed to foot traffic, and the regular talks and walks are canceled through May. However, WBU is still open for curbside pickup and online orders. Everyone can continue to feed their birds! Just call the store with a credit card number and they will have your order ready for you when you arrive to pick up or order online at mywbu.com/medford for either pick up at store or delivery to your door. Stay safe and healthy!

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"American Crow"
Louis Agassiz Fuertes
Courtesy USFWS



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