

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

*Deadline for the November issue is October 20*



## OCTOBER Program

Tuesday, Oct. 27 at 7:00 pm

### Resilient Forests for Nature & People of the Rogue Valley

Presented by **DARREN BORGAS**

Darren Borgas, Southwestern Oregon Forest Conservation Director for The Nature Conservancy (TNC), will give a Zoom presentation and invite dialogue about “Resilient Forests for Nature and People of the Rogue Valley”.



Darren Borgas has guided TNC protection and restoration work in the Rogue Valley since 1987, with projects spanning the Table Rocks, vernal pools, grasslands, oak and pine woodland, unique serpentine habitats, and dry forests ringing the valley. Since 2004, Darren has focused on expanding the partnership of local and regional groups and agencies supporting proactive forest restoration and controlled burning. Darren has additionally

helped to advance a 20-year strategy to restore resiliency to forests which once again may be sustained by “mild” fire that works for nature and people. (See Zoom instructions on page 2).

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## September Program continued from page 1

### Zoom instructions

The October chapter meeting will be live on Zoom on Oct. 27. If you already signed up for the last meeting, you won't need to sign up again. To sign up for the first time, attendees will need to register by Oct. 25 via a new mail-ing list created just for RVAS Zoom events. Click on this link ([https:// www.roguevalleyaudubon.org/zoom-signup/](https://www.roguevalleyaudubon.org/zoom-signup/)) to register. After you register, you will be sent an email with the Zoom link on Oct 26 and again on the day of the event.

Please check your junk mail as the messages can end up there. Contact RVAS via the website if you don't receive the link on the stated dates.

If you are new to using Zoom, OLLI has helpful information about using Zoom at <https://inside.sou.edu/olli/courses/index.html>.

### Reminder: RVAS Birding Field Trips

The RVAS board met in early August and voted to suspend all field trips until further notice due to the COVID -19-19 pandemic. Suspended trips include the First Wednesday Walks at Denman Wildlife Area. Nate Trimble, our field trip committee chair, pointed out several factors that make field trips potentially unsafe at this time, and also noted current Oregon's rule that limit groups to 10 people.

We look forward to birding with our friends again when the COVID-19 circumstances improve. In the meantime, we encourage our members to continue their own birding adventures with their households or quarantine bubbles.

**NOTE:** Until RVAS can safely resume field trips and other in-person events, we will not advertise in-person events for other organizations. We look forward to the resumption of our pre-COVID bird-related fun!

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.

**NOTE:** Until further notice, chapter meetings will be held on Zoom.

### Status of upcoming events

Field trips - Suspended until further notice

October Chapter Meeting - Oct 27 @ 7pm

## Letter from the Board

Well, now that traveling around the world is pretty much verboten, birding in exotic locations has become the stuff of dreams. What if I told you there was a way you could bird in exotic locations right from your couch (or bed, or bathroom, or wherever else you're computing from for hours these days)? Well, you can. You can #BirdTheFeckAtHome!

If you're not familiar, there is a Facebook group called #BirdTheFeckAtHome (substitute a naughty Irish word in place of a naughty English word) which encourages people from around the world to share the birds they see in their backyards. You need only two things: a love of birds and a good sense of humor.

Started by Australian birder Ed Williams to combat the banality of COVID-19 lockdowns and travel restrictions, the Facebook group has amassed over 7,200 members since its debut in March. Its mission: "To find, share and celebrate as many birds as possible in our gardens around the world, and keep smiling! We need to encourage everyone to stay home and help bring COVID-19 under control."

Many members contribute wonderful photographs of their backyard birds, which may seem quite exotic to us but are "backyard trash" to them. Our quite common Steller's Jays may be very exciting to someone in Indonesia or Nepal! And yes, there are members in both places.



Over 4,000 species have been checked off of the world list. Occasionally, there are bird Olympics and recently, the Superb Lyrebird won the title "Feckest of Them All." There is also an online shop where you can purchase #btfah merchandise and monies are donated to Birdlife International.

For bird lovers, it's a great place to spend a portion of your day. Now, go join, and decide if you are #teamshoebill or #teamlyrebird or #teamcactuswren!

Erin Ulrich  
RVAS Secretary

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## Ashland Pond After the Fire

By Juliet Grable

As most of you probably know, the Alameda Fire impacted much of the Bear Creek Greenway between Ashland and Medford and destroyed or damaged much of the vegetation around Ashland Pond. The pond, a favorite of local birders, has been the focus of restoration efforts since 2008. Over the years, hundreds of kids from Helman Elementary School, guided by Lomakatsi, have helped remove blackberries and plant native trees and shrubs. RVAS had recently installed a bench at the pond. It is difficult to see this beloved spot so compromised.

As of this writing, the area is closed. Before the sign was posted, a few birders were able to survey the damage and post reports on the rvbirds Google Group. Kristi Mergenthaler, stewardship director for Southern Oregon Land Conservancy, reports that most of the restoration plantings, including the young pines, appear to be dead. A few of the white oaks and larger ponderosa pines may survive, but she is concerned that riparian trees are generally not adapted to intense fires.

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### *Ashland Pond After the Fire continued from page 3*

“It’s hard to look at a high-severity fire in a remnant riparian area,” she wrote to me in an email, listing several issues that she hopes will be at the center of any restoration plan for Ashland Pond and the Bear Creek riparian zone going forward:

First, she advocates for the retention of as many snags as possible, especially large cottonwoods, for wildlife habitat. This may be a challenge, as many people will likely view them as hazard snags and call for their removal. Second, we should be aware of the double risk posed by non-native Himalayan blackberry. Not only does this invasive plant shade out the next generation of streamside trees and reduce biodiversity, it is highly flammable. When ignited, blackberry canes can quickly carry flames into the canopy. Riparian zone hardwood trees such as ash, alder, and cottonwood have thin bark and are not very well adapted to intense wildfires such as the Alameda Fire. English ivy, while not as common, also serves as a wick into the canopy when allowed to vine high into trees.

Our streamside forests are already much more narrow, fragmented and compromised than they used to be, Kristi told me. This further loss of floodplain forests and bottomland habitat is truly a blow.

Right now, Rogue Valley Sewer Services is focused on keeping toxic runoff out of the waterways. Rogue Riverkeeper is coordinating with a number of local agencies and organizations and will be leading restoration efforts once it is safe. It is my hope that RVAS can participate in these efforts. We will keep RVAS posted with any opportunities.

**NOTE:** On Sunday, September 20, a sign was posted at the Ashland Pond entrance from Glendower warning that the area is closed due to hazardous conditions. Birders shouldn’t attempt to access Ashland Pond until the closure is lifted.



View of Ashland Pond taken from Jackson County Sheriff’s helicopter flyover shortly after the fire.  
Credit: Alameda Fire Flyover, Jackson County Sheriff’s Office



## Field Notes for Jackson County September 2020

By Frank Lospalluto

*This is the moment when you see again  
the red berries of the mountain ash  
and in the dark sky  
the birds' night migrations.  
-- Louise Gluck*

The last few weeks have been hellish to say the least in a rather hellish year. A brief respite of rain now as our winter birds arrive.

**Greater White-fronted Geese** are beginning to move with two hundred spotted over Emigrant Lake Sep 22. (VZ) Ducks are starting to appear more regularly in reports from visits to area lakes. American Wigeon, Gadwall, Northern Pintail and Ruddy Ducks all have been seen over the last few weeks. Water levels are quite low everywhere however. Four **Cinnamon Teal** were on Kirtland Ponds Sep 01. (RN) Twenty-seven **Northern Shovelers** were on Whetstone Pond Sep 22. (MG)

Nine **Gadwall** were on Emigrant Lake Sep 03. (MMc) Nine **American Wigeon** were on Ashland Pond Sep 20. (KS) Twenty-four **Northern Pintail** were on Howard Prairie Lake Aug 27. Large Northern Pintail flocks start moving through about the same time as we start seeing Greater White-fronted Geese. Two **Hooded Mergansers** were in the Holy Waters below Lost Creek Dam Sep 05. (RA) A Baker's Dozen of **Common Mergansers** were on Lost Creek Lake Sep 20. (JK) Five **Ruddy Ducks** were on Agate Lake Sep 24. (GS)

A single **Horned Grebe** graced Agate Lake Sep 18 along with five **Western Grebe**. (JK) A lone **Eared Grebe** was at Lost Creek Lake Sep 20. (JK)

Forty **Band-tailed Pigeons** were below Mt. Ashland feeding on elderberries Sep 14; elderberries are a favorite food source in late summer and early autumn for many bird species. Many other reports of Band-tailed Pigeons have been coming in as they are flocking up and starting to move south into central and southern California for the winter, though some do overwinter in our area.

A **Common Poorwill** was seen and heard on lower Mt. Ashland Ski Rd. Sep 07. (FL)  
**Vaux's Swifts** have been migrating for weeks now

and large numbers have been roosting in the Hedrick Middle School Chimney. Two thousand were reported on Sep 22.

**Rufous Hummingbirds** continue moving through southern Oregon; one was at a feeder in the Little Apple-gate Sep 23. (MH) And of course **Anna's Hummingbirds** continue, so keep those feeders up through the winter if you can as some do stay.



Common Tern  
Credit: Karl Schneck

Fifty **American Coot** were on Lost Creek Lake Sep 20, as their numbers should increase exponentially on area lakes. (JK)

A single **Black-bellied Plover** was on Medco A flat at Lost Creek Lake Sep 20. (JK) **Baird's Sandpipers** continue to be found with one at Agate Lake Sep 23. (JK) **Pectoral Sandpipers** have also continued with one at the Medco A flats Sep 20. (JK) Thirteen **Long-billed Dowitchers** along with 10 **Greater Yellowlegs** were at Agate Lake Sep 24. (GS) A single **Lesser Yellowlegs** was seen at Agate Sep 07 (AG) and a single was at Jackson County sports Park along Kershaw Rd. Sep 24. (GS)

Two **Red-necked Phalaropes** were at Kirtland Ponds Sep 20 (BH) and two **Wilson's Phalaropes** were there Sep 24. (GS)

Seven **Caspian Terns** were at Agate Lake Sept 19. (FE, JC) A **COMMON TERN** was spotted at Emigrant Lake by a couple of out of town birders, Nicholas and Maureen, Sept 05. Four **Forster's Terns** were diving into Lost Creek Lake Aug 29. (FL) Lake Sep 19.

*Field Notes continued on page 6*

### *Field Notes continued from page 5*

Two **American Bitterns** were at Denman WMA Aug 30. (JH) Eight **Great Egrets** were reported from Emigrant Lake Sep 19.

**Turkey Vultures** are flocking up and starting to bid adieu with close to 50 birds kettling at the south end of Emigrant Lake and 21 noted moving over an Ashland residence Sep 19. (NT, VL) A lone **Northern Harrier** was seen floating over Siskiyou summit heading south Sep 19. (VL) It is the time of year when a lot of first fall accipiters, both **Sharp-shinned** and **Cooper's**, can be seen as they migrate. Accipiters hunt songbirds, and where there is good songbird activity an accipiter can't be far behind. A juvenile **Northern Goshawk** was seen along the PCT by Mt. Ashland in late Aug. (KMc) A **Ferruginous Hawk** was photographed over a yard on North Valley View Rd. Aug 27. (KS)

**Great Horned Owls** are hooting with more regularity in the early mornings and at night.



**Sage Thrasher**  
Credit: Janet Kelly

Thirty-six **Lewis's Woodpeckers** were seen flying over Vesper Meadow Sep 04. (JM) They are starting to be seen more regularly as they return to and seek wintering habitat in the oaks. There was an interesting sighting on ebird of a **White-headed Woodpecker** near Trail not far from the Rogue River on Sep 04. (PK) **Northern Flickers** are migrating now. Some of our breeding birds may move south into California as birds from further north move into our area. Winter is a good opportunity to perhaps see a Yellow-shafted Flicker though hybrids are very common so caution is advised. Review your field guides and happy flicker watching!

A **Merlin** was over North Valley View Sep 17. (KS) A **Prairie Falcon** was seen strafing the ground at Emigrant Lake both Sep 07 and 23. (RA, SP) Another was

seen Sep 05 near Agate Rd. in Eagle Point Sep 05.

An **Olive-sided Flycatcher** stopped in Medford on its way south Sep 14. (SS) A single **Western Wood- Pewee** was calling in Lithia Park Sep 26. (MS) It is getting late to see either of these flycatchers. A **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** was in Ashland during the Great Fall Migration Big sit Sep 19. (NT) A **Say's Phoebe** was in the Little Applegate Sep 23. Say's Phoebes along with **Black Phoebe** are seen throughout the winter in our region. Two **Ash-throated Flycatchers** were visiting Ousterhout Farm Sep 20. (BH) Two **Western Kingbirds** were at Agate Lake Sep 02. (BF)

**Hutton's Vireos** are year round residents but not often reported after mid summer. One was in the Pioneer Hills Sep 26. (JK) **Cassin's Vireo** and **Warbling Vireo** are migrating through to warmer climes for the winter. One of each was found in Cantrall –Buckley Park Sep 21. (AG)

A **Black-billed Magpie** was over N. Valley View Rd Sep 18. (KS) They are sometimes seen up near the Ashland Transfer Station on Valley View Rd.

Swallows are leaving us. **Violet-green Swallows** and **Barn Swallows** have been spotted in larger numbers as they flock up to leave. One hundred Violet-greens were over Agate Lake Sep 19. (FE)

**Ruby-crowned Kinglets** are returning to our area as many pass through headed south, and some do stay. One was up on Mt. Ashland Sep 11. Learn their harsh scold call and look for the small fast moving bird with golden feet.

Three **Rock Wrens** were seen on the dam at Agate Lake Sep 19, a spot they can be found year round. Amazingly an adult was seen feeding a juvenile. (JC) **House Wrens** are still lingering with a bird near Siskiyou Summit Sep 22.

The Talent **CALIFORNIA THRASHER** was ticked at the stakeout by out of town birders Sep 05. A likely hatch year **SAGE THRASHER** was found along Dry Creek Rd. Aug 31. (JK)

**Swainson's Thrush** have been migrating in good numbers all month through western Oregon. Small numbers move through Jackson County. Six were seen in the morning near Siskiyou Summit Sep 13. (FL) **Hermit Thrush** have also been migrating, and there are many who will winter in our area.

*Field Notes continued on page 7*

### *Field Notes continued from page 6*

**American Pipits** have returned to our area with 50 birds at Agate Lake Sept 18. (JK) Sixty-five were on the Emigrant Lake flats Sep 19.

Ten **Chipping Sparrows** were at Emigrant Lake Sept 14. (FE) Two **Brewer's Sparrows** were at Denman Sep 01. (JH) Sooty Fox Sparrow have been migrating through our area the last week or two and many will spend the winter here. **White-crowned Sparrows** and **Golden-crowned Sparrows** are back and being widely reported. **Lincoln's Sparrows** are moving through and being seen in the valley. Some will overwinter.

A **Yellow-breasted Chat** was reported from Denman Sep 02. (JH) Two **Tricolored Blackbirds** were at Agate Lake Sep 6. (FE) A **Yellow-headed Blackbird** surprised an observer at a pond near Coleman Creek Sep 26. (JK)

Seemingly a steady stream of warblers have been moving through these last weeks. **Orange-crowned Warblers** are among the most regular, though in small numbers compared to the wave of **Yellow-rumped Warblers** that pass through. Many Yellow-rumps will overwinter with a scattering of Orange-crowned. Two **Nashville Warblers** were at North Mountain Park Sep 06.

(LW) Three **MacGillivray's Warblers** were skulking near Siskiyou Summit Sep 22. (FL) Eight **Common Yellowthroats** and six **Yellow Warblers** were at the south end of Emigrant Lake near the Old Siskiyou Highway Sep 23. (FL) Four **Black-throated Gray Warblers** were in Ashland during the Big Sit Sep 19. (NT) A **Townsend's Warbler** was spotted in the Little Applegate Sep 26. (MH) Three **Hermit Warblers** were near Mt. Ashland Sep 18. Most Hermit Warblers have left us now. A **Wilson's Warbler** was on Ousterhout Farm Sep 17. (BH)

**Western Tanagers** are being seen widely. Six were reported from Ousterhout Farm Sep 20. A few **Black-headed Grosbeaks** are being detected. A single bird was observed during the Big Sit in Ashland Sep 19. (LK)

Thank you to all observers including: Rene Allen, Jon Cox, Forrest English, Janet Kelly, Anne Goff, Bob Hunter, Jim Hostick, Bill Feusahrens, Gary Shaffer, Nate Trimble, Linda Kreisman, Kate Sipfle, Pepper Trail, Vince Zauskey, Sammie Peat, Linda Winslow, Peter Kappes, Nicholas Martens, Maureen Leong- Kee, Andre Carvalhaes, Kristi Mergenthaler, Howard Sands, Marion Hadden, Stephanie Sabin, Karl Schneck, and Kate McKenzie.

All errors and omissions are my own. Peace.

### Participate in the First Annual Global Bird Weekend!

Bird nerds near and far, mark your calendars for the first ever Global Bird Weekend taking place October 17 & 18 2020! Global Birding, in association with Bird Life International, eBird, and Swarovski Optik, have initiated this new event to encourage birders around the world to stay COVID-safe and minimize their carbon footprints by enjoying the birds in their own local parks, backyards, and communities. This weekend also includes eBird's October Big



Day on Saturday Oct. 17, with a goal of 25,000 birders contributing sightings of at least 6,000 species to eBird, making it the biggest global big day in history during the peak of fall migration. In addition to getting those good feels that come with contributing to an important citizen-science effort, registrants will be entered to win some amazing prizes, including a pair of coveted Swarovski binoculars. Won't that impress your birding crew when you all reunite after the lockdown!

To participate, just grab your binoculars and get out there! But first, register for an eBird account at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology [website](https://ebird.org). During the 24 hour period of Oct. 17, you can record all your birding checklist as you go via the eBird mobile app (to download, visit your phone's app store), or submit your checklist at the end of the day on the eBird website at <https://ebird.org/submit>. You can also upload images of your bird sightings and favorite local birding spots to eBird's dedicated Global Bird Weekend page (<https://ebird.org/octoberbigday>), and share them on social media with the hashtags #octoberbigday, #globalbirdweekend, and #globalbirding.

Learn more about the Global Bird Weekend by visiting the event website (<https://globalbirding.org/>) and the eBird October Big Day site (<https://ebird.org/news/october-big-day-2020-bigger-than-ever>). You can also learn more about the global conservation work of BirdLife International at their website (<http://www.birdlife.org/>).

## The Conservation Column

### By Pepper Trail

As I write this, we are all struggling to come to terms with the effects of the Alameda Fire. My deepest sympathy to all who have lost homes or businesses in the fire. Recovery of the towns of Talent and Phoenix will take many years. The fire also devastated a large section of the Bear Creek Greenway, stretching from Ashland Pond to Blue Heron Park in Phoenix. The affected Greenway is currently closed due to hazardous conditions, so the full extent of the ecological damage isn't yet clear. The fire burned quickly through some areas, giving hope that some large trees, though scorched, may have survived. And there are patches of the riparian forest that appear untouched in aerial photographs. But there is no question that the canopy that shades Bear Creek and provides habitat for species like Bullock's Oriole and Warbling Vireo has been torn apart. The brush that harbors Yellow-breasted Chats, Wrentits, and Song Sparrows has been reduced to ash in many places – though this will recover more quickly.

I have received many questions about how wildfires and smoke affect birds, and I have seen no better summary of information on this topic than this recent post from National Audubon Society, which we reprint here.

#### How Wildfires Affect Birds

*Big burns are natural, but climate change could make especially destructive fire seasons the new normal.*

This year's fire season in the western United States still has months to go, and already several fires have shattered records. In just three days, 900,000 acres have burned in Oregon. "We have never seen this amount of uncontained fire across the state," said Governor Kate Brown on Thursday. More than 2 million acres have burned since mid-August in California, where the complex of blazes known as the August fire is the largest in the state's history, so far scorching 788,880 acres across Mendocino and Humboldt counties.

Unearthly orange skies and smoky days devoid of birdsong are side effects of this unprecedented season. At least 17 people have died, with more expected as rescue workers search burned homes. In Oregon alone, some 500,000 people—more than 1 in 10 state residents—are under evacuation warning. Wildfire smoke can cause respiratory issues that make people more prone to lung infections such as COVID-19, according to the CDC, and disproportionately affects already vulnerable people including those with chronic illness (e.g. heart or lung disease), children, older adults, low-income communities, and communities of color.

While wildfires are a part of natural cycles in the western United States, climate change makes every wildfire that sparks more likely to rapidly grow and spread. Like melting glaciers and rising seas, larger fires and longer fire seasons are among the predicted effects of climate change that are now coming to pass. Rising temperatures and shifting rainfall patterns already threaten two-thirds of North American bird species with extinction, so it's worth exploring how this symptom of a hotter planet will affect birds.

**What do birds do when wildfires break out?** No surprise here: They fly away. A fire might kill weak birds or, depending on the time of year, claim nestlings. At least in the Western forests that U.S. Forest Service research biologist Vicki Saab studies, birds evolved alongside fire and flee in the face of conflagrations. "Historically, I think direct mortality was likely minor," she says. But they might not be able to outrun the larger, more destructive fires we're now experiencing due to climate change, she adds.

**How does wildfire smoke affect birds?** Assuming birds escape a fire, smoke might still affect their health in ways that aren't very well understood. "We do know that exposure to particulate matter, which of course is of great concern for human health, can affect birds as well," says Olivia Sanderfoot, a National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellow at the University of Washington Seattle who studies how air pollution affects birds. For example, veterinarians and poultry scientists who study captive birds have found that smoke can damage lung tissue and leave the animals susceptible to potentially lethal respiratory infections.

How that plays out in the wild is largely unknown, Sanderfoot says. Her current research aims to track changes in bird populations and diversity after exposure to smoke from large wildfires. In some cases, smoke inhalation might make it harder for birds to flee onrushing flames. Thick smoke, for instance, may have contributed to the deaths of

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*Conservation Column continued from page 8*

50 adult White Ibises during a 1999 fire in the Everglades, Sanderfoot reported in a recent paper. And some low-flying species might succumb to smoke inhalation or exhaustion before they can escape forest fires, according to the Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation.

**How do wildfires affect habitat, and do any birds benefit from blazes?** A little disturbance is a good thing for many species. In the dry, mixed-conifer forests Saab studies, most wildfires—even intense ones—burn unevenly, leaving behind a mosaic of habitat patches. “Fire definitely benefits a lot of bird species,” Saab says. “It’s not all doom and gloom.”

For a Black-backed Woodpecker, for example, a newly burned forest provides a smorgasbord. Bark- and wood-boring beetles arrive in droves and lay eggs in charred trees; woodpeckers feast when they reach the larval stage. There’s often an influx of other bugs, too, which draws aerial insectivores like Dusky Flycatchers and Mountain Bluebirds that hunt for mid-air meals in the new forest openings created by fire, Saab says. The patchwork of post-fire habitats also suits White-headed Woodpeckers and other species that nest in open areas but forage in unburned surrounding forests.



Other birds benefit from fires over the longer term. Kirtland’s Warbler, for instance, nests only in the fire-dependent jack pine forests of Michigan, Wisconsin, and Ontario. Jack pine cones are sealed tight with resin until fire opens them up, releasing the seeds and generating new warbler habitat. Red-headed Woodpeckers, which nest in the high limbs of dead trees, can see a local population boom after a fire devastates a patch of forest.

Blazes aren’t a boon for all avian species. Wildfire forces those that dwell in old-growth forests—including Pileated Woodpeckers, Townsend’s Warblers, and Golden-crowned Kinglets—to go in search of new places to nest and forage. It also poses a serious risk to a bird that faces plenty of other threats: the Greater Sage-Grouse. Fire in the sagebrush ecosystem—upon which this iconic species depends—often gives invasive plants such as cheatgrass and juniper a leg up on slower-growing sage, and they provide fuel for future fires.

**Do birds ever start wildfires?** When combined with electricity, yes. We’ve all seen birds perched harmlessly on power lines. But if they manage to touch two transmission lines at once, they form a circuit and get zapped. In two recent fires started by birds, hawks were carrying snakes. Chances are, those writhing meals-to-be touched the second power line, electrocuting dinner and diner both, and sparking the blaze below.

There are even credible claims that birds intentionally spread fires – at least in Australia. *Audubon* and other publications have covered anecdotal reports of northern Australia raptors picking up burning sticks and dropping them elsewhere on the arid landscape to flush out prey like lizards and snakes. No evidence of this in the U.S., though! **How big of a role does climate change play?** Researchers detect a changing climate’s fingerprints in recent fires, which may be just a glimpse of things to come. In northern California, for example, heavy winter rains in 2017 fueled a riot of new plant growth in the spring, but the summer’s record heat parched that vegetation, turning it to tinder. That’s part of a broader trend; in 2016, Columbia University scientists showed that climate change has doubled the area of the western U.S. affected by forest fires over the past three decades. “Climate is really running the show in terms of what burns,” one of that study’s authors said. “We should be getting ready for bigger fire years than those familiar to previous generations.”

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*Conservation Column continued from page 9*

What climate-charged fires will mean for birds is hard to say. “More and more, the past is becoming irrelevant as we advance to the no-analog future climate,” one researcher told *Audubon* in 2015. Saab, from the Forest Service, says she expects future fires to rearrange habitat types and the distribution of bird species. For now, the patchwork of habitat left behind by blazes helps maintain bird diversity in Western forests. “In the future?” she says, “I don’t know.”

Finally, just in case this is the last *Chat* you receive before November 3, let me remind you of the most important conservation action you can take this year: **VOTE!**



**It’s RVAS membership renewal time!**

**Please renew by OCT. 31.**



**Renewal time for RVAS Membership**

Mail check to: Rogue Valley Audubon, P. O.Box 8597, Medford, OR 97501 or join online at [www.roguevalleyaudubon.org](http://www.roguevalleyaudubon.org) using PayPal. Thanks for your continued support.

\_\_\_\_\_ \$20 Regular membership    \_\_\_\_\_ \$25 for paper newsletter    \_\_\_\_\_ Additional donation (amount)

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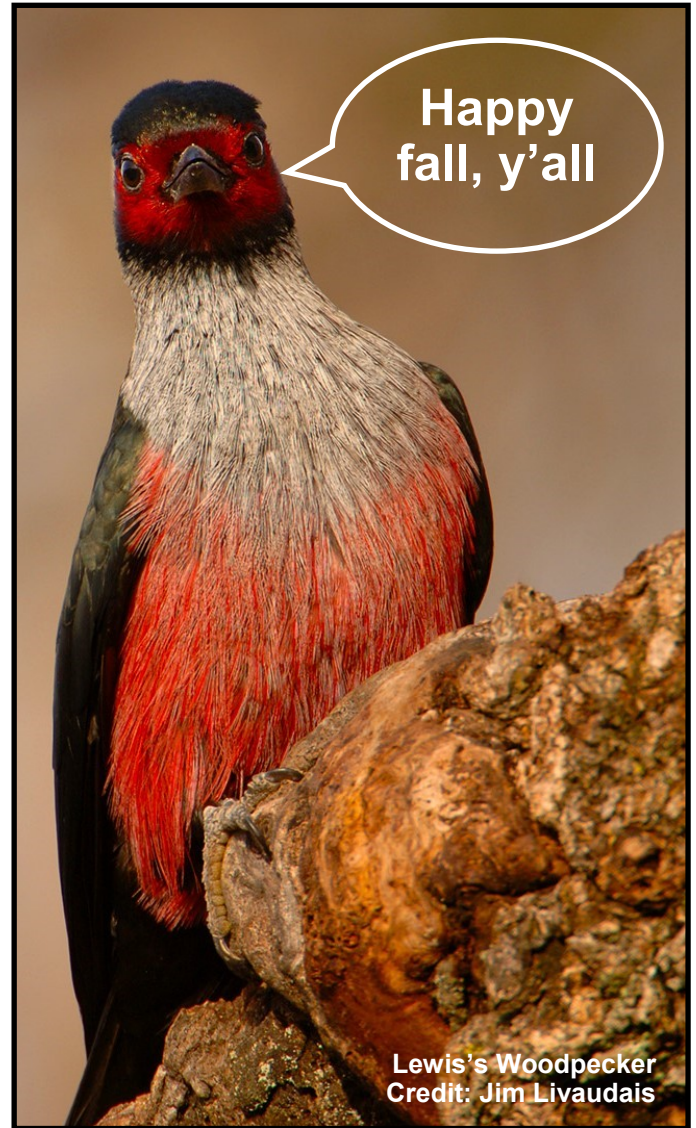
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