

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

*Deadline for the May issue is April 20*



## Virtual APRIL Program

**Tuesday, April 27 at 7:00 pm "Observation Point: Birding at the Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument"**

**Presented by GINA ROBERTI**

On May 18, 1980, a cataclysmic event occurred at Mount St. Helens as the north flank of the volcano slid off in one of the largest landslides in recorded history, unleashing a powerful eruption. This eruption buried 230 square miles of existing old-growth forest with hundreds of feet of volcanic debris. In some places closest to the crater of the volcano, almost no living organisms survived. Ash from the eruption blew across the United States and megatons of logs and volcanic debris clogged up rivers, lakes and streams. The eruption dramatically reshaped the landscape, creating a mosaic of habitat types that are now home to a diverse suite of birds.

In 1982, the Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument was designated to protect the land closest to the volcano as a place for research, recreation and education. Today, home to more than 80 species of nesting birds, the Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument offers unique birding opportunities.

Join us as we take a tour through the diverse mosaic of habitats created by the 1980 eruption and learn about where to see some of Mount St. Helens' signature birds. This interactive presentation will excite and prepare you for birdwatching in the Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument. Bring your questions and curiosities!

### About Gina

Gina Roberti is a geologist, naturalist and educator who grew up digging quahogs and exploring the shorelines of the Narragansett Bay in Rhode Island amidst ancient metamorphic rocks of the Appalachian Mountains. Since graduating from Brown University with a degree in Geology-Biology, Gina spent several years working as a geoscience educator in various geologic regions in the western U.S., including the Colorado Plateau, Snake River Plain, Klamath-Siskiyou, North Cascades, and presently in the active Cascade volcanic range with the Mount St. Helens Institute. When Gina is not working, she can be found on long walks or cross-country skis, often in the company of birds. Contact Gina at [gina.m.roberti@gmail.com](mailto:gina.m.roberti@gmail.com).



**Zoom instructions:** If you haven't registered for RVAS virtual programs you will need to do so. Once registered, you will receive a link with the virtual address for the meeting.

Click on this link to register: <https://www.roguevalleyaudubon.org/zoom-signup/>

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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.

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

## Bear Creek Community Bird Survey Update

By Nate Trimble

The Bear Creek Community Bird Survey is off to a fantastic start! The Rogue Valley Audubon Society, Klamath Bird Observatory, Rogue River Watershed Council, the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy, and the Rogue Valley birding community have joined forces to monitor bird populations in one of the most important pieces of lowland bird habitat in the Rogue Valley.

The Bear Creek Community Bird Survey is harnessing the years of experience and expertise of this area's many skilled birders to help this priceless urban greenspace and birding oasis recover from the 2020 fires. This survey, completed by 100% volunteer effort, will give a picture of how the fires themselves, the subsequent recovery, and human management changes are affecting the many birds that rely on this piece of riparian (riverside) habitat.

So far, volunteers have carried out bimonthly surveys at seven sites along the length of Bear Creek since the beginning of 2021. We have had complete coverage at all of our sites since the beginning of the survey, a testament to the passion and conservation ethic of the birders of this region. As of the writing of this, 91 species have been detected so far along Bear Creek, with many more likely once spring migration really kicks up. Some highlights so far are: Say's Phoebe, Peregrine Falcon, Greater Scaup, Golden Eagle, Wilson's Snipe, Cackling Goose, and Prairie Falcon. As expected, species associated with dense shrub cover and that were once common



*Bear Creek Surveys continued on page 3*

## Status of upcoming events

Field trips - Suspended until further notice  
April Chapter Meeting: Tues, Apr. 27th @ 7pm  
May picnic - Canceled  
May Birdathon - Canceled

### *Bear Creek Surveys continued from page 2*

winter residents, such as Song Sparrows and Spotted Towhees, have been encountered infrequently in areas that have been severely burned, while ground foragers such as American Robins and Dark-eyed Juncos are still quite numerous along most areas of Bear Creek.

As Spring sets in and more anthropomorphic and natural changes continue to occur along Bear Creek, this survey will provide a valuable look into how this time of rapid change is impacting the wildlife species that depend on Bear Creek, and will help managers make informed decisions that hopefully benefit both wildlife and human recreational use along the Bear Creek Greenway. In just a few short months, our partners have been able to work together to create a community science study in response to the environmental damage caused by the 2020 fires. Most of all, however, it is the Southern Oregon birding community that has stepped up to monitor and protect the birds and habitat they love. I want to extend a huge thank you to everyone who has volunteered so far. Let's keep up that energy and keep up the great work!

### **Letter from the Board**

At our March board meeting, several of our usual topics of late continued to be "When are we going to be able to start field trips again" and "Are we going to have the Birdathon this year?" The conclusion was still not yet.

Then, our discussion switched to what birding activities are occupying our time and interest. Carol Mockridge shared one of her highlights as virtually attending the Willamette Valley Birding Symposium on Jan. 23 via Zoom. Two days earlier, she had her left knee replaced so she wasn't going anywhere but her couch with a sack of ice. Carol thought she would watch for a while then probably doze off. But the event was so interesting and well-organized, she ended up watching the whole day. The topics varied widely, the speakers were concise, and she kept thinking "I can't believe I didn't know that" or "WOW!" A few of her favorites were about Black-backed Woodpeckers, wildlife rehab centers' research, and genital evolution in birds ("I'll never look at a Ruddy Duck the same way again.")

The symposium is available at: [https://media.oregonstate.edu/media/t/1\\_054np89w](https://media.oregonstate.edu/media/t/1_054np89w). You can view a table of contents by clicking the three horizontal lines in the top left corner of the video box.

Boardmember Susan Weaver Stone recommends the podcast The Science of Birds, by Ivan Phillipsen. It's a light-hearted, yet extremely informative podcast series about birds and their behaviors. There are 24 episodes, and the topics range from "How Birds Survive in Winter" to "Vision in Birds" to "Mixed Flocks." It's available on all the usual podcast sites.

Boardmember Erin Ulrich says "Alexa, play BirdNote." One of her favorite ways to get birdy at home is by listening to the BirdNote podcast. Each episode is approximately two minutes, so she can listen to many of them at once, or just one or two while she makes her coffee before work. For a more in-depth experience, she can go online to [birdnote.org](http://birdnote.org) and listen to a whole episode and also find more links related to the topic - as well as some wonderful photos.

We hope you enjoy these pleasant diversions, and all of the upcoming changes Spring brings into our lives.

Carol Mockridge, Susan Stone, and Erin Ulrich

Rogue Valley Audubon Society Board



## Field Notes for Jackson County

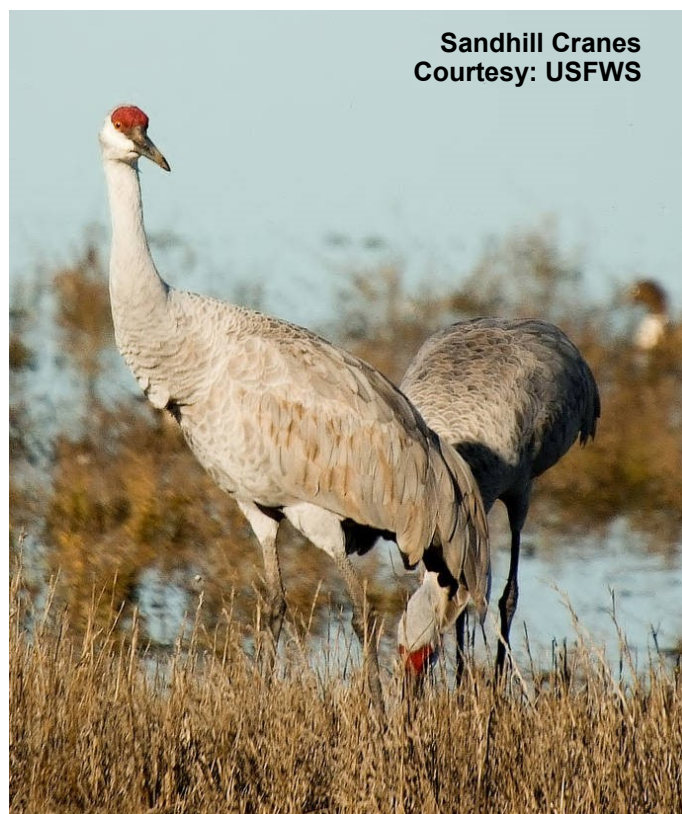
### March 2021

By Frank Lospalluto

*It started just now with a hummingbird  
Hovering over the porch two yards away  
then gone,  
Gary Snyder*

Spring has arrived as I write this month's notes, but March is fickle. We wait and watch. We listen.

Twenty **Tundra Swans** were still being seen in the pasture along Table Rock Rd. near the big bend below Lower Table Rock Mar 20 (RA, SP). A male **Eurasian Wigeon** was observed out on the slowly filling Emigrant Lake Mar 15 (VZ). A male **Redhead** was spotted out at a pond on the OSU Extension Property outside Jacksonville Feb 28 (MC) and another **Redhead** was seen in one of the ponds on Denman WMA along Touvelle Rd. Mar 14 (JL).



Sandhill Cranes  
Courtesy: USFWS

A **Ruffed Grouse** was observed outside Butte Falls by a Spotted Owl surveyor Mar 18 (HT). **Sooty Grouse** males are starting to feel it in our local forests and are becoming quite vocal. And the **Wild Turkeys** are gobbling and

displaying with real vigor (LF).

There have been multiple reports of **Anna's Hummingbird** females gathering nest materials and actually building since late Feb. A female was seen above Phoenix gathering spider web Feb 23 (JK) and one was seen pulling cattail tufts and working on a nest along Bear Creek Mar 13. **Rufous Hummingbirds** are back! One was visiting a feeder in Eagle Point Mar 02 (HS) and one was at the Rogue Valley Manor on the same day (AG). A plethora of sightings emerged in the following week from feeders near the Little Applegate to Antelope Creek (JK, MH, BH, EU, MC).

Three flocks of **Sandhill Cranes** with a total of 260 birds passed over Emigrant Lake Feb 28 (NB, JL, GS). A pair of dancing cranes was reported from the Howard Prairie area Mar 13 (DA). Pairs of Sandhill Cranes nest and dance up in the wet meadow up on the Indian Plateau area.

A **Black-bellied Plover** made a quick stop at Kirtland Ponds Mar 14 (JK). Many birders hope it marks the beginning of a species-rich parade of spring shorebird migrants. **Greater Yellowlegs** are moving through and becoming more conspicuous. Three were out at Emigrant Lake Mar 18 (VL) and five were at Agate Lake Mar 22 (JK).

Two **American White Pelicans** were out at Agate Lake Mar 15 (JL) and two were seen flying over Denman WMA Mar 17 (KS). This is a couple of weeks earlier than normally expected.

A **Green Heron** was again noted at Mingus Pond during the Bear Creek Community Bird Survey Feb 27 (NT), one was at North Mountain Park Mar 11 during another BCCBS, and one was at the south end of Emigrant Lake Mar 19 (VL).

**Turkey Vultures** have been zigzagging north this month. **Osprey** have returned as well. Two were spotted on a nest platform near Emigrant Lake Mar 08 (JL, GS). Many other observations around the area followed. **Red-shouldered Hawks** are beginning to nest, with much loud calling and pairs mating. A pair at North Mountain Park was seen doing just that March 11 (NR) and another pair near Lynn Newbry March 13 (MC). A **Rough-legged Hawk** was seen over Butler Creek Rd Mar 09 (BH).

A couple of **Williamson's Sapsuckers** have been reported of late, one was seen along Hyatt Prairie Rd. Mar 09 (JK) and one not far from Jenny Cr. Mar 07 (VL).

*Field Notes continued on page 5*

### *Field Notes continued from page 4*

**Red-breasted Sapsuckers** are conspicuous of late; four were along Jenny Creek Rd. Mar 11 (JL, GS) and three were at the Provolt Tree Farm in Josephine Co, Mar 19 (AG).

**Hutton's Vireos** are year-round residents in our area and are starting to be heard singing in the mixed conifer-hardwood forest where they nest. They love live oak so are found with some regularity in the Applegate. They tend to move around in winter and are often seen in riparian areas though basically they are non-migratory. Their song is two-parted and repetitive.

The **Loggerhead Shrike** near Whetstone Savannah was still being seen Mar 14 (TJ).

**Tree Swallows** are becoming more visible in the sky, swooping and swerving along with increased reports of **Violet-Green Swallows**. A lone **Barn Swallow** was seen over Kirtland Ponds Mar 23 (JL, GS). Two **Cliff Swallows** were spotted over the Rogue near the Table Rock Rd Bridge where there is a large colony annually (Mar 13). A flock of 39 Cliff Swallows was seen near Gold Hill Mar 17 (SA).

**Wrentits** have been singing the last couple of months along Bear Creek as many of the BCCBS surveyors will verify (more volunteers are welcome). **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** can be heard singing briefly on nicer early spring days as they forage and migrate north.

A lone **Pygmy Nuthatch** was observed near Jenny Creek Rd. Mar 07 (VL).

**Bewick's Wrens** have been singing vigorously in both chaparral ("we love chaparral" they sing!) and along the Bear Creek Greenway often in the dreaded Himalayan Blackberry. Though in the absence of native shrub habitat, blackberry patches do provide cover and structure.

Fifteen **American Pipits** were reported from Upper Table Rock Mar 02 (LH, MW). The Table Rocks are often a good location to see flocks of these birds during the late winter and early spring.

**Purple Finches** and **Cassin's Finches** are being seen and heard singing more frequently as birds are moving through and toward breeding grounds. **Pine Siskins** are still being reported in good numbers from numerous valley locations. A male **LAWRENCE'S GOLDFINCH** was seen and photographed at a feeder by Dale Fisher in Ashland Mar 23. This is a rare bird for Oregon with Jackson County being the area with most reports.

An uncommon vagrant **CLAY-COLORED SPARROW** found along the Bear Creek Greenway in Talent by Roxanna Tessman Mar 07 has delighted many birders. It was last seen Mar 23 in the same blackberry patch. A first of the season returning **Chipping Sparrow** was spotted in Lynn Newbry along Bear Creek Mar 23 (VL).



Clay-colored Sparrow  
Credit: Roxanna Tessman

We will leave it here, as I am past my deadline and the coming weeks promise a host of new migrants including many singing birds. Happy safe spring bird watching!

Thank you to everyone who contributed observations. This month's observers include: Jim Livaudais, Norm Barrett, Gary Shaffer, Janet Kelly, Jim Hostick, Sammie Peat, Rene Allen, Bob Hunter, Howard Sands, Tanner Martin, Kristi Mergenthaler, Pepper Trail, Roxanna Tessman, Leslie Hart, Anne Goff, Forrest English, Amanda Alford, Matt Cahill, Dave Garcia, Vince Zauskey, Mary Kay Wells, Erin Linton, Nick Viani, Sooney Viani, Erin Ulrich, Marion Hadden, Seth Ontiveros, Rebekah Bergkoetter, Shannon Rio, Vicki Fox, Dick Ashford, Nate Trimble, and Violet.

All errors and omissions are my own. Peace.

### **WE NEED YOU! (yes, you!!)**

RVAS is currently in search of two bird-lovin' humans to serve as our **Board President** and our **Program Chair**.

We can't keep doing what we do without these important positions. If you're interested, please contact Board President Carol Mockridge at 360-829-7505 or mockridge50@hotmail.com. And thanks!

## The Conservation Column

By Pepper Trail

As I discussed in last month's column, the arrival of a new administration in Washington means that conservation organizations can hope to advance an ambitious forward-looking agenda, rather than simply attempt to defend the victories of the past. Recently, the National Audubon Society and the American Bird Conservancy released the outlines of such an ambitious agenda, called "Bring Back Birds." Below, I provide an excerpt from the full article, which can be seen by cutting and pasting the link below into your browser.

<https://abcbirds.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/BringBirdsBackPolicies.pdf?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=a5ea61da-08fa-434f-b092-92fe410fb3d1>

### Bring Back Birds

The landmark study, "Decline of the North American Avifauna," published in 2019 in the journal *Science*, found that bird populations have declined by close to 3 billion birds since 1970, representing a 29% overall decline in 50 years. There are many historical and current causes of declining bird populations, including habitat loss, direct mortality due to industrial hazards, predation by cats, building collisions, and invasive species. In addition, a recent Audubon report found that two-thirds of North America's birds are gravely threatened by climate change.

There is urgent need to address these and other threats so as to avert continued catastrophic declines. Fortunately, the remarkable recovery of waterfowl populations, sustained now for decades, to say nothing of the endangered bird species returned from the brink of extinction, demonstrate that coordinated, sustained conservation action works.

Just as there is no single cause of declining migratory bird populations, there is no single policy solution, program or approach that will suffice. Instead, we need a suite of actions that foster on-the-ground protection, mitigation, and restoration of bird populations and the habitats they need to thrive. Audubon and the American Bird Conservancy have identified the following policy options to be considered by Congress and the Administration in 2021 and beyond. We welcome comments and suggestions on these ideas and we invite other organizations to endorse these concepts in principle, recognizing that these are not detailed proposals.

### Planning, Research and Evaluation

Reauthorize and amend the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act to provide additional direction for migratory bird conservation:

- Support national, regional, and flyway bird conservation planning and implementation
- Revitalize and enhance the Migratory Bird Data Center to support integrated assessments of bird populations by federal, state, and private partners
- Identify and report to Congress on lands and waters needed to conserve migratory birds, including in the Western Hemisphere and the East Asian-Australasian and Oceania flyway
- Evaluate implementation of international authorities and programs and develop a federal strategy and recommendations for international migratory bird conservation

### Engagement and Partnerships

Support Migratory Bird Joint Ventures and enhance project delivery and the ability to address the needs of all birds and all habitats:

- Increase annual funding to assure base staffing and support are ample and equitable for all Joint Ventures
- Support the Urban Bird Treaty Program and authorize increased funding:
- Increase staff capacity and funding for partner grants

*Conservation Column continued on page 7*



### *Conservation Column continued from page 6*

Support voluntary, community-based conservation on private working lands across the country in cooperation with Joint Ventures and other partners:

- Increase funding for the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program

### **Addressing Threats**

Reaffirm that the Migratory Bird Treaty Act covers incidental taking, and establish a permit program to apply available best management practices that reduce bird mortality:

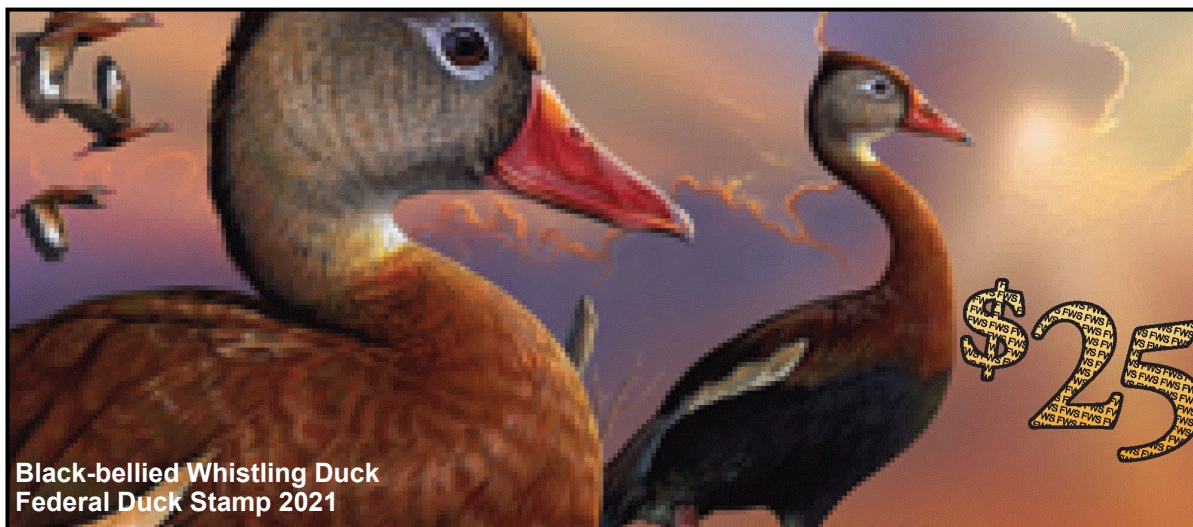
- Pass the Migratory Bird Protection Act and develop a permitting rule through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Facilitate and demonstrate bird-friendly practices in the construction of federal buildings:

- Pass the Bird-Safe Buildings Act

Enhance and demonstrate U.S. leadership in reducing fisheries bycatch of marine birds:

- Ratify and enact implementing legislation for the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels
- Ensure there are coordinated and consistent approaches toward federal planning and actions that impact migratory birds:

- Revitalize Executive Order 13186 on the Responsibilities to Protect Migratory Birds
- Require consideration of climate change in federal planning related to birds



### **Policy and Funding**

Elevate the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (NMBCA) so that it can help address the needs of these declining species:

- Increase funding for grants
- Change the federal to private matching ratio from 1:3 to 1:1 to facilitate greater participation, particularly among Central and South American and Caribbean conservation groups

Pass the Recovering America's Wildlife Act to boost conservation of migratory birds and other wildlife by state wildlife agencies:

- Include mandatory spending outside of the annual appropriations cycle

Establish a new "Songbird Stamp" as a sister program for the federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp (aka Duck Stamp) to raise funds for bird conservation:

- Use net revenue to support conservation efforts such as NMBCA grants or other relevant programs

*Conservation Column continued on page 8*

*Conservation Column continued from page 7*

**Land and Water Conservation**

Develop new landscape-scale habitat initiatives on par with NAWCA:

- Conserving North American grasslands is a current priority, and other initiatives could include a focus on ecosystems such as the sage-steppe, saline lakes, and old-growth forests in Alaska and the Pacific Northwest

**Taking Action Close to Home**

RVAS takes action almost every month to advocate for the protection of birds locally and across Oregon, as well as nation-wide. In case you missed it, please visit <https://mailtribune.com/opinion/guest-opinions/snags-have-value-as-essential-homes-for-wildlife> to review a March 7 op-ed that I co-wrote with Lyndia Hammer of the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy advocating for the preservation of snags for wildlife, especially in the areas of the Bear Creek Greenway burned by the Almeda Fire. Board member Jon Deason has been particularly involved in this effort.

On a more regional issue, RVAS recently sent a letter to the US Fish and Wildlife Service (see below) protesting a rule adopted in the last days of the prior administration that would remove almost 3.5 million acres from critical habitat protection for the Northern Spotted Owl. Through these and other actions, Rogue Valley Audubon continually works to assure that we will always have birds to watch, and habitat for them to call home.

.....  
**US Fish and Wildlife Service**

**Re: Docket FWS-R1-ES-2020-0050**

I am writing on behalf of the Rogue Valley Audubon Society (RVAS), a chapter of the National Audubon Society with over 500 members in southern Oregon. Our chapter has long advocated for strong protections for the Northern Spotted Owl, an emblematic bird of our Pacific Northwest old-growth forests. RVAS applauds the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service extension of the effective date for the proposed Northern Spotted Owl critical habitat rule. This is necessary to give the Service time to evaluate this rule from the previous administration and ensure it does not go into effect. That “final rule” drastically scaled back critical habitat protections for the threatened Northern Spotted Owl. It was published in the Federal Register on January 15, 2021 and was clearly a last minute attempt by the outgoing administration to weaken protections for old-growth forests.

We support the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service following sound science – and the requirements of the Endangered Species Act – by eliminating the 2021 rule as quickly as possible. There is no scientific justification to remove any critical habitat for the Northern Spotted Owl, whose populations continue to decline. The rule, if allowed to go into effect, would remove 3.5 million acres from critical habitat designation, a massive area of Pacific Northwest ancient forest ecosystems. These are the exact forests that Service biologists deemed critical to the recovery of the threatened bird.

We support protections of Northern Spotted Owl critical habitat because the owl and our Pacific Northwest forest ecosystems are critical to our future. The science is clear, old-growth forests are essential for the Northern Spotted Owl and a host of other forest species. Old forests with big trees provide important ecosystem services as well; they produce cleaner water and are massive stores of carbon that help fight climate change. Finally, these are the cherished places we hike, bird-watch, and find the peace and solace of nature.

We need to save our remaining ancient forests and the Northern Spotted Owl, not weaken protections for them.  
Sincerely,

Carol Mockridge

President, Rogue Valley Audubon Society



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Newsletter of the  
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