

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



Virtual MAY Program

Tuesday, May 25 at 7:00 pm

"The Woodpecker's Tongue and Other Avian Adaptations"

Presented by DAN GLEASON

Editor's note: We don't usually have a May chapter meeting. This bonus event takes the place of our annual May picnic which was canceled.

Awakened by a woodpecker drumming on your gutters at 5 a.m.? Or was one tapping on a nearby street sign? No, they aren't trying to dig out your gutters, nor have their brains been addled! Banging your head against a tree all day may not seem like a productive way to spend your life, but woodpeckers are adapted to do just that, and they do so very successfully. There are a number of fascinating adaptations found in woodpeckers that facilitate this mode of living, along with many other adaptations that occur throughout the bird world.



Dan will discuss some of the most unusual and generally little-known specialized bird adaptations. Topics he'll cover in this program go beyond woodpeckers and include other fascinating adaptations that help birds. Many of these adaptations are not found in field guides, so many people are not aware of them. Indeed, they make birds among the most fascinating of creatures to study and learn about.

Join us for a fascinating look at Avian Adaptations!

About Dan

An Oregon native, Dan Gleason was on the faculty of the University of Oregon Biology Department for 30 years, and taught Ornithology for senior graduate-level biology majors for 35 years. He is the author of *Birds! From The Inside Out*, an introductory textbook about birds, and *Looking for Yellowheads*, a book of stories accumulated in over 45 years of watching birds.

Dan has been active on bird organization boards of directors (Lane County Audubon Society, Oregon Field Ornithologists), and was an educational volunteer at Cascades Raptor Center in Eugene. He and his wife, Barbara, are the owners of Wild Birds Unlimited in Eugene, a wild bird-focused store helping bring people and nature together. Barbara and Dan have fed birds a combined total of +90 years!

Dan's speaking engagements and bird walks took a hiatus in 2019 as he fought off AML leukemia. He prevailed, and although his visual and vestibular abilities suffered permanent changes due to treatment, Dan remains active. He continues to provide vital science-based information to the region's birding community, and is considering launching a nature exploration series called "Slow Meanders with a Blind Birdwatcher."

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 May, 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.

Letter from the Board

This Memorial Day marks the year anniversary of both the murder of George Floyd and the incident in which Black birder and NYC Audubon board member Christian Cooper filmed a white dog walker threatening him in Central Park. These and other heartbreaking events contributed to initiating a long-overdue public conversation about the ways that people of color are impacted by racism and inequity in the United States. While George Floyd's death helped spark a widespread racial justice movement, Cooper's experience inspired the formation of the BlackAFInSTEM Collective and their launch of Black Birders Week in late May 2020.

The inaugural Black Birders Week featured livestream video forums which included the voices of Black naturalists, students, and wildlife science professionals, among many others. Hashtags like #BlackBirdersWeek, #BlackWomenWho Bird, and #BlackInNature were used on Twitter to tell stories of "birding while Black". People from all over the globe engaged in productive dialogues about the deep connection of people of color to the natural world, and what happens when that connection is disrupted. This event inspired the creation of a number of other social media-based events celebrating Black people in various STEM fields, as well as Black in National Parks Week in August 2020. For anyone curious, a quick web search reveals the incredible wealth of stories and news articles that came out of that first effort.

Black Birders Week takes place this year from May 30 to June 5. Want to join in? Follow @BlackBirdersWeek on Instagram, @BlackAFInSTEM on Twitter, and National Audubon Society on Facebook to stay posted as they announce the events lineup. If you spend more time birding than on social media – good for you! - the great news is that we can all play a role in actively making a change for the better. Especially for those of us who already feel comfortable and safe engaging in our favorite outdoor pursuits, there's a great responsibility and opportunity to make birding a welcoming and safe activity for people of all skin colors, ages, backgrounds, genders, orientations, and abilities.

Birds provide a fitting lens to understand the importance of diversity in human spaces. They exist in a gorgeous flurry of sizes, shapes, colors, and survival strategies, each providing their own songs, services, and value to ecosystems. As Christian Cooper himself put it best, "The birds and the outdoors are for

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Status of upcoming events

Field trips - Suspended until further notice
May Chapter Meeting: Tues, May 25th @ 7pm
May picnic - Canceled
May Birdathon - Canceled

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all of us to enjoy. Don't let anybody make you think otherwise, and don't let anyone deny you the tremendous joy, wonder, and sense of well-being that being outdoors and looking at and listening to birds can bring."

The RVAS Board wants everyone to feel this sense of joy and well-being when birding in our local natural areas and taking part in Chapter meetings and other events, and we will continue to look for ways we can better promote that. If you have any feedback for us, please don't hesitate to reach out to a board member. We want to hear what you have to say, understanding that difficult conversations are often the most important.

Happy birding, and cheers to #BlackBirdersWeek!

Kate Halstead

Chat Editor & RVAS Board Member



Field Notes for Jackson County April 2021

By Frank Lospalluto

When I woke up I was in a forest. The dark seemed natural, the sky through the pine trees thick with many lights.

(from the poem Trillium by Louise Gluck)

Spring migration is upon us and this is not news to all the birders and birdwatchers out there. So forgive me for the old news that follows.

Two **Snow Geese** were out at Agate Lake Apr 23 (JL). A significant movement of **Greater White-fronted Geese** occurred on Apr 15 and again on Apr 19 with a few thousand birds passing over the valley noted by multiple observers (VZ, RA, HS).

The strikingly handsome **Blue-winged Teal** male was reported at Kirtland Rd. Ponds Apr 21 (JL, GS, JK).

Pied-billed Grebes are in their breeding plumage and being widely seen; subtly sublime. A **Horned Grebe** in breeding attire was seen at Kirtland Rd. Ponds Apr 19 (RA). **Eared Grebes** are also being seen around and are molting into their breeding plumage.

A single **Common Poorwill** was found along Lake Creek Rd. Apr 13 (NB). Another was heard near Siskiyou Summit Apr 18.

For some, spring hasn't officially arrived until the twittering antics of **Vaux's Swifts** are seen and heard overhead. Four were over Denman Apr 11 (JH) and three were over Lincoln School in Ashland Apr 19 (KH). And of course a



Solitary Sandpiper
Credit: Jim Livaudais

number of other sightings as well the last week or so as I write this. Three very lucky and very experienced Bino-saurs spotted a **White-throated Swift** amidst the Violet-green horde on top of Lower Table Rock Apr 6 (JL, NB, GS). There are legends of past breeding by these miniature flying Orcas on local rocks.

The hybrid **Black-chinned x Anna's Hummingbird** found last season near Shady Cove returned to the same feeders again this year Apr 6 (HS).

Two **Black-necked Stilts** were found at the Kirtland Rd. Ponds Apr 18 (AG). Baby **Killdeer** are beginning to make an appearance. Two were spotted during a Bear Creek Community Bird Survey (BCCBS) near Blue Heron Park Apr 22 (DG). Volunteers for these surveys are still welcomed and encouraged; check out the RVAS website for more details. A **Solitary Sandpiper** was spotted at the Ave G. Ponds Apr 15 (JH). Another bird was found at Kirtland Rd. Ponds Apr 20 (BH). Two **Lesser Yellowlegs** were reported from Kirtland Apr 16 (JL). Three **Semipalmated**

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Plovers were at Kirtland Apr 24 (JK, GS, SP). Two **Red-necked Phalaropes** were spinning on Kirtland Ponds Apr 25 (JK, GS).

One **Caspian Tern** was seen at Tou Velle SP Apr 16 (CJR). Two were at Kirtland Rd. Ponds briefly Apr 22. One Caspian Tern was at Agate Lake Apr 24 (RA, SP). A lone **Bonaparte's Gull** was at Kirtland Rd. Ponds Apr 25 (FL).

Nine **Common Loon** were on Lost Creek Lake Apr 23 (BH). Thirteen were there Mar 29 (NB, JL, GS). One Common Loon was on Emigrant Lake Apr 17 (MC).

Green Heron are being widely seen again across our area. One bird was found in North Mountain Park Apr 23 (KS), and one was spotted out at Lost Creek Lake-McGregor Park the same day (DG).



Canyon Wren
Credit: Gary Shaffer

Two **Swainson's Hawks** were seen moving north over Lower Table Rock Apr 20 (FL).

A **Short-eared Owl** was seen around Denman Ave G pond Apr 6 (BH) and has been reported with regularity this month from multiple observers in the nearby vicinity.

A **Hammond's Flycatcher** was in the madrones along the Lower Table Rock trail Apr 20 (FL). Another was at North Mountain Park Apr 25 (RA, SP), and another near the trail along Little Butte Creek on the same day (JK). A **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** was in Cantrall-Buckley Park Apr 24 (AG). Another was heard singing along Bear Creek during a BCCBS survey Apr 25(FL).

An **Ash-throated Flycatcher** was observed along Salt Creek Rd. Apr 18 (NB, GS, JL). Another was reported from Lower Table Rock Apr 23 (JK, AG). Ash-throated Flycatchers are cavity nesters and closely associated with oak habitats. **Western Kingbirds** have arrived and are being seen along fence lines and atop power poles in many locations around the valley.

One of the first spring **Cassin's Vireos** was found Apr 10 on Lower Table Rock (NK). Two were spotted along the Little Butte Creek trail Apr 11 (FL). An early singing **Warbling Vireo** was in Ashland Apr 8 (DA).

As **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** move north, **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** have been arriving the last few weeks. One was seen southwest of Pilot Rock in the CSNM Apr 7 and another around Emigrant Lake the same day (VZ). On Apr 8 one was observed along the trail at Lower Table Rock (MH).

A **Canyon Wren** up on Lower Table Rock has been quite vocal and visible this month with a fine recording and some excellent photographs on eBird by Howard Sands, Gary Shaffer, and Jim Livaudais. Two **House Wrens** were reported from the Little Applegate Apr 5 (MH).

A spring **Evening Grosbeak** was in Ruch Apr 5 (AG). A few **Cassin's Finches** have been reported from the valley recently as they move in and up to the mountains. One was at Ashland Pond Apr 12 (MD) and three were on Lower Table Rock Apr 16 (AM). One was in White City Apr 19 (JH) and three were in Ashland Apr 22 (AA). Four were reported from Jacksonville Apr 23 (CM).

Lark Sparrows are being noticeably more vocal as they enter breeding season. There has been something of a large movement this month of Gambel's **White-crowned Sparrows**, or what is referred to in Sibley's as the Taiga West group. They have clean gray napes and orangey bills. A number of **White-throated Sparrows** have been spotted of late with three in the Little Butte Unit of Denman Apr 17 (BH). **Lincoln's Sparrows** are also skittering through mostly quietly but occasionally one has the good fortune of hearing some song.

A **Yellow-headed Blackbird** was spotted over Ave G pond Apr 16 (BH). **Bullock's Orioles** are back chattering, peas and tea. One was reported from Ashland Apr 20 (KMc).

Wood-Warblers are returning to the joy of everyone. **Nashville Warblers** began to appear on everyone's day lists the middle of April and can now be heard singing region wide. A few **MacGillivray's Warblers** showed up Apr 17 with one in the CSNM below Pilot Rock and one up near Lost Creek Lake the same day (AM). Three were spotted along the Lower Table Rock Trail Apr 24 (CS, PL). **Common Yellowthroats** have been with us since late March. A **Yellow Warbler** was heard singing along Little Butte Creek Apr 22 and one was found along the Lower Table Rock Trail Apr 24 (CS, PL). A **Black-throated Gray Warbler** was found along Little Butte Creek Trail Apr 11 (JH) and four were out in the Little Applegate Apr 14 (MH). A **Hermit Warbler** was along Conde Cr. Rd. Apr 20 (HS) and one was along the Lower Table Rock Trail Apr 23 (AG, JK). A **Wilson's Warbler** was first spotted Apr 13 at Cantrall-Buckley (AG).

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A **Western Tanager** was near Buckhorn Springs south of Ashland Apr 25 (KM). And finally **Black-headed Grosbeaks** are back with one at Sardine Creek Apr 9 (MR).

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, Kristi Mergenthaler, Pepper Trail, Roxanna Tessman, Leslie Hart, Anne Goff, Forrest English, Amanda Alford, Matt Cahill, Dave Garcia, Vince Zauskey, Marion Hadden, Matt Dufort, Alan Moss, Nicole Koeltzow, Dick Ashford, Kate Halstead, Cindy MacDonald, Maggie Rackley, Kate McKenzie, Claire Stuyck, Paul Leonard, and Violet.

All errors and omissions are my own. Peace.

Help Us Count Vaux's Swifts!

Vaux's Swifts are here and they're dropping like flies (into our local chimneys)! Would you love to see this amazing event take place? Better yet, would you like to contribute to citizen science by counting these amazing birds as they dive into the Hedrick Middle School chimney or another local site? We would LOVE your help. If you can spare one night a week, or more, please email Erin Ulrich at eulrich44@gmail.com. The swifts will be migrating north throughout May. If you can't help out now, keep in mind that they have to travel back south, so help will be needed in early fall also. Stay tuned for information as that survey effort approaches.

The Conservation Column

By Pepper Trail

As I write this, Earth Day is just around the corner, so it seems an appropriate time to focus on a big-picture conservation issue: the importance of forests in the fight against the climate crisis. This recent overview is from the National Audubon Society.

Forests are Important in the Fight Against the Climate Crisis

Congress should pass a suite of policies that enhance the carbon storage and biodiversity of our forests.

Forests offer more than just beautiful scenery. They also protect drinking water, serve as stopover habitat for migratory birds like Hermit Warblers, and are an important piece in our defense against climate change.

As climate change worsens, forests will be increasingly vulnerable to drought, wildfire, pests, and disease, some cases of which have already become so severe that the forests lose the ability to naturally regenerate. In fact, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) has at least 1.3 million acres of forests in need of restoration, but without adequate resources to address these needs, the risk of further destruction like mudslides and damaged infrastructure only increases.

Forests are also a key piece of the climate solution because they naturally store carbon dioxide in their trees, shrubs, and soils, and keep carbon emissions out of the atmosphere. Approximately one-third of the U.S. is forested, presenting huge potential for increased carbon storage through natural climate solutions—actions that protect and restore natural spaces while simultaneously reducing harmful emissions. We can help forests adapt to the changing climate while also drawing down carbon emissions, enhancing biodiversity, protecting our air and water, and creating new jobs.

Audubon's [own science](#) shows that climate change is the greatest threat to North American birds, with two-thirds of species vulnerable to extinction if carbon emissions continue at their current pace. Birds that rely on boreal and western forests are at especially high risk. However, if we keep warming below 1.5 degrees C—which would require [reaching net-zero greenhouse gas emissions](#) by 2050—we can improve the outcomes for 76 percent of those imperiled birds. While reaching this target will require decarbonization across our electric, transportation, and industrial sectors, we can also implement policies that help our working lands be part of the climate solution.

This year, Audubon hopes to see Congress pass policies that can help improve the health and resilience of our forests, enhance bird habitat, and create jobs, including:

- **Incentives for Forest Owners and Farmers to Adopt Climate-Smart Practices:** To adopt climate-smart practices, private forest owners need financial resources and some protection from financial risk. Congress should consider new programs that provide direct payments, tax incentives, or easier access to voluntary carbon markets to reward landowners for climate-smart management practices. Any new programs must have proper safeguards that ensure the actions taken result in carbon storage that would not have happened otherwise. Programs must also value the health of the entire ecosystem over short-term gains, and should disqualify actions that result in clearcutting

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or illegal deforestation. Last Congress, the [Trillion Trees and Natural Carbon Storage Act](#) outlined a set of programs that could help increase 'net carbon stock' on private and public lands, and the [Growing Climate Solutions Act](#) (GCSA) would provide needed structure to voluntary carbon markets.

The GCSA creates a program to certify technical assistance providers and third-party verifiers for the agriculture and forestry sectors for actions that reduce the amount of air and carbon pollution and for processes to naturally store carbon emissions. The legislation addresses barriers to entry for landowners trying to access carbon markets, and encourages practices guided by science, while also refining protocols that account for additionality, permanence, and leakage of practices. It also seeks to reduce barriers to entry for historically underserved, socially disadvantaged, and limited resource farmers, ranchers, and foresters.

The bill directs the U.S. Department of Agriculture to establish a set of nationwide protocols and standards that will help farmers, ranchers, and private forest landowners adopt sustainable management practices like planting cover crops, prescribed grazing, and reforestation. In addition to improving the health of working lands, these practices serve as natural solutions to reducing greenhouse gas pollution and increasing the amount of carbon stored in the soil. New protocols will improve the reliability and accessibility of voluntary carbon markets, but more action is needed to completely eliminate carbon pollution and address the impact on communities that have historically shouldered the burden.

"While the fight against climate change will require the broad participation of all sectors, agricultural stewards are a critical part of the solution," said Greenberger. "The people who know the land best are the people that work it every day, and this bill presents sensible and bipartisan solutions to ensure a cleaner environment for us all."

- **Restore National Forests:** The USFS manages 193 million acres of forest lands, which includes at least 1.3 million acres in need of reforestation. These activities are paid for through the Reforestation Trust Fund (RTF), which only has dedicated resources to address a fraction of the backlog each year. Congress can help the USFS restock forests efficiently by removing the \$30 million cap on the RTF and requiring USFS to develop a plan to address the backlog, both of which are included in the [REPLANT Act](#). Reforestation should only be done with regionally appropriate species in areas that were historically forested, and in a way that enhances wildlife habitat.
- **Invest in Urban Forestry:** Urban trees and parks are vital to any city or town. Planting trees in urban areas can decrease air pollution, improve public health, increase access to green spaces, and provide important habitat for urban wildlife. Tree canopy can also provide shade and decrease the amount of energy needed to cool homes, which currently presents a disproportionate burden for low-income communities. Unfortunately, low-income communities have much [lower rates](#) of tree canopy cover, and don't benefit as much from the cooling effects, flood protection, and reduced air pollution provided by urban trees. Congress can take action to increase resources for the maintenance of urban trees and forests through programs like the [Urban and Community Forestry Program](#).
- **Protect Old-Growth Forests:** Old-growth forests comprise less than seven percent of all U.S. forests but have outsized importance for wildlife habitat and carbon storage. Old-growth stands in the [Tongass National Forest](#) in south-east Alaska store [considerably more carbon](#) than younger parts of the forests, both in their trees and deep soils. Congress should protect these remaining stands by not opening them up to new logging.
- **Invest in Research and Development:** There is still much we don't know about how our forests can be part of the climate solution. Congress can support scientific inquiry into forestry by increasing funding for relevant research—such as the [Forest Inventory and Analysis program](#)—and to entities that can help provide regional expertise, like land-grant institutions.



Efforts like these are absolutely essential to slow the headlong momentum of the climate crisis. As we head into another hot and very, very dry summer, we are all acutely aware of the peril that climate change poses to the forests that surround us. Those forests provide water, wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, and countless other services to the region. We must save them, so they can save us.

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WE NEED YOU! (yes, you!!)

RVAS is currently in search of some bird-lovin' humans to serve as board members.

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



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