

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

Deadline for the October issue is September 20



SEPTEMBER Virtual Program

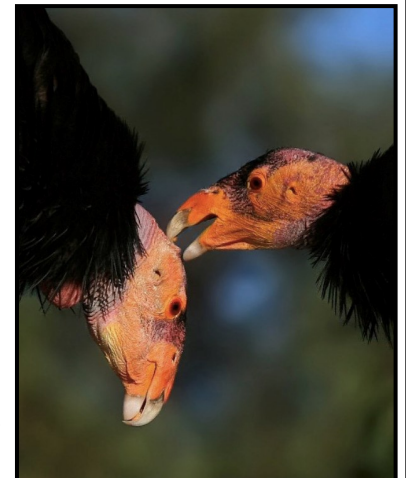
Tuesday, Sept. 28 at 7:00 pm

The Recovery and Conservation of the California Condor

This month's virtual program will feature several speakers. Each speaker will participate through their collaboration with the Friends of California Condors Wild and Free, and will discuss their own niche within the California Condor monitoring and recovery effort.

About The Speakers

Growing up in San Diego without many resources, Daniel Cook engaged with nature through the generosity of community groups, neighbors, and friends. Now, he seeks to get folks out in nature as an interpretation Park Ranger for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. He leads environmental education efforts throughout "condor country" in Southern California using the lens of California Condor conservation to help people fall in love with, and understand their place in, nature. He is passionate about our ecosystems, the magnificent California Condor, and our communities' benefits from these natural resources. He received a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science and Resource Management at California State University Channel Islands and served in the US Army from 2009-2018.



Andrew Clare is the Hunting and Conservation Outreach Coordinator with Great Basin Institute. Combining a background in natural resource management and a lifelong passion for the outdoors, Andrew works from within the hunting community to encourage the switch to non-lead ammunition. As a partner of the North American Non-Lead Partnership, he conducts live demonstrations, explains ballistics, and works with unaccustomed shooters on how they can shoot alternatives and contribute to conservation.

Debbie Parisi is a member of the Friends of Condors. She volunteers to coordinate and bring programs to interested groups.

Zoom instructions: If you haven't registered for RVAS virtual events, 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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Remembering Mike Guest

Our dear friend Mike Guest passed away on June 11, 2021 in Medford. Mike was a RVAS board member from 2013 to 2016. He also served as board secretary and brought years of wisdom from his prior experience as president of the Huachuca Audubon Society in Arizona.

Mike cared about the future of RVAS and actively recruited new board and chapter members. Each year, he participated in the Medford Christmas Bird Count and together with his wife Heather, hosted the team for lunch at their home at the Manor on count day. For several years, he donated intricately carved and painted birds for the holiday auction to the delight of the audience.

Besides being an excellent birder, Mike was an avid hiker and volunteer. He was a docent at two Nature Conservancy preserves in Arizona. He also led bird walks for the BLM and did bird surveys and visitor programs for the National Park Service. Locally, he volunteered at the Southern Oregon Historical Society and led hikes at Rogue Valley Manor.

Our thoughts go out to his wife Heather. Mike will be missed.



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 - No field trips are scheduled at this time

September Chapter Meeting: Tues., Sept. 28th
@ 7pm



Hello Rogue Valley Audubon Members!

My name is Erin Ulrich and I am your new RVAS Board President. Let me tell you a bit about myself. I have lived in Jacksonville for the past 3 ½ years. Prior to moving to the area, I was a children's librarian for 20 years in Santa Clara, CA. I am currently working full-time at Wild Birds Unlimited in Medford, so a few of you may know me from there! I've been on the RVAS Board for a little over two years, and I'll do my best to keep this small but dedicated group going strong!

Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions, comments, suggestions, etc. My email box is always open, and I'm looking forward to meeting you virtually or in person!



Letter from the Board Goals from RVAS Board Retreat

Although last year was a tough one, we are happy to report that we met all three of our main goals from last year: 1) We kept RVAS going!, 2) We have a new Board!, and 3) The Hedrick Middle School chimney has not gone away! Great job, us!

When the Board last met in June for our annual retreat, we were eager to start moving back to a more "normal" year. However, it seems that may not take place just yet. We decided that there were five goals that were most important to us for the upcoming year, and we will do our best to make them happen.

1. **Continue support of Hedrick Middle School chimney.** We will stay in communication with the Medford School District regarding the retrofitting of the chimney. We will make sure that Vaux's Swifts have a roost site for the foreseeable future.
2. **Partner with Southern Oregon University to make it an official Audubon "Bird Campus."**
3. **Get an "official" logo for our chapter.** We are keen on getting an official identity for our local Audubon chapter. We have decided on a bird that we think everyone will admire and is representative of our region. We look forward to introducing it to everyone in the near future. Stay tuned!
4. **Expand Project FeederWatch to a Title 1-A school.** We currently have a wonderful site at North Mountain Park in Ashland. We added another site in 2019 at Jacksonville Elementary School, which was cut short by the school shut-downs in 2020 due to COVID-19. We are hoping to revive that site this year as well as set up a new site at a Title 1-A school. These schools have 75% or greater poverty levels amongst their students. We think this could be a great opportunity to introduce birds and birding to students who wouldn't be exposed to them otherwise.
5. **Reinstate outreach.** We would like to get out into the community again and preach the awesomeness of our organization to the public at large.

As another uncertain year approaches, the work continues. Thank you from the bottoms of our feathery hearts for everything you do to help us promote the conservation and appreciation of birds and their habitats in the Rogue Valley.

Erin Ulrich
RVAS President

The Conservation Column

By Pepper Trail

Well, this certainly wasn't the post-pandemic we were dreaming of, but I hope everyone got out and enjoyed our beautiful southern Oregon environment before the smoke descended. Here's hoping that by the time you read this, blue skies will have returned.

This first Conservation Column back from the summer break is a bit of a grab bag, as there has been a lot of activity on multiple environmental fronts.

For those of you interested in tracking President Biden's rollbacks of the previous administration's many terrible environmental actions, the *Washington Post* provides a handy and constantly updated digest, at:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2021/climate-environment/biden-climate-environment-actions/>

Here is the scorecard as of late August:

Environmental Topic	New Biden Policies	Trump Policy Overturned	Targeted for Review	Not Yet Targeted
Air Pollution	8	10	24	34
Chemical Safety	1	4	5	8
Drilling & Logging	8	11	18	43
Water Pollution	0	0	8	7
Wildlife	1	2	13	15

As you can see, there are plenty in the "Not Yet Targeted" category, so lots of work still to do. But here are a few of the positive actions to date:

Reviewing activities in roadless areas in national forests

Biden officials instructed that any activities in roadless areas must undergo special review, effectively barring logging in Alaska's Tongass National Forest.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2021/06/11/tongass-roadless-rule/>

Conserving public lands and waters

President Biden set a goal of conserving 30 percent of U.S. lands and waters by 2030 (the "30x30" goal).

<https://www.nrdc.org/experts/helen-oshea/biden-administration-lays-out-30x30-vision-conserve-nature>

Banning the nerve-agent pesticide chlorpyrifos

Under the new regulation signed by the EPA in August, all food uses of chlorpyrifos would be revoked six months from the final rule's publication in the Federal Register, which will likely happen in the coming weeks.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2021/08/18/chlorpyrifos/>

Proposed listing of Emperor Penguins and Lesser Prairie Chickens under the Endangered Species Act.

Eliminating fossil fuel subsidies

President Biden instructed all agencies to identify existing fossil fuel subsidies and eliminate them from their FY 2021 budget request.

<https://www.nrdc.org/experts/sujatha-bergen/market-warping-oilgas-subsidies-way-out-biden-budget>

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So, the Biden Administration is a huge improvement from the previous one. But, there have also been major disappointments:

The Biden Administration is permitting Line 3 tar-sands oil pipeline in Minnesota to go ahead (<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/24/climate/line-3-pipeline-biden.html>), and in an apparent political deal with Alaska Senator Lisa Murkowski, also **allowed the largest oil-and-gas drilling project in the Alaska National Petroleum Reserve to go forward**. Fortunately, a federal district court has now vacated that permit, as described in this news release from Earthjustice:

In a significant climate victory, a federal district court judge in August issued a decision vacating the Trump administration's decision approving ConocoPhillips' Willow Master Development Plan, halting the largest oil-and-gas drilling project in the Alaskan Arctic.

ConocoPhillips' plan, slated for a public lands area known as the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska in the Western Arctic, would have helped accelerate climate change by releasing enough greenhouse gas emissions to equal that of 66 coal-fired power plants operating for a year. The lawsuit challenging the massive oil-drilling operation was brought by Earthjustice, on behalf of Friends of the Earth, the Center for Biological Diversity, and Greenpeace.

"We were very surprised to see the Biden administration, which has promised historic progress on climate change, defending this plan in court — but today's decision gives the administration the opportunity to reconsider the project in light of its commitment to address the climate emergency," said Earthjustice attorney Jeremy Lieb. "We are hopeful that the administration won't give the fossil fuel industry another chance to carve up this irreplaceable Arctic landscape with drilling rigs, roads, and pipelines. We must keep Arctic oil in the ground if we want a livable planet for future generations."



The Sixth Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC):

The severity of the climate crisis, and the necessity to keep fossil fuels in the ground, was proclaimed yet again and with more urgency than ever by the latest report of the IPCC, released in August. This was, in the words of the report, "A Code Red for Humanity." The "Headline Statements" can be seen at: https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGI_Headline_Statements.pdf

Here are some of the major ones:

- Each of the last four decades has been successively warmer than any decade that preceded it since 1850. The Last Interglacial, around 125,000 years ago, is the next most recent candidate for a period of higher temperature.
- In 2019, atmospheric CO₂ concentrations were higher than at any time in at least 2 million years. Global surface temperature will continue to increase until at least the mid-century under all emissions scenarios considered. Global warming of 1.5°C and 2°C will be exceeded during the 21st century unless deep reductions in carbon dioxide (CO₂) and other greenhouse gas emissions occur in the coming decades.

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- Many changes in the climate system become greater in direct relation to increasing global warming. They include increases in the frequency and intensity of heat extremes, marine heatwaves, and heavy precipitation; agricultural and ecological droughts in some regions; and proportion of intense tropical cyclones; as well as reductions in Arctic sea ice, snow cover, and permafrost.
- Many changes due to past and future greenhouse gas emissions are irreversible for centuries to millennia, especially changes in the ocean, ice sheets, and global sea level.

But it's not too late...

If nations follow through on recent promises — like President Biden's April pledge to eliminate America's net carbon emissions by 2050 or China's vow to become carbon neutral by 2060 — then something closer to 2 degrees Celsius of warming might be possible. Additional action, such as sharply reducing methane emissions from agriculture and oil and gas drilling, could help limit warming below that level.

"The report leaves me with a deep sense of urgency," said Jane Lubchenco, deputy director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. "Now is the critical decade for keeping the 1.5 target within reach."

Last But Not Least: Oregon's Marbled Murrelets

And finally, I'll close with an Audubon priority close to home. In response to strong advocacy by Oregon Audubon groups and others, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife "uplisted" the Marbled Murrelet from "threatened" to "endangered" in July. As a result of that decision, state natural resource agencies that own, manage, or lease lands with murrelet habitat are required to develop an endangered species management plan and submit for approval by the Commission within 18 months of uplisting.

<https://www.opb.org/article/2021/07/10/marbled-murrelet-endangered-status-oregon-climate-change-threat/>



Franklin's Gulls
Credit: Jim Livaudais

Field Notes for Jackson County Summer 2021

By Frank Lospalluto

*When you hear music, after it's over,
it's gone, in the air.*

— Eric Dolphy

The bird song of spring has faded and the long fall migration is well underway. What follows are a few highlights from this past summer.

Northern Shovelers are returning to Kirtland Rd. Ponds with 31 on Aug. 22 (JV). A small assortment of ducks was at Ashland Pond Aug. 26 with a **Northern Pintail**, **Gadwall**, and **Cinnamon Teal** seen (NT). A **Bufflehead** was out on Lost Creek Lake Aug. 25 (JK). Four **Ruddy Ducks** were near Klum Landing at Howard Prairie Aug. 19 (JK).

An early single **Horned Grebe** was spotted on Agate Lake Aug. 25 (JK). Though **Eared Grebes** are being spotted again on area lakes, an early group of 17 was on Lost Creek Lake Jul. 28 (JK). No doubt the drought is wreaking havoc with the local distribution and seasonal occurrences of many waterbirds.



Long-billed Curlew
Credit: Jim Livaudais

A **Black Swift** was spotted flying above the forest near Prospect May 18 by a KBO bird surveyor (DW). **Vaux's Swifts** are migrating through with large numbers being seen entering a chimney in Medford not far from Hedrick Middle School where soon large numbers will be also gathering. No doubt more information about our local Vaux's Happening can be found here in the Chat or on the RVAS website.

A female **Black-chinned Hummingbird** was at a feeder



Semipalmated Sandpiper
Credit: Janet Kelly

in Eagle Point May 30 (HS). And a butterfly enthusiast reported another female from below Pilot Rock Jun. 19 (VL).

A lone **Black-necked Stilt** surprised a couple of lucky birders July 1 near Howard Prairie Lake off Klum Landing (AG, JK). A pair of **Black-bellied Plovers** was out along the shoreline at Howard Prairie Lake Aug. 3. A **Long-billed Curlew** was at Kirtland Rd. Ponds Jun. 13 (JK, JL, NB, GS). The beautiful **Baird's Sandpiper** has been reported from a few different locations recently. One was out in the mud along the remnant of Emigrant Lake Aug. 15 (TS). There have also been a rash of **Semipalmated Sandpiper** reports with singles here and there. One was at Whetstone Pond Aug. 25 (TSh, NK).

Four **Wilson's Phalaropes** were on Lost Creek Lake Jul 29 (VL) and one was on Howard Prairie Aug. 21 (EB). **Red-necked Phalaropes** are moving through with small numbers being seen at few different locations. Eleven were on Lost Creek Lake near Medco A Aug. 25 (JK). A pair of **Solitary Sandpipers** was found in a mud puddle near the entrance to the Hall Tract at Denman WMA Aug. 21 (JK). A single **Lesser Yellowlegs** was reported from Howard Prairie Aug. 13 and two were at Hyatt Lake on the same date (GS, JL).

Four **Franklin's Gulls** in breeding attire were observed at Agate Lake May 29 (HS). Likely these birds were displaced because of the drought. A **Black Tern** was found foraging over Howard Prairie Lake by a visiting PDX birder May 24 (BCT). A **Forster's Tern** was at Agate Lake May 27 (NB).

A **Snowy Egret** was seen briefly near Little Butte Cr. Jul 22 (JH). Twenty-eight **White-faced Ibis** were at Emigrant Lake May 17 (JK, KS) and then 29 were seen at Agate Lake May 27 (NB, GS, JL).

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Phainopepla
Credit: Jim Livaudais

Lewis's Woodpeckers are returning to the valley with a bird at Whetstone Savannah Aug. 20 (KM). Four were photographed up near the Mt. Ashland Ski Area Aug. 16 (TK). An **American Three-toed Woodpecker** was found not far from Parker Meadows near Sky Lakes Aug. 11 (HS).

An early returning **Merlin** was observed near Mt. Ashland Aug. 6 (TK).

A pair of **Gray Flycatcher** bred up along Keno Access Rd. in a place folks call Stumpy Knoll, and were first spotted by renowned bird guide Rich Hoyer Jun. 7. On Aug. 05 Janet Kelly observed an adult feeding a juvenile. This is likely the first confirmed breeding in Jackson County for this species.

An **Eastern Kingbird** was briefly observed late in the afternoon on the backside of Mt. Ashland Jul 25 (TSh). Odd location but an experienced observer familiar with the species - some people have all the luck!

Red-eyed Vireos were once again singing in the riparian forest at Rogue River Preserve in June (KM). A **Sage Thrasher** was photographed along the Savannah Loop Trail at Lower Table Rock Jun. 28 (TMe).

Tim Johnston found a **PHAINOPEPLA** May 23 in an oak tree at the Denman Ave G area. Then after the bird was not refound, Tim refound the bird on June 4 when a number of other birders were able to see it. This is the seventh Jackson County record and the tenth state record.

A female **Lawrence's Goldfinch** was photographed in a field off N.Valley View Rd. May 12 (KS). A male **Grasshopper Sparrow** was found off of Ave G. Jun. 13 (JK). There may have been a breeding pair in the area based

on the audio recording obtained by a few observers. Unfortunately, because the City of Ashland closed public access due to liability issues and the rancher who leased the land did not grant any access, the large colony of Grasshopper Sparrows on the Imperatrice Property was not documented this season (despite efforts by Pepper Trail and Kristi Mergenthaler to gain access for a survey visit). **Brewer's Sparrows** were found both along the Siskiyou Crest and over on the DIM plateau this spring and summer with lots of breeding evidence observed. And that's all for this time.....

Thank you to all observers including:

Nate Trimble, Kristi Mergenthaler, Pepper Trail, Bob Hunter, Janet Kelly, Anne Goff, Tim Johnston, Norm Barrett, Jim Livaudais, Gary Shaffer, Howard Sands, Karl Schneck, Tim Sorby, Tim Shelmerdine, Nicole Koltzow, Tom Meyers, Rich Hoyer, Tanner Martin, Elliot Bury, Terry Karlin, Brodie Cass Talbot, Rene Allen, Sammie Peat, John Vial, and Violet.

All errors and omissions are my own. Peace.



Barn Owl
Credit: Karl Schneck

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Vaux's Swifts Spring Migration Highlights

A small but dedicated group of volunteers counted northbound swifts at Hedrick Middle School during their Spring migration. Our numbers were smaller this year compared to last, but there were some very exciting nights. The chimney at Hedrick ranked #11 out of 36 sites that submitted data. Sites are located from San Diego, CA to Vancouver, BC (Canada).

Hedrick Swift Stats

Dates counted: April 15 - May 26, 2021

Total number of swifts observed: 4,843

Number of nights counted: 34

High count days:

4/26: 617

5/9: 528

5/1: 437

5/8: 437

Volunteers needed now!

We'd love to have more volunteers now during the current 2021 fall migration. If you would be willing to donate a couple of hours one evening (or several), please contact Kate Halstead at katherine.elspeth@gmail.com for details. No prior experience required. If you'd like to come out and see how it works, or simply view the spectacle, pop on over to Hedrick Middle School and join the fun. Counting begins about 30 minutes before sundown each night, possibly through October!



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THE CHAT

Newsletter of the
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