

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

*Deadline for the Dec/Jan 2022 issue is November 20*



## NOVEMBER Virtual Program

Tuesday, Nov. 23 at 7:00 pm

**Presenter: Steve Wise, Southern Oregon Land Conservancy**

**Topic: TBD**

Join us for our November program where Steve Wise, Executive Director of Southern Oregon Land Conservancy, will present. Steve is a leader with more than 25 years' experience in ecosystem scale watershed and forest restoration, stormwater green infrastructure, climate resiliency, fundraising, conservation policy and sustainability in the Pacific Northwest, Great Lakes and beyond. Steve was most recently the executive director for the Sandy River Watershed Council for nearly 10 years. Before his position as executive director of the Sandy Watershed Council, Steve served as the natural resource director at the Center for Neighborhood Technology, as the development director and interim executive director at the Opal Creek Ancient Forest Center/ Friends of Opal Creek and as the Snake River dams economic analyst at the River Network.

Southern Oregon Land Conservancy works cooperatively with landowners and communities to save our region's special places. The organization's mission is to protect and enhance precious land in the Rogue River region to benefit our human and natural communities.

## DECEMBER Annual Party & Fundraiser

Out of an abundance of caution, we have decided once again to cancel our holiday party. We will miss seeing all of you, but we hope to see a return to normalcy in 2022. In the meantime, have a wonderful holiday season, and happy birding!

**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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## Bear Creek Greenway Update

Since the devastating Alameda Fire last year, the Board has been monitoring activities on the Bear Creek Greenway. We have reported our progress in a previous issue of *The Chat*, but I would like to present a brief review of our concerns and the resulting very positive and encouraging findings.

Our first concern was the preservation of snags. We feared that there would be a clear-cut mentality that would not leave the needed snags for a balanced riparian habitat. The immediate massive removal of dead trees along the bike path added to the fear. A second concern was the need to remove blackberries as one of the main causes of the intensity of the fire and what that habitat would be replaced with. Older members of RVAS will remember the years that Otis Swisher spent defending blackberries on the Greenway as needed bird habitat.

Our concerns were very early on put to rest. We found that all activities in the Greenway will be coordinated through the County Parks Department. A comprehensive plan will be drafted through a process that includes the five cities, ODOT, US Fish and Wildlife, and all other private and public agencies. Steve Lambert, manager of Jackson County Parks, responded to our concerns:

**Snags.** A large portion of the snags will be left. Trees that are felled will be either chipped, left on the ground or used for stream improvement.

**Blackberries.** Because of cost, removal will be long term. When removed they will be replaced by Ash, Oregon Grape, Alders, Willows, Dogwood, and other native plants.

With our concerns being responded to, we have been merely observing on-going activities and reacting to any problems.

The only problem so far has been the timing of blackberry removal. North Mountain Park was concerned about the removal of large amounts of blackberries during breeding season. It was resolved. The Board signed off on a request from the Bear Creek Restoration Initiative to restrict berry removal during breeding season.

Jon Deason

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 - Denman Bird Walk is back! See page 8

November Chapter Meeting:  
Tuesday, Nov. 23 at 7:00 pm

## The Conservation Column

By Pepper Trail

This column is filled with promising news. Not fully achieved victories, but definitely promising. And that feels pretty good.

### The Griffin Half Moon Timber Sale Halted

In early October, a federal judge halted the 900-acre Griffin Half Moon timber sale on the edge of the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument for failing to properly assess its impact on Great Gray Owls.

U.S. District Judge Ann Aiken ruled the U.S. Bureau of Land Management's approval of the project was "arbitrary and capricious," which means logging cannot proceed until the plan is revised.

The Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center, Oregon Wild, Cascadia Wildlands and the Soda Mountain Wilderness Council filed a lawsuit claiming the project would harm the Pacific Fisher, which requires dense canopy closure, and the Great Gray Owl, which relies on older forest stands.

Aiken adopted U.S. Magistrate Judge Mark Clarke's earlier recommendation to block the project for violating the National Environmental Policy Act, dismissing the BLM's objections that the case was analyzed under the wrong legal standards. Clarke had ruled with the environmental plaintiffs regarding the Great Gray Owl but rejected their arguments about the Pacific Fisher, a carnivore in the same family as the weasel.

BLM's broad "resource management plan" for 1.2 million acres of BLM land in the region dedicates "a large network of reserve lands for Great Gray Owls" and expects their habitat to improve, but the agency didn't analyze the project's particular effects on the species, Clarke said.

The agency's decision record "contains no meeting notes, memos, reports or other documentation" that it specifically considered site-specific impacts on the owls, he noted.

Susan Jane Brown, an attorney for the environmental nonprofits, argued that BLM was required to conduct an updated examination instead of relying on the resource management plan.

"We can't know if there were changed circumstances since 2016 because the BLM never actually looked," she said.

### Enhanced Protections Possible for Greater Sage-Grouse

The just-released Senate FY 22 Interior Appropriations bill removes a provision exempting protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) for the once-abundant but now rapidly declining Greater Sage-Grouse. The House of Representatives has already passed an Interior bill without the rider. Conservation groups are urging that the rider remain out of the final spending agreement.

"Our thanks to Senators Jeff Merkley and Patrick Leahy for showing exemplary conservation leadership by excluding the sage-grouse rider from the Interior bill," said Steve Holmer, Vice President of Policy for American Bird Conservancy (ABC). "This exemption has been in place for nearly seven years. It's time to once again give the grouse the possibility of ESA protection and the safety net it deserves."

The Greater Sage-Grouse is the keystone species of sagebrush habitat in the American West. Conserving the grouse also supports 350 other species of conservation concern, including the Pronghorn, Pygmy Rabbit, Mule Deer, native trout, and nearly 200 migratory and western bird species.

As many as 16 million Greater Sage-Grouse once occurred across 297 million acres of sagebrush grasslands in the West. Today, the sagebrush biome and grouse populations continue to decline. Sage-grouse habitat is less than



Great Gray Owl  
Credit: Wikipedia

*Conservation Column continued on page 4*

*Conservation Column continued from page 3*



Greater Sage-Grouse  
Credit: Bob Wick

half of what it once was, diminished by invasive species, roads, overgrazing, mining, energy development, agricultural conversion, and fires. The grouse's populations have declined 80 percent range-wide since 1965 and nearly 40 percent since 2002.

"A recent U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) study provides an excellent resource to understand the magnitude of Greater Sage-Grouse loss, as well as the likelihood that grouse populations will continue to decline," said Holmer. "It also shows that the species' range will continue to contract absent substantial new conservation measures."

The USGS report indicates that current management plans and other regulatory mechanisms are not sufficient to arrest the grouse's ongoing decline, and that additional conservation measures are needed to stabilize the population.

"Efforts to revive the National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy can best be accomplished, and will have a greater chance of success, if the Endangered Species Act listing moratorium is ended," said Holmer.

### **Migratory Bird Treaty Act Restored**

In late September, the Biden Administration announced that it plans to reverse a harmful rule change that undermined the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), as well as undertake a new initiative to reduce accidental but preventable bird deaths.

"We are encouraged that protections for migratory birds are on track to be restored, and where possible advanced, using techniques we know can reduce bird mortality," says Mike Parr, President of American Bird Conservancy (ABC). "Our thanks to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for proposing this rule and for providing leadership to conserve millions of migratory birds each year."

The last Administration had issued a significant rollback of the MBTA, overturning decades of bipartisan precedent at a time when our bird populations are in peril. The rollback removed the incentive to avoid and minimize harm to birds from industrial hazards, and limited accountability and recovery after incidents such as oil spills.

Recent research has revealed that North America's bird populations have declined by 3 billion birds since 1970. "To respond to the loss of 3 billion birds, we must restore federal protections and go even further to strengthen protections for migratory birds," says Steve Holmer, Vice President of Policy for ABC. "This proposed rulemaking will ultimately protect birds by utilizing best management practices such as installing screens that prevent birds from falling into oil pits and turning off tower lights to reduce collisions."

The rule weakening the MBTA had faced widespread opposition from more than 25 states, 30 tribes, treaty partner Canada, and hundreds of thousands of people, while a federal court vacated the legal opinion underpinning this rule.

"We urge the Biden Administration to go even further to bring back bird populations," says Holmer. "A permitting program would advance bird conservation efforts and increase regulatory certainty, and can also be effectively implemented."

"Beyond this, we urge passage of the Migratory Bird Protection Act (MBPA) to help safeguard the MBTA and its necessary and longstanding protections for the future. The MBPA supports a common-sense permitting framework that will advance best management practices, benefiting birds while expanding certainty under the law."

Here's hoping for more good news – and more definitive victories – to come!



## Field Notes for Jackson County October 2021

By Frank Lospalluto

*Then one day in late November, the dark ones, the black hawks from the far north, are suddenly with us,....*  
Merrill Gilfillan, *Rivers and Birds*

October has brought us some needed rain and cleaner air. We give thanks.

A flock of 30 **Snow Geese** were seen flying over Emigrant Lake Oct. 30 (JC). Twenty-four **Greater White-fronted Geese** were loafing near the entrance to Emigrant Lake Oct. 31 (JV). Two **Cackling Geese** were at Whetstone Pond Oct. 30 (TS, AC). One of the birds had a neck collar band and was photographed and the band reported the next day (GS). Any banded birds can be reported online at <http://www.reportband.gov/>.

Ducks are returning with the wet weather. A female **Eurasian Wigeon** was at Hyatt Lake Oct. 29 (FL). Twenty-seven **Northern Pintail** were on Lost Creek Lake Oct. 19 (EB). Three Canvasback were at Willow Lake Oct. 20 (JK) and three were at Kirtland Ponds Oct. 31 (JV). A **Redhead** was at Lost Creek Oct. 18 (JK). Two **Surf Scoters** were on Whetstone Pond Oct. 30 (TS, JK, AC). Three Barrow's Goldeneye were on the Rogue River below Lost Creek Dam near the fish hatchery Oct. 20 (HS, GS). A female **RED-BREASTED MERGANSER** was at Agate Lake Nov. 1 (HS, GS).

Six **Western Grebe** were on Lost Creek Lake Oct. 20 (NB, JL). A single Western Grebe was at Emigrant Lake Oct. 27 (BH). Three **Clark's Grebes** were on Lost Creek Lake Oct. 19 (EB).

A late **Rufous Hummingbird** was in Ashland Oct. 13 (RT).

One hundred **Sandhill Cranes** were seen and heard over Emigrant Lake Oct. 20 (VZ, JT).

Twelve **Dunlin** were starting November at Kirtland Ponds (HS, GS). Two **Pectoral Sandpipers** continued at Emigrant Lake Nov. 1 (JK). Four **Greater Yellowlegs** were at Jackson County Sports Park Oct. 26 (GS). A lone **Lesser Yellowlegs** was at Ave G pond Oct. 16 (JK).

The storm on the last days of October brought in good numbers of **Bonaparte's Gulls** as they migrate south. Fifty-one were counted at Emigrant Lake Oct. 31 (JV). Forty-two birds greeted November at Kirtland Ponds (HS, GS). There was a **Herring Gull** at Lost Creek Lake Oct. 20 (JL, NB). Another single was at Emigrant Lake Oct. 31 (AG, BH). A juvenile **ICELAND GULL** continued at Emigrant Lake first spotted Oct. 23 (LS) and seen by many at this point being quite uncommon for inland waters. Two late **Caspian Terns** were on Emigrant Lake Oct. 31 (CS).



Iceland Gull  
Credit: Frank Lospalluto

A baker's dozen of **Common Loon** were spotted on Lost Creek Lake Oct. 20 (NB, JL) and Oct. 23 (EB).

The **Black-crowned Night-Heron** roost at Whetstone Pond is active with five birds reported on Oct. 31 (GS).

**Turkey Vultures** made a big push north out of the valley in the first half of October. Over three hundred birds were seen streaming over the greenway in Ashland Oct. 7 (FL). **Osprey** still linger with one reported over Emigrant Lake Nov. 1 (BH).

There were two observations of **White-tailed Kite** in October. This is a bird that has become very uncommon over the last couple of years. One bird thought to be a juvenile was seen over the PCT between Mt. Ashland and Grouse Gap Oct. 12 (TK), which is an unusual location to spot one. The second sighting was out in the Applegate not far from Buncom Oct. 25 (SR). Good notes, photos if possible are encouraged with any sightings of these birds.

A **Rough-legged Hawk** was seen up off of Hyatt Prairie Rd Oct. 26 (JK) and a single migrant was seen high over Ashland Oct. 27 (PT). On Oct 29 (VL) there were two birds up in the meadows around Hyatt Prairie Rd, Lily Glen and Vesper Meadow. A single bird was spotted at Emigrant Lake Nov. 1 (BH). These hawks are coming from the tundra and taiga areas of Alaska and Canada where they leave in late September. Many arrive here and in the Klamath Basin in early November. A **Ferruginous Hawk** was reported over Ave G ponds Oct. 16 (NA).

The leucistic **Acorn Woodpecker** at Grizzly Peak Winery outside Ashland was recently seen again Oct. 12 (EU). Amazing the bird survives a couple of years on from the first reports.

*Field Notes continued on page 6*

*Field Notes continued from page 5*



Streaked Horned Lark  
Credit: Frank Lospalluto

The utterly spellbinding small falcon known as the **Merlin** is being seen widely and admired for its acrobatic flight as it stalks small birds. Merlins are just as comfortable in urban and suburban environments as they are out in the country.

**Prairie Falcon** sightings also pick up in the winter around the valley such that not every large falcon seen is a Peregrine. **Peregrine Falcons** are being seen regularly around Emigrant Lake (VZ) and the Kirtland Rd. Ponds.

**Black Phoebe** and its cousin the **Say's Phoebe** are widely seen in the winter here. Say's Phoebe observations have risen steadily the last few weeks. Weedy fields and pastures are their haunts.

Four **Hutton's Vireos** were observed in Liberty St. Park in Ashland Oct. 28 (NT). There was a small wave of migrant **Warbling Vireos** Oct. 9 with one at Rogue River Preserve (AA) and one up in the Greensprings area (JM). A single was also spotted in Ashland) Oct. 12 (NT).

A **Loggerhead Shrike** was found at Kirtland Rd. Ponds Oct 9 (JK).

Two **Horned Larks** were on the Medco A flats Oct. 18 (JK). A flock of 10 were found at Emigrant Lake Nov. 1. These birds were identified as the **Streaked Horned Lark** (*E.a.strigata*), which is listed as a federally threatened species. Most of the population breeds up in the Willamette Valley but they do disperse in the winter with some of the Horned Larks that show up on the Medco A flats at Lost Creek Lake being of that group. We do see a couple of other subspecies of Horned Lark so photos should be obtained.

October is late for **Tree Swallows** as most fall white-bellied swallow are Violet-Green Swallow. Twenty-four were over Emigrant Oct. 7 (FH). A single **Violet-Green Swallow** was at Emigrant Oct. 25 (TM). Fifteen **Barn Swallows** were over Kirtland Rd. Ponds Oct. 12 (JL, GS).

A **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** was observed up along the Rogue River near Lost Creek Dam Oct. 3 (AG, JK).

**Varied Thrush** sightings are up as birds migrate down for the winter. Two birds were observed during a Bear Creek bird survey on the Ashland section Oct. 11 (MW, LH).

Thirty-three **Evening Grosbeaks** were reported up near Lincoln in the Greensprings Oct. 16 (JM). A couple of **Gray-crowned Rosy Finch** were up on Mt. Ashland Oct. 28 (VL).

A **Lapland Longspur** was spotted with a flock of American Pipits at Kirtland Rd. Ponds Oct. 31.

This is the sparrow time of year and many sparrows are moving through the valley. Any single day one can hear snippets of the song from a handle full of species. Their rich buffy, rufous, brown, and black feathering is worth long study.

Two late **Yellow Warblers** were observed during a Bear Creek bird survey in Talent Oct. 30 (SV, NV, RB). A **PALM WARBLER** delighted a few birders out at the Kirtland Rd. Ponds Oct. 9 (JK).

And on that wonderful observation we are done. See you all in 2022!



Loggerhead Shrike  
Credit: Gary Shaffer

Thank you to all observers including: Nate Trimble, Pepper Trail, Bob Hunter, Janet Kelly, Anne Goff, Marion Hadden, Norm Barrett, Jim Livaudais, Gary Shaffer, Howard Sands, Karl Schneck, Tim Sorby, Elliot Bury, Terry Karlin, Rene Allen, Sammie Peat, John Vial, Kevin Spencer, Jacob Myers, Leslie Hart, Mary Kay Wells, Vince Zausky, Shannon Rio, Lauren Smith, Nicholas Asreen, Erin Ulrich, Frank Hall, Amanda Alford, Nick Viani, Sooney Viani, Emmalisa Whalley, Mick Smith, Kristi Mergenthaler, Claire Stuyck, Rebekah Bergkoetter, Andre Carvalhaes, Roxanna Tessman, and Violet.

All errors and omissions are my own. Peace.

## Birding is For Everybody and Every Body

By Erin Ulrich

Have you ever thought about how inclusive birding is to those who have accessibility challenges? Maybe you have a partner or a parent who has trouble walking on rough terrain, or perhaps you know a veteran who is wheelchair-bound and has limited access to birding sites because of his/her mobility. Maybe it has never even crossed your mind. Birdability is a non-profit organization that began in 2018 with one paraplegic bird-er's dream of making birding accessible for all people.

Birdability Week was October 18-24, 2021. I just found out about it this year, and unfortunately, not in time to promote it to RVAS. However, now that I do know about it, I'm going to share it with you and ask you to think about how birding is accessible (or inaccessible) to your friends and family members. How can we as an organization make birding more accessible and inclusive? We can definitely start by offering accessible outings for our fellow birders. We can each contribute to the Birdability Map, created by the National Audubon Society, by providing detailed accessibility information about our favorite birding locations in the Rogue Valley, or wherever you find yourself birding (the map is worldwide). I encourage you to take a look at their website at [birdability.org](https://birdability.org). There are several free webinars, fun merchandise, and lots of great information.

### WANTED! Field Trip Coordinator

Would you like to be a vital part of Rogue Valley Audubon's mission to provide free field trips to birders of all levels and abilities? We are looking for a new Field Trip Coordinator- someone who can find trip leaders, make sure the sign up sheets are completed for each trip and forwarded to the Membership Chair for solicitation of new members, and enter birds seen in eBird. Of course, field trips are currently on hold, but if you would like to start lining trips up for the future we can start back up as soon as possible. Please contact Erin Ulrich if you would like to take on this position.

## Christmas Bird Counts in Another Pandemic Year

The RVAS board and the coordinators of the Medford and Ashland Christmas Bird Counts agreed to continue this season's counts by following guidelines set by National Audubon. There will be no large teams or carpooling, and no compilation dinners. We won't be inviting the general public to join in, with the exception of submitting sightings in their own neighborhoods. But, once again we'll strive to cover all the areas as completely as ever. Results will be announced in the February *Chat*.

Bob Hunter, coordinator of the Medford count on **December 18**, and Carol Mockridge, coordinator of the Ashland count on **January 2, 2022**, will be contacting potential area leaders soon. Area leaders will decide how best to manage the counts in their areas. This could mean that the area leaders count alone, or with a family member or friends in their pandemic bubble. Or they could elect to divide up their areas and have volunteers count a specific location and report back via email, text, or phone.

This is not the joyful return to our normal CBCs we envisioned. But we'll still be proud when we pull this off safely for another year and get all our statistics into the national database.



Varied Thrush



## BIRDCENTRIC EVENTS FROM AROUND THE REGION

### Wild Birds Unlimited

#### Ashland Pond Walks

Erin Linton will lead a walk to Ashland Pond. Limited to 9 participants. Call the store at (541) 772-2107 or come in to register and get directions on where to meet.

DATE: Wednesday, November 3

TIME: 9:00 am

COST: Free

Max McClarnon will lead a walk to Ashland Pond. Limited to 9 participants. Call the store at (541) 772-2107 or come in to register and get directions on where to meet.

DATE: Saturday, November 13

TIME: 9:00 am

COST: Free

### First Wednesday Bird Walk

On Wednesday, December 1, the First Wednesday Bird Walk will resume at the Denman Wildlife Area. Walks begin at 8:30 am and end before noon. Jim Hostick is the leader. The gate will be open from 8:00 - 8:20 am. Participants will need to purchase an ODFW Area Parking Permit at the ODFW Office, Sportsman Warehouse on Delta Waters and Highway 62 in Medford or at Bi-Mart. We request that all participants be vaccinated for COVID-19.

**Directions to meeting spot:** We will meet at the entrance off Agate Rd. between 1/4 and 1/2 mile past the fire station on the left side of the road. Coming out Table Rock Rd., turn right on Antelope Rd. and go to the light on Agate Rd. and turn left. The fire station will be on your left at the corner of Ave. G and Agate Rd. Go 1/4 to 1/2 mile past the fire station and the gate will be on your left. Coming out on Highway 62 to Antelope Rd., turn left and go to the next light. Turn right and continue to the gate on Agate Rd.



### 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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\_\_\_\_\_ Check here if you wish to be sent a printed copy of *The Chat* by U.S. mail. Add \$25 to membership check.

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White-throated Sparrow  
Credit: Frank Lospalluto

Happy Holidays!  
See you in 2022!

Palm Warbler  
Credit: Gary Shaffer

  
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# ROGUE VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

## THE CHAT

Newsletter of the  
**ROGUE VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY**

Post Office Box 8597  
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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



### Sign up to receive easy notification of Chapter activities

Your Audubon Chapter wants to be sure you are aware of upcoming field trips, chapter meetings, the most recent edition of *The Chat*, and other items we post online.

At the bottom of every page on our website [roguevalleyaudubon.org](http://roguevalleyaudubon.org) you will find a form where you can request to be added to our mailing list. And be assured, we will never share your e-mail address with any other organizations.

