

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

Deadline for the March 2025 issue is February 20



February IN PERSON Program

Tuesday, Feb. 25, 2025 at 7:00 pm

Emperors of the Ice: Ecology and Physiology of an Iconic Antarctic Predator, the Emperor Penguin

With Dr. Gitte McDonald

Emperor Penguins are the largest species of marine bird. Perhaps because of its size, it is able to fast longer, dive deeper, and endure harsher conditions than any other avian species. As a top predator in the Antarctic ecosystem, they have a significant top-down effect on prey species. Additionally, as top predators, their survival and reproduction depend on the functioning of the entire food web.

Join Gitte McDonald as she talks about her research expeditions to the Ross Sea to study the ecology and physiology of Emperor Penguins. She will start off with an introduction on the basic biology and ecology of Emperor Penguins, before talking about current research on the behavioral and physiological adaptations that allow them to thrive in the Antarctic ecosystem. The talk will conclude with a discussion of current and future challenges.



About the Speaker:

Dr. Gitte McDonald is an Associate Professor at Moss Landing Marine Laboratories within San Jose State University. As a physiological and behavioral ecologist, she investigates adaptations that allow animals to survive in extreme environments. Marine mammals and birds provide an ideal study system to investigate how animals deal with extreme conditions because of their large size variation, geographic distribution, and the physiological challenges they face daily, including hypoxia, extreme temperatures, and fasting. Her research has provided opportunities to work with a broad range of species in diverse habitats from the Antarctic to the Galapagos. -Learn more about Dr. McDonald's work at <https://mlml.sjsu.edu/birdmam/>.

Location: Medford Congregational Church of Christ- Lidgate Hall, 1801 E. Jackson St., Medford
Time: 7:00 pm (coffee/tea/cookies will be served beginning at 6:30 pm)

Zoom instructions: We will attempt to include a Zoom stream for this program. If available, the Zoom link will be posted on the Rogue Valley Audubon webpage the day of the meeting.

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Chapter Program meetings are held on the fourth Tuesday of the month (unless otherwise noted), September through April, at 7:00 pm. Meetings take place at 1801 E. Jackson St., Medford, in Lidgate Hall of the Medford Congregational Church of Christ.

NOTE: Chapter meetings will be held on Zoom if deemed unsafe for gathering, or as otherwise needed.

Medford Christmas Bird Count 2024 Report

By Rebekah Bergkoetter

On the morning of December 14, 2024, twelve teams of birders spread out across Medford to watch and listen for the birds who grace the Rogue Valley in the winter. In a myriad of habitats, birders went by foot, car, and golf cart, documenting every individual bird they observed in the day. By dinner, 42,289 individual birds, representing 127 species, were logged.

The winter rainfall yielded about a half inch over the day, but the birds and birders were relentless. Volunteers hiked a collective 66 miles, and drove 284 miles, all in the name of community science. The efforts were rewarded with sightings of Canyon Wren, Townsend's Warbler, Barn Swallow, and Northern Shrike. Additional sightings of the usual suspects included American Wigeon (1,048), Canada Goose (2195), European Starling (25,207), and Brewer's Blackbird (2,855).

I am so grateful for the time and energy volunteers pour into this event. The 2024 Christmas Bird Count is the 125th count, providing incredible data for years past, present, and future.



Canyon Wren
Credit: Jim Livaudais

Status of upcoming events

Field trips: Denman Bird Walk - Feb. 5, Mar. 5, Apr. 2

Chapter Meeting: Tues. Feb. 25 at 7pm

BIRDCENTRIC EVENTS FROM AROUND THE REGION

RVAS

First Wednesday Bird Walks: February 5, March 5, April 2

Join RVAS for our monthly outing to Denman Wildlife Area. Walks begin at 8:30 am and end before noon, and are led by Jim Hostick. The gate will be open from 8:00 - 8:20 am. Participants need to purchase an ODFW Area Parking Permit at the ODFW Office, Sportsman's 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.

Wild Birds Unlimited

Ashland Pond Birding Trip

Max McClarnon will be leading a bird walk to Ashland Pond this Saturday. An easy trail leads to and encircles the pond where an assortment of our winter waterfowl may be seen. The riparian habitat is a great place to observe our wintering songbirds. Limited to 9 participants. To reserve your spot, come in or call the store at (541) 772-2107.

DATE: Saturday Feb 8

TIME: 9:00 am

LOCATION: Ashland Pond

“The Monarch Butterfly” presented by Robin McKenzie

Join us for a presentation of all things Monarch butterfly, from life cycle to migration and how you can help save this iconic butterfly just by providing host and nectar plants in your own garden. Robin McKenzie is a professional garden designer in Talent, specializing in pollinator gardens in the Southern Oregon for over 10 years. She will bring her entire set up showing what you'll need to start growing your own milkweed to plant, grow and share with your neighbors, so we can all be a part of the effort to raise more monarchs and save the species from extinction. Along the way, we'll learn about plants that will also sustain our feathered friends!

DATE: Sunday Feb 16

TIME: 2-3:00 pm

COST: Free

LOCATION: Wild Birds Unlimited store, 961 Medford Center, Medford OR 97504

Klamath Bird Observatory

Brazil Birding & Fundraising Trip

Join us on an adventure to support bird science conservation beyond borders! If you love tropical birds and hiking in the mountains, listen closely. Over the course of ten days, you will be exploring wildlife and the natural landscape, birding with local ornithologists, visiting national and state parks, and getting involved with local conservation efforts to protect birds and habitats in the Atlantic Forest. If that wasn't enough, the cost of this special trip will help fund the intern exchange program between KBO and Mantiqueira Bird Observatory (OAMa) and support the continuation of the bird monitoring program on the Mantiqueira Highlands in Southeast Brazil! Find more information and register here: https://klamathbird.org/about-kbo/kbo_travel/brazil-trip-registration-open/.

DATES: Aug 13 - 22, 2025

COST: \$5,750 per person

Courtesy: Klamath Bird Observatory



January Field Notes 2025

By Frank Lospalluto

*Nowhere is the same place as yesterday
None of us is the same person as yesterday
--Jim Harrison*

New year, new bird list. The Jackson County eBird list shows the number of species seen at the time of this writing to be 157. By December 31, 2025 that number will be around 260 species observed and reported. The Oregon eBird list covering the entire state reports 269 species so far this year. In 2024 the state registered a total of 422 species at year's end.

We have a few photos to share of three winter visitors: **Burrowing Owl**, **Loggerhead Shrike**, and **Northern Shrike**.

The Burrowing Owl and Loggerhead Shrike are interesting examples of winter site fidelity. While the rates of winter return vary across species, these two species exhibit fairly high rates of fidelity. Like returning to the same patch of forest or meadow to breed, so do some species return to the same areas to overwinter.

Kay Simmons shared these wonderful photos (below) of our Burrowing Owl. For the owl, the pastures around the Brophy Ranch must offer enough good food in the form of various arthropods. The manure is certainly a good host for various beetles and these can make up a sizable percentage of the owl's diet along with small mammals and small birds. And the owl has found a safe burrow for roosting. Burrowing Owls are active nocturnal hunters.



The Loggerhead Shrike along Campbell Rd. hunts the pasture, irrigation ditch, and the hedgerows. Small birds, small mammals, amphibians, small reptiles, and arthropods make up the diet. Loggerhead Shrike, lacking the powerful feet and talons of a raptor, rely on their powerful hooked bills to 'butcher' their prey after impaling it on barbed wire or on thorns. Hence the colloquial name of butcherbird. Impaling food on thorns in a shrub also serves as a larder. Land use, agricultural practices, and agricultural chemicals pose major threats to this North American shrike.

The larger Northern Shrike is a common winter visitor. They too 'impale' their prey and have similar habits to their cousin. Their prey tends to be larger; they have the ability to take jays, robins, and doves. They breed in the boreal taiga and tundra areas across Canada, Alaska, Siberia, and northern Asia. We usually see a few every winter in Jackson County.

Gary Shaffer's photos (page 5) offer a bit of comparison between the two species. Loggerhead Shrikes exhibit a strong black mask that mostly extends over the eye and across the top of the bill; they appear clean and white underneath. They are compact and powerful-looking. The base of the lower mandible of the bill is black. This is a

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good ID feature, as Northern Shrikes have a pale base to the lower mandible. Northern Shrikes have barring on the breast that can give them a slightly 'dirty' look that contrasts nicely with the Loggerhead. The black in the mask is often not as strong, and usually does not cover the eye or go over the bill as it does on a Loggerhead Shrike. Northern Shrikes have a 'lanky' look, like they play a different sport than their cousins.



References:

Paruk, J.D., T.J. Cade, E.C. Atkinson, P. Pyle, and M.A. Patten (2020). Northern Shrike (*Lanius borealis*), version 1.0. In Birds of the World (S. M. Billerman, Editor). Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, NY, USA. <https://doi.org/10.2173/bow.norshr4.01>

Yosef, R. (2020). Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*), version 1.0. In Birds of the World (A. F. Poole and F. B. Gill, Editors). Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, NY, USA. <https://doi.org/10.2173/bow.logshr.01>

The Conservation Column

By Pepper Trail

I-5 Wildlife Crossing

Let's start with some GOOD news. As many of you will have heard, the US Department of Transportation has awarded a \$33 million grant for the construction of the Mariposa Preserve Wildlife Crossing over I-5. This grant was through the Federal Highways Administration Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program, a part of the Inflation Reduction Act.

As Senator Jeff Merkley stated in his press release on the award: "What a huge win for Southern Oregon! This first-ever I-5 wildlife crossing in Oregon will be instrumental in safeguarding all the special species that call the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument home, while protecting drivers from dangerous wildlife collisions and costly damages to their vehicles."

Rogue Valley Audubon is a proud member of the Southern Oregon Wildlife Crossing Coalition (SOWCC), and has worked since 2021 with the many other coalition members to achieve this huge victory. National groups working on wildlife crossings have been amazed at the effectiveness of our grassroots effort. Construction is likely to begin in 2027 or 2028 and be completed in a single season. For much more information (including an illustration of the design), visit <https://myowf.org/sowcc>.

Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument Management Plan

The Mariposa Preserve Wildlife Crossing will link two parts of the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument, and will help repair the damage to the monument's ecological connectivity created by I-5. This was a key factor in the success of

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SOWCC's grant application. Yet despite the vital importance of the crossing for the monument, Medford BLM played no role in the effort (the monument's ecologist left BLM early on, and was not replaced). This lack of engagement speaks volumes about the BLM's management of the monument.

Medford BLM's failure to prioritize the protection and restoration of the monument's unique biodiversity and ecological processes are sadly on full display in its just-finalized Monument Resource Management Plan (RMP). The plan places its primary emphasis on fuels reduction for fire management, including 2-acre clearcuts ("for snow capture"). It would allow thinning on over 62,000 acres of the Monument. It also fails, yet again, to in any way acknowledge or reduce the ecological damage being done by livestock grazing on the Monument.

A coalition of environmental groups, including the Soda Mountain Wilderness Council, KS Wild, and Oregon Wild, submitted comprehensive comments on the plan, both at the scoping and the protest stages. Every single one of these comments were dismissed by BLM in the final RMP, with the boilerplate "this protest issue is denied."

A chilling statement repeated over and over in BLM's document rejecting all protests to its plan is this: "Presidential Proclamations 7318 and 9564 do not require the BLM's management decisions to be those that are the most protective of Monument objects. Instead, they require that, on balance, the BLM's management decisions be consistent with the overall protection of the identified objects. The CSNM PRMP/FEIS must comply with the purposes and objectives outlined in Presidential Proclamations 7318 and 9564, but multiple uses are allowed to the extent they are not inconsistent with the proclamations."

This deference to the "multiple use" paradigm that BLM applies to all its lands is entirely inappropriate for the only National Monument established to protect biodiversity. The RMP also envisions extensive use of "Categorical Exclusions" to carry out projects in the Monument without full environmental analysis. Again, this is completely inappropriate in the Monument, where careful analysis and a precautionary ("do no harm") approach should be paramount.

The Monument RMP is now final, so what is to be done? BLM's responses to the protests repeatedly stated that the analyses we were demanding would be done in the "implementation phase," when on-the-ground projects are actually being planned. It will be more important than ever to closely monitor how BLM implements the plan, and to challenge actions that are not fully protective of the Monument's values.

Beyond all this, of course, looms the incoming Trump administration. We do not know if we will see a renewal of the attacks on monuments established under the Antiquities Act that occurred in the first Trump administration, but that could well happen. I will keep you informed.

Northwest Forest Plan Amendment

The 1994 Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP) established the framework for protecting and gradually restoring ancient forests on federal lands throughout the range of the Northern Spotted Owl. While not perfect, it drastically reduced old-growth logging, established a network of Late Successional Reserves to be managed for the development of old-growth characteristics, and put in place requirements to survey and monitor threatened species.

Now, for the first time, the NWFP is undergoing a comprehensive revision, the Northwest Forest Plan Amendment, with the justification as follows:

"Changes in ecological and social conditions are challenging the effectiveness of the 1994 NWFP. In recent years, large, high-severity wildfires have resulted in losses of mature and old-forests, eliminating gains achieved during the first 25 years of implementation. Research on climate change and on the effects of past forest and fire management regimes indicates that large wildfires and other disturbances will increase in frequency and extent throughout the area covered by the NWFP. Further, Tribes were not included in the development of the 1994 NWFP, and the Forest Service seeks to uphold its trust responsibility to Tribes through honoring treaty and other protected tribal rights."

It is true that climate change and extensive wildfires were not anticipated in the 1994 NWFP, and certainly a greater voice for the Tribes is long overdue. Therefore, an update of the plan seems appropriate. However, the conservation community needs to monitor this process carefully to assure that the fundamental protections provided by the NWFP are not threatened.

The Oregon Audubon Council has convened a working group to analyze the proposed changes in the Amendment, and to protest those that would weaken protections for old growth forests or for species that depend on them, especially Spotted Owls and Marbled Murrelets. I am representing RVAS in this effort.

Issues of particular concern in the draft Amendment's proposed alternative (Alternative B) include:

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- An increase in the threshold for active management from 80 to 120 years in wet forests and 150 years in dry forests, thereby allowing logging in older stands.
- Elimination of the Survey and Manage provisions of the 1994 NWFP, weakening
- habitat protections for Spotted Owls and other old-growth dependent species.
- Overemphasis on supporting and promoting early seral stage plant and animal species that are not threatened or endangered.
- Lack of transparency in operational planning. Far too much “flexibility” granted to regional and local managers. Inadequate attention to accountability and compliance.

The Forest Service is hosting public meetings at all 17 of the National Forests covered by the Northwest Forest Plan. The meeting for the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest will be January 29 at 6 PM at the Interagency Office on Biddle Road in Medford. I'll be there.

The NWFP Amendment and supporting information can be found at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=64745>

For all its flaws, the NWFP Amendment was initiated and written by the Biden Administration. As I write this on January 20, we don't know what changes to public land management will be proposed by the Trump Administration. But based on Trump's record and the vision outlined in Project 2025, we are in for a full-scale assault on our environmental laws and regulations. It's going to be a long four years. Buckle up, and make sure your voice is heard!



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THE CHAT

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