

A voice for education and conservation in the natural world

Rogue Valley Audubon Society

www.roguevalleyaudubon.org

Deadline for submissions is the 20th of each month



BIRDATHON 2013: GREAT GRAYS RE-TAKE TITLE

With young guns Forrest English and Frank Lospalluto lending their considerable aural faculties, the Great Grays saw/heard 154 species to win the 2013 edition of the Rogue Valley Audubon Birdathon. The 24-hour Jackson County-wide count began at 6 p.m. Friday and ended at the same time Saturday.

The Great Grays team also included Bob Hunter, Brian Barr, and business manager and cheerleader Gretchen Hunter. Their admirable total not only bested their runners-up mark of last year by 10, it also ranks as the second best total ever in the event. Last year's winning team, the Falcons (who did not compete this year because of personal commitments), recorded 162 species to break their own record of 153.

Runners-up this year were the Binosaurs (they're grayer than the Great Grays but still sharp after all those years) who tallied 133 species. Led by Capt. Norm Barrett, the team also included Gary Shaffer, Jim Livaudais and Howard Sands.

Other competing groups--all in the We Don't Sleep In The Mountains Division--were the Old World Warblers (Edith Lindner, Maggi Rackley and Kathy Simonson) who had 92 species, the Wandering Tattlers (Anne Goff, Goly Ostovar and Sooney Viani) who recorded 80, and the Restive Wrens (Nancy Menken and Kate Cleland-Sipfle) who had 52 in only eight hours of counting.

Although no exceptional species were seen, there were some remarkable "misses." Not one Western Tanager was seen or heard by any of the groups. That must be a Birdathon first. Also not found were Lincoln's Sparrows and the notoriously fickle Cedar Waxwings. The Binosaurs inexplicably did not locate a single Empid Flycatcher. Empidonax difficilis has a new, all-encompassing meaning, for their team.

As of the end of May, we received contributions of \$1935, close to last year's total of \$2335. More contributions are expected, so we should be close to matching last year's totals. Congratulations to all, and thanks to every team member and every donor for making Birdathon 2013 a success.



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President's Column

The end of this month marks the end of our fiscal and administrative year; and for Maggi Rackley and Shelly Tanquary, it marks the end of their terms on our Board. Both have made significant contributions. In addition to the traditional tasks of the Secretary —keeping Minutes of every meeting, and sending thank you and condolence cards, Shelly managed to organize a listing of our inventory. Maggi has been working hard at increasing the number of our field trips and adding additional locations. You must have noticed that last month we offered three trips—to the coast with Ron Ketchum, to the Bear Creek Greenway with Harry Fuller, and to the Klamath-Siskiyou National Monument with Pepper Trail. Thanks to both Maggi and Shelly for your dedicated efforts on behalf of Audubon. And welcome to our newest Directors: Juliet Grable, Mike Guest, and Sue Polich. RVAS now has a ten-member Board and they are all looking forward to serving the Audubon mission in the Rogue Valley.

At the Board Retreat earlier this month, we committed RVAS to continue to offer programs you support. In addition to the Little Butte Creek Walk on the first Wednesday, so ably led by Murray Orr, we will offer at least two Saturday or Sunday field trips every month (except July and August). Thanks to Alex Maksymowicz, we will again offer the highest quality monthly Chapter programs. We will also have two Christmas Bird Counts, led by Bob Hunter in Medford and Harry Fuller and John Bullock in Ashland, and an active and competitive Birdathon which we hope will involve more members. Project Feeder-Watch at North Mountain Park, coordinated and managed for many years by Denny Niebuhr, will have a new coordinator this winter. Thank you, Denny, for making this excellent program available for the public to enjoy birding and welcome, Mary Pat Power, for making this continue. Good Birding! — Bill Hering

Field Notes: The Changing Seasons

Compiled by Stewart Janes

Whew! May has come to an end, and a busy month it was. Now that spring migration is coming to a close, maybe we can sit back and enjoy the summer birds with a little less intensity.

The Kirtland Ponds provided the most excitement. First, 4 **Black-necked Stilts** have taken up residence. It is unknown whether they are breeding, but it wouldn't surprise me. The first two appeared on 4/26 (JT,GS); two more appeared the next day. Black-neck Stilts show up from time to time during spring migration, but they seldom stay for more than a couple of days.

About the same time another denizen of the Klamath Basin paid us a visit. This was a **White-faced Ibis** that appeared on 4/26 (GS,JT) and was seen through 5/7 (RN) at the Kirtland Ponds and the Avenue G Pond.

Least and **Western Sandpipers** provided the backdrop for the less common species at the Kirtland Ponds. The peak numbers for these two were reported on 4/26 and 4/27 (RN,GS,JT). Both **Wilson's** and **Red-necked Phalaropes** were also consistent throughout May at the Kirtland Ponds though their numbers were less impressive. Still, they are pretty birds.

Dunlin were seen from 5/8 through 5/24 (JT). **Long-billed Dowitchers** were seen from 4/26 through 5/12 (GS,JT) and **Short-billed Dowitchers** were seen on 5/5 (RN). **Semipalmated Plovers** visited from 4/26 through 5/24 (JT). The most interesting visitors were the **Whimbrel** (usually strictly a coastal species) reported on 5/2 (JT) and the **Semipalmated Sandpiper** seen on 5/2 and 5/6 (JT,GS). A **Solitary Sandpiper** was at the Kirtland Ponds on 5/5 (RN).

The shorebirds were joined by **Black Terns** from 5/9 through 5/31 at the Kirtland Ponds and Agate Lake (JT,NB), and **Forster's Terns** at the Kirtland Ponds on 5/2 (JT).

Both breed in the Klamath Basin but are only visitors to the Rogue Valley. **Bonaparte's Gulls** were reported from both Agate Lake and the Kirtland Ponds between 5/9 and 5/23 (NB,BH).

Purple Martins continue to increase in number in the valley. Sightings were reported from the Kirtland Ponds, Eagle Point and Dead Indian Memorial Road between 5/12 and 5/26 (BH,HS,GS,KH).

The **Great-tailed Grackle** of White City returned for one more year. This time it was seen at the Kirtland Ponds on 5/6 (GS) and along Lower Table Rock Road on 5/11 (JT). **White-throated Swifts** continue to occupy Lower Table Rock with one seen and photographed on 5/23 (GS).

While the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument **Black-throated Sparrows** apparently did not return this year, a **Sage Sparrow** did make an appearance in Eagle Point on 5/17 (HS).

A remarkable female **Lawrence's Goldfinch** was at the Kirtland Ponds on 5/17 (JT). There are only a handful of records for the state despite being regular just south of the state line. A female **Black-chinned Hummingbird** was at the feeder of Howard Sands in Eagle Point on 5/24.

The **Eastern Kingbird** on Tresham Lane on 5/16 (AC) was also quite unusual. One usually has to travel to Malheur or the lower Deschutes River to see them in Oregon. The lone **Bank Swallow** at Agate Lake on 5/11 (RN) was also unusual on two counts. First, they are rarely seen in Jackson County, and second, they are very gregarious.

Evening Grosbeaks continued to visit throughout the month with most sightings in the Ashland area. **Red Crossbills** are also demonstrating a reluctance to leave. Sizeable flocks were seen on occasion in Ashland throughout the month (FE,SJ).

Field Notes continued on page 5

The Conservation Column

By Pepper Trail

Senator Wyden Prepares to Tackle O&C Land Management

As most RVAS members are well aware, the management of public forests in Oregon has been a source of seemingly endless dispute. At the root of much of the controversy is the O&C Act, which covers most of the southwestern Oregon forests managed by the Bureau of Land Management. Revenues from unsustainable logging of these forests filled the coffers of southern Oregon counties for decades, allowing generous public services despite some of the lowest property tax rates in the state. Logging restrictions since the listing of the Northern Spotted Owl (and, at least equally important, changing economic conditions) have drastically reduced this flow of federal money, resulting in budgetary crises and intense pressure on Oregon politicians to find a solution. In late May, Senator Ron Wyden announced that he is working on a comprehensive legislative reform of the O&C Act. Many details remain to be worked out, but here is an abridged summary of the press release from Senator Wyden's office on his plan:

O&C Legislative Framework

Oregon's O&C lands are truly unique among federal land holdings and deserve separate treatment within the confines of the O&C Act. We have learned a great deal about conservation, clean air and water and habitat preservation since the Act was adopted and it must be updated to reflect that understanding. This update must also give new life to the original guarantee of jobs and timber production in the Act. Sustainable harvest will be consistent with the most advanced forest management practices advocated by Northwest experts and demonstrated in pilot projects and collaborative efforts across the state, including the pioneering and successful efforts in the Siuslaw Forest and Medford BLM district. The division of land will be based on the following guidelines intended to guarantee increased jobs and timber harvest while protecting large areas of habitat and old growth.

1) A substantial portion of O&C lands will be set aside for sustainable economic activity with ultimate harvest levels governed by rules established in legislation.

The legislation will modernize existing federal laws as they apply to O&C lands so that harvest can continue at a steady, sustainable, and uninterrupted rate once an initial review of all lands set aside for management is completed and as long as subsequent timber sales comply with the legislation.

2) The legislation will create wilderness and other permanent land use designations whose primary management focus will be to maintain and enhance conservation attributes. This acreage will be roughly equivalent to lands designated for sustainable harvest. The focus should include protection of both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, sources of clean drinking water, contiguous lands, and old growth stands older than 120 years of age.

These lands will include wilderness protections as well as a variety of protections that safeguard clean water and treasured resources and focus on long term conservation of habitat, but will also include areas emphasizing recreation and areas that would allow for restoration based thinning in previously managed stands.

Conservation Column continued on Pages 6 and 7

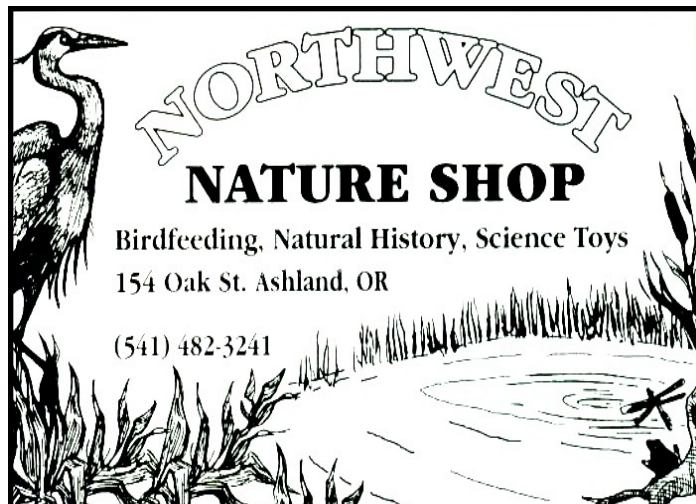
Field Notes continued from Page 3

The oddball **White Stork** that escaped from someone in the Applegate a couple of years ago is still on the loose. This time it was seen along Garfield Road in Medford on 5/23 (JB). Actually, it's surprising that it isn't reported more often.

Other sightings of note include the **Gray Flycatcher** at Howard Prairie on 5/10 (NB), the **Snow Goose** at the Kirtland Ponds on 4/22 (GS), the **Black-backed Woodpecker** on the road to Fourmile Lake on 5/14 (DA), the **Red-naped Sapsucker** on Heppsie Mountain on 5/12 (BH).

A couple of final notes to close out the spring migration. A sizable movement of **Townsend's Warblers** and **Warbling Vireos** was reported from the Siskiyou on 5/23 and 5/26. These must be birds heading for the northernmost reaches of their range in Canada and Alaska, as Oregon birds are already well along in their breeding cycle. And now for the last word in migration, the **Common Nighthawk**. It is traditionally the last of the spring migrants to arrive. Kate McKenzie reported one on 5/29.

Thanks to this month's contributors including Dick Ashford, Norm Barrett, Jerry Burke, Alan Contreras, Forrest English, Bob Hunter, Karen Hussey, Frank Lospalutto, Kate McKenzie, Russ Namitz, Howard Sands, Gary Shaffer, Pepper Trail and Jeff Tufts. Deadline for contributions to the Field Notes in the September issue of The Chat is August 20.



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Conservation Column continued from Page 4

3) Voluntary land exchanges between Federal and private landowners should be encouraged. The Federal lands exchanged should be confined to those lands outside of protected areas. Along with improving management of O&C Lands, exchanges should focus on reducing costs to the taxpayer and protecting private forest landowners from the impacts of less intensively managed federal lands and more limited wildfire management.

4) A substantial portion, if not all, of the revenue from these lands, minus federal costs, will be returned to the counties where the lands are located. Accompanying the legislation that implements this division of land will be legislation to provide a permanent and stable source of funding for O&C counties encompassing existing county payments and other federal payments. While the legislation will not prescribe any local tax levy, the formula in the accompanying legislation will consider a local tax level that is not on par with the average resource-dependent rural county.

The senator is requesting input as to the designation and consolidation of BLM, State and private lands that best meet the economic and conservation goals outlined above. The legislation will put into effect the recommendations of a broad group of Oregonians including land swaps, movement of lands between governments and agencies, and redesignation of lands for harvest or conservation.

I will be following the development of this proposal, and will present a full analysis as details become available. While there are certainly positive aspects, we must be wary of any measure that essentially designates large areas of public forests as logging sacrifice zones - which appears to be a potential result of Wyden's framework.

Finally, here is the summary of RVAS's conservation activities over the past year. Whew!

Conservation Activities and Accomplishments of Rogue Valley Audubon Society 2012-2013

A major focus of Rogue Valley Audubon Society (RVAS) conservation this year was the water situation in the Klamath Basin, specifically how this is negatively impacting the National Wildlife Refuges there. We signed letters of concern on the refuge water supply addressed to the Bureau of Reclamation and Interior Secretary Salazar. We also convened an RVAS study group on the proposed Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement (KBRA), which has been controversial within the environmental community. As part of this, we had direct conversations both with WaterWatch staff (leaders in opposition to the KBRA) and FWS refuge staff (who support KBRA). At the present time, the KBRA is dormant, as Congressional action would be required for it to take effect, and no bills have been put forward.

We also wrote or signed on to letters related to the following state and national conservation issues:

- Expanding Marbled Murrelet protection measures and critical habitat
- Management of Caspian Terns and other fish-eating species in the lower Columbia River
- Supporting Oregon Governor Kitzhaber's compromise proposal limiting gillnetting in the Columbia River

The Chat—June, 2013

- Supporting the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program (a priority for NAS)
- Calling for environmental review of wave-energy proposals off the Oregon coast
- Opposing the proposed Pebble Mine in Alaska's Bristol Bay (an NAS priority)
- Calling for state regulations banning feeding of raccoons
- To the Pacific Fishery Management Council concerning their Fishery Ecosystem Plan; advocating for catch limits on forage fish that are the basis for the food web of the ocean and are essential for seabirds.
- Signed on in support of the concept of a Wildlife Conservation Stamp (similar to a Duck Stamp, but for non-consumptive users of the National Wildlife Refuge system).

In addition, we worked on two local issues with significant potential impacts on bird habitats:

- **Denman Wildlife Management Area:** this is a marsh and wetland habitat complex administered by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), and is the only significant remnant of this habitat in the Rogue Valley. We continued our monthly Denman bird walks (which serve a monitoring function), and also worked with ODFW staff and Audubon volunteers to plant shade trees around the largest pond in the wildlife area. Finally, we prepared "scoping comments" on this initial phase of planning for expansion of a major regional highway (Hwy 62) which may have drastic negative impacts on adjacent portions of the Denman Wildlife Area due to increased lights, noise, and emissions. These comments were submitted to the Oregon Department of Transportation.
- **Ashland Pond/Bear Creek Greenway:** this area along Bear Creek provides significant riparian habitat and is a favorite birding area. City of Ashland plans related to wastewater treatment have potential negative impacts on this area, and were the subject of much concern. RVAS leaders met with Ashland officials and established a good dialogue related to this issue, assuring that our environmental concerns will be incorporated into the final plans.

Finally, we continued our collaborative with other regional and statewide conservation organizations, particularly the following:

- Continued our work in alliance with the Soda Mountain Wilderness Council to increase the size and insure the ecological integrity of the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument.
- Participated in meetings of the Oregon Conservation Network, and provided input for setting environmental priorities for their advocacy efforts with the Oregon legislature.
- Participated with other Audubon chapters in joint conservation activism, coordinated through the Oregon Audubon Council.

Have a great summer, everyone!

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE — Christy Splitt, Oregon Conservation Network Director

It's June of an odd-numbered year, which means that the Oregon Legislature is just weeks away from wrapping up their long session. The budget for the next two years will be set and important policies affecting all of us - and our environment - will be put in place. **RVAS is part of the Oregon Conservation Network (OCN), a coalition that brings together organizations from all over the state to protect our natural legacy in the Capitol.**

This session, one Southern Oregon problem has made it to the top of the "to do" list for Oregon's conservation groups: suction dredge mining. If you have been on the Middle Rogue, Chetco, or East Illinois rivers recently, then you know that we have seen a dramatic uptick in so-called recreational mining in our area waterways. Loud suction-dredges suck up gravel from the river bed in the search for gold, and then that gravel is dumped back into the river. The practice is bad for fish habitat and bad for other river users. Many a local fly-fisher can tell you a tale of what it's like to find your favorite fishing hole overwhelmed by suction dredges.

Senate Bill 838, a priority of OCN, would place a five year moratorium on suction dredge mining while the state develops a regulatory and fee framework in order to minimize the damage caused by the recent increase in suction dredging. As we go to press, the bill is in the Ways and Means Committee awaiting further consideration.

Climate change is another area of concern to Oregon's conservation community. Senate Bill 692 will improve energy efficiency for some appliances. Because California recently passed these requirements, this new law stops Oregon from becoming a dumping ground for inefficient appliances and saves consumers over \$20 million in annual energy costs by 2020, five years after the bill takes effect.

Energy efficiency is one way that we can reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. But, we can also look toward cleaner energy sources to do right by both the climate and the economy. Oregon's current Clean Fuels Program could bring thousands of jobs to Oregon and reduce the carbon intensity of our transportation fuels by 10% over 10 years, but passing another OCN priority, Senate Bill 838, is necessary to move the program forward. As we go to press, that bill is in the Senate Rules Committee awaiting further consideration.

A few bills have already passed that are of interest to nature lovers. Senate Bill 602 will ensure that sea-planes stay off Waldo Lake, a unique Central Oregon treasure. House Bill 2396 is another good one for local fishers - it will protect large woody debris, great for fish habitat, from removal in many circumstances. House Bill 2032 will make some changes to Oregon's mitigation rules in order to ensure natural resource and wetland protection.

But, there is still time left this session and plenty of work to do to ensure that Oregon's most special places are protected and that we do our part to minimize climate change now, not later. Friends and allies in the Capitol are also keeping an eye out for legislation that could weaken existing protections. **Get involved!** Sign up to receive email updates from the OCN and invitations to take action on conservation bills at salemwatch.forahealthyoregon.org. Thank you!

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Rogue Valley Audubon Society is a chapter of the National Audubon Society and everyone who joins NAS is enrolled as a member of the RVAS as well. We welcome the following new members this month: George Berkich, Elisa Brady, Susan Bratt, Lisa Carter, Clara L. Fader, Jim Featherstone, Tammy L. Fowler, Betty Gillarde, Joanne Haddad, Challee McKenzie, Sally Minard, Patricia Peck, Aldene Scheuerman, Paula Silverberg, Shel Silverberg, David Tara, Brenda Thomas, Jan D. Vries, Sylvia Whitman.

You will be mailed a copy of *The Chat* every month (except July-August) until the end of the year. If you would like to continue to receive a copy of *The Chat* in the mail, at no charge, you just need to let us know. Call any of our officers or Board Members listed in this issue or send an email to: roguevalley-audubon@gmail.com. As an alternative, *The Chat* is always available online at <http://www.roguevalleyaudubon.org/>. Please let us know if you prefer to use the web instead of receive a paper copy in the mail.

And remember to join us at our Chapter meetings, field trips and bird walks, and let us know how you would like to become involved. Welcome to RVAS!

SPRING GARDEN FAIR VOLUNTEER THANK YOU

Thanks to those who made RVAS a presence at the Master Gardeners' **Spring Garden Fair**, continuing the tradition of a decade or so. This year about 7,000 people visited the fair. We sold some booklets and may have gained some new members.

We paired with Klamath Bird Observatory (KBO) to give both organizations exposure to the fair participants and KBO offers a great selection of educational material. We had three stuffed birds overseeing the booth, courtesy of Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and a real nest for close inspection in its display box. Many people stopped by to talk "birds" or ask questions about birds, equipment and where to find interesting birds. We gave out nearly all the copies of RVAS's new "Birding Hotspots in Jackson County" that we had at the fair.

Of course there is the small cadre of folks who volunteer their time to spend some hours in the booth making face-to-face contact; they represent all of the rest of us in a very personal way. Our special thanks go to Judd Hurley for the variety of essential tasks he accomplished and thanks to Gaylene Hurley, Bill Hering, the Petersons, Shelly and Sue, the Kreismans and Kathleen Kudo.

We are looking for a coordinator for the next fair. If you are interested, contact Bill Hering at [541-488-5886](tel:541-488-5886).

Robert Mumby, coordinator

Join our Society

If you like to hang out with the birds, join the *Rogue Valley Audubon Society*



If you would like to

- Attend our monthly meeting & programs
- Participate in our field trips and bird walks
- Read our newsletter *The Chat*
- Support our classes for children
- Help protect bird habitats
- Support local bird research

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*This fund is used for local bird research projects and to promote interest in birds and birding.

NORTH MOUNTAIN PARK SUMMER PROGRAM

Summer Saturday Morning Bird Walks

Stroll through North Mountain Park with local birding experts from the Rogue Valley. This will be an opportunity to see and hear a variety of birds that spend the summer in the Rogue Valley. Binoculars and field guides will be available for check-out.

AGES All ages welcome
DAYS 2nd Saturday each month
DATE July 13 | August 10
TIME 8—9am
PLACE North Mountain Park
COST Free
INSTRUCTORS Local volunteer birders

Birding Siskiyou County

Through photos and lively discussion, get to know the breeding birds of Siskiyou County. Follow up what you learn with a field trip to Copco Lake and Shasta Valley Wildlife Area. Register online at www.ashland.or.us/register or call the Nature Center at 541-488-6606.

AGES 13 & up
Lecture | Field Trip
DAYS Thursday | Saturday
DATE July 11 | July 13
TIME 6—8pm | 7am—3pm
PLACE North Mountain Park
COST \$15

INSTRUCTOR: Harry Fuller is a local birding tour guide and author of *Freeway Birding, San Francisco to Seattle*. His website is www.towhee.net, and his bird blog is <http://atowhee.wordpress.com>

FIELD TRIP LEADERS NEEDED

Local birders are needed to lead field trips. Field Trip Chairman Maggi Rackley coordinates the events, but leaders have the option of choosing their destinations. Please contact Maggi at imabrrrder@yahoo.com to volunteer, or to get further information. Thank you.

ROGUE VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

THE CHAT

Newsletter of the ROGUE VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

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MONTHLY BIRD WALK WITH MURRAY ORR

First Wednesday Each Month: Little Butte Creek Walk. Meet at entrance gate of the Denman Wildlife Area at 8:00 and the walk will start at 8:30. (The gate is open between 8 and 8:30 only.) Please contact **Murray Orr, 541-857-9050** for details and if you are willing to join him in organizing these bird walks. He needs volunteers to help him open and close the gate and record observed species when he is not available. Walks will continue through 2013.



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 on-line. Send an e-mail RogueValleyAudubon@gmail.com and ask to be added to the e-mail notification list. And be assured, we will never share your e-mail address with any other organizations.