

# The Chat

Number 384  
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A voice for education and conservation in the natural world

Rogue Valley Audubon Society

[www.roguevalleyaudubon.org](http://www.roguevalleyaudubon.org)

*Deadline for submissions for the next month's issue is the 20th of each month*



**Tuesday, January 24**  
**Program Meeting— 7:00 pm:**  
**Clayton Barber, Manager of**  
**Denman Wildlife Management**  
**Area**

Join Clayton as he provides an interesting look at the Denman Wildlife Management Area, located on Agate Road White City. Clayton will tell us about the activities and the range of flora and fauna which can be found in the area.



**Holiday Potluck—Fun and a Fund-raising Success**

Congratulations to the holiday potluck, raffle and auction organizing committee, along with master of ceremonies Bob Hunter for raising over \$2,500 for RVAS education and outreach programs.

For a complete rundown on all the donors and the evening's activities see page 10.



Program meetings are held at Medford Congregational Church at 1801 E. Jackson St.

President's Column

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**Book Sales:** Lynda Stevenson, 858-7048

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**Field Trips: OPEN**

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**Holiday Party Raffle:** Kate Cleland-Sipfle; [sipfle@aol.com](mailto:sipfle@aol.com), 541-482-2933,

**Hospitality:** Katy Reed, 245-5095

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A great holiday party and two very productive Christmas Bird Counts finished up the old year with a bang. Thanks to Carol Palmer, Kate Cleland-Sipfle and Sooney Viani for organizing the holiday party and raffle. The Medford CBC was the sunniest in memory, and the Ashland CBC may have set a record for the least number of Canada Geese ever recorded. Thanks to organizers Bob Hunter and Harry Fuller and John Bullock for providing these holiday gifts.

With the coming of the new year, it is also time to think about finding new volunteers to serve on the RVAS Board starting July 1. What seems like a distant date will be upon us before we can say "Birdathon". In fact, Birdathon 2012 is scheduled for April 28, whereas the election of new Board members will take place at the chapter meeting on April 24. Obviously, there's little time to waste. So please be receptive if you are contacted by nominating committee chair Harry Fuller or another committee member asking you to stand for election to the Board.

I hope that most of you saw the lead article in the December 30 Outdoors section of the Medford Mail Tribune describing Project Feederwatch at the Jefferson Nature Center. Not only do I urge more of you to participate in PFW, I also want to draw your attention to the fact that it takes volunteers like Judd Hurley at JNC and Denny Niebuhr at North Mountain Park to make this program possible. Volunteer organizers are the core of all other RVAS-sponsored activities, such as chapter meetings, educational programs and conservation activities, bird walks, and field trips.

*President's Column continued page 3*

*President's Column continued from page 2*

Which reminds me to remind you that we still need a field trip organizer. Currently, there are no RVAS field trips scheduled after the February 4 field trip to the Klamath Basin. We need someone to remedy this situation. The RVAS Board will provide on-the-job training, but first someone must step forward to take on this position. Please contact me or Bill Hering to volunteer—soon.

I wish you all a fun-filled year of happy birding!



Alex Maksymowicz

Canada geese at Denman Wildlife

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## Field Notes: The Changing Seasons, November, 2011

*Compiled by Stewart Janes*

It's November and fall migration is finally over....or not. Waterfowl of course are still moving. They follow the open water north or south until spring sends them far north to breed.

Fall migration really should be over by now for everyone else. Yet, there were an inordinate number of laggards this past month. I'm still trying to sort out whether it's due to reluctant birds or an increase in the number of birders getting out and beating the bushes.

Lone **Turkey Vultures** were observed on 11/7 at Sickles Pond (JB,SB) and along highway 66 on 11/17 (FE). Will they stay the winter?

A **Western Tanager** was at Denman on 11/2 (JT).

In most years they rarely are observed in October, and here is one in November. The same goes for **Black-headed Grosbeaks**. Yet, individuals were seen at the home of Maggie Rackley on 11/3 and at the Jefferson Nature Center on 11/12 (DN,VZ).

Only a little less surprising were the 2 **Tree Swallows** at Agate Lake on 11/12 (KC-S) and the 2 **Osprey** at Agate Lake on 10/26 (CD) and one at Mace Lake on 11/17 (SJ). Neither species completely abandons the valley in winter anymore. The same is true for **Orange-crowned Warblers** though the number of observations was greater than usual. Individuals were seen at Ashland Pond on 11/5 (FE,HF), south Medford on 11/15 (AC) and along the Greenway in north Medford on 11/24 (SJ).

Shorebird migration finally faded this month with just the usual residue remaining though the small group of **Western Sandpipers** at Emigrant Lake on 11/1 and 11/5 (HF) was somewhat

*Field Notes continued*

unusual. **Dunlin** which bring up the rear of shorebird migration were seen at both Agate Lake and Emigrant Lake from 10/24 through 11/20 as well as **Long-billed Dowitchers** (CD,JT,HF). **Greater Yellowlegs** were at Agate Lake between 10/28 and 11/10 (JT) and up to 7 **Least Sandpipers** there between 10/26 and 11/14 (CD,HF,JT).

For whatever reason, this has been the fall of the grebe. The **Red-necked Grebe** reported last month at Lost Creek Reservoir remained until at least 10/21 (JT). **Horned Grebes** have been at Emigrant Lake, Casey Park and the Boise-Cascade Pond in Medford between 11/12 and 11/19 (FL,OS,HF,SJ) and **Eared Grebes** at Lost Creek Reservoir and Emigrant Lake between 10/21 and 11/22 (JT,HF,SJ). And we won't bother mentioning **Western Grebes**. There have been more this month than worth enumerating. **Common Loons** are fixtures at Lost Creek Reservoir with a maximum of 13 observed on 10/31 (NB).

Small numbers of **Bonaparte's Gulls** were at both Agate and Emigrant Lake between 10/24 and 11/5 (HF,JT) and an unusual **Herring Gull** was at Emigrant Lake on 11/22 (HF). Other waterbirds of note include the **White Pelican** at Agate Lake on 11/10 (JT) and the 12 **Sandhill Cranes** that dropped in for a short visit at Emigrant Lake on 11/22 (FE).

There has been little remarkable in the waterfowl world except we can now confidently declare Lost Creek Reservoir an inland sea. I can reach no other conclusion given the number of **Surf Scoters** that were seen this month between 10/24 and 10/31 (NB). Fifteen was the highest tally. **Tundra Swans** put in their first appearance for the winter on 11/10 at Agate Lake (JT).

Raptors, too, have been rather unremarkable. **Prairie Falcons** which typically winter in the valley as widely scattered individuals are here again with sightings at Agate Lake, North Phoenix Road and Yankee Creek Road between 10/26 and 11/18 (CD,AC,JT,DA). A **Northern Goshawk** descended from the forests to visit northeast Medford on 11/17 (JT), and a **Ferruginous Hawk** visited the agricultural fields behind Talent on 10/26 (SJ). Bob Hunter is happy to report that the **Short-eared Owls** are back in their usual winter haunts near the airport.

There is no shortage of **White-throated Sparrows** this fall with five sightings around the valley including the dependable bird at Ashland Pond (RB,BH,EL,HS,FE).

The **Townsend's Warblers** seen in Ashland on 11/3 and 11/17 (JB,SB) may represent tardy migrants or wintering birds. One or two can usually be found throughout the winter.

Other sightings of note include a late **Vesper Sparrow** in the Greensprings Spur on 11/12 (FL), another on Hammel Road on 11/9 (MM,LM), a **Rock Wren** at Agate Lake on 11/10 (JT) and **Horned Larks** on the mudflats at Lost Creek Reservoir (NB). The Dead Indian Memorial Road **Black-billed Magpies** were seen at milepost 7.5 on 10/25 (MM,LM) and 2 Tri-colored Blackbirds were along Ball and Brophy Roads on 11/9 (LM,MM). A number of people have seen **Varied Thrushes** already this fall. I hope they will return in numbers this winter after several years of near absence.

Thanks to November contributors including Dick Armstrong, Norm Barrett, Ralph Browning, John Bullock, Stephanie Bullock. Alan Contreras, Carol Doty, Forrest English, Harry Fuller, Bob Hunter, Edith Lindner, Frank Lospalutto, Lisa Moore, Marjorie Moore, Dennis Neibuhr, Maggie Rackley, Otis Swisher, Jeff Tufts, and Vince Zausky.

*Field Notes continued December 2011*

With a couple of dramatic exceptions, it's been a quiet December. The cold stretch we had pushed many potential good birds along and out of the valley, I suspect. Only the now obligate **Tree Swallows** of our summer birds were seen on the Bird Count. They no longer ever completely abandon the valley in winter. As January progresses we can expect the first of the Tree Swallow migrants to appear. Spring is coming. Speaking of spring, I have seen **Starlings** already checking nesting sites. **House Sparrows** are tuning up with what passes as a song for them, and **Red-tailed Hawk** pairs are sitting cozy and fiddling with sticks in the nest.

**Orange-crowned Warblers** continue to be seen in unusually high numbers. Individuals were seen in Medford on 12/5 (AC), at Ashland Pond on 11/27 and 12/21 (HF,KC-S) and at North Mountain Park on 12/4 (BA).

Now to the standouts. First, a **Snowy Owl** was found along Dutton Road in Eagle Point on 12/12. The bird was in poor condition and taken to Wildlife Images where it died. If memory serves me correctly, this is the second record for the county. This has been an invasion year with several seen along the coast and even a couple in the Willamette Valley. Most of the birds that make it this far south are juveniles, and most fail to survive to return north.

Next was a probable **Eastern Phoebe** on 12/4. While Says' Phoebes spend the winter with us in low numbers and Black Phoebes are with us year round, Eastern Phoebes are just that—Eastern. There are precious few records for Oregon. One was seen near Valley of the Rogue State Park in Jackson County about 10 years ago. This bird was observed at Denman near the headquarters

. The description was clear and accurate, but it was never seen again after the initial observation.

The third standout was the **Common Gallinule** at Howard Prairie on 12/10. Okay they breed in the Central Valley of California. There have been a few scattered records for Oregon in the past. Preferring warmer climates, it's not surprising that the sightings have all been in the summer. Well, this bird did not get the memo. Imagine Forrest English's surprise when canoeing on Howard Prairie he saw a "coot" with a red bill among a flotilla of real coots. Of course the "coot" with the red bill was a Common Gallinule (photo taken). Why here? Why now? If one was to show up in the winter which is crazy to start with, why in the high country in a lake with ice closing in? It makes no sense, but here it was. Unfortunately, it appears to have come to its senses and soon disappeared to the disappointment of other birders. One birder did find an unusual **Pacific Loon** while searching for the Gallinule.

Remnants of the shorebird migration were observed including **Least sandpipers** and **Dunlin** seen 11/22 and 12/24 (JT). **Lesser Yellowlegs** are not common in December, but one was at Agate Lake on 12/23 (JT).

**Tundra Swans** are never abundant in the valley in winter but they are usually quite dependable with small numbers in the Eagle Point and Table Rock vicinity. The two at Willow Lake on 11/10 (NB) were a bit of a surprise. **Cackling Geese** are with us in good numbers including a surprise flock at Emigrant Lake on 12/21 (FE).

There are a couple of solitary **Snow Geese** bouncing around the valley having been seen along Brophy Road, Kirtland Pond, the Boise-Cascade Pond in Medford, and Jacksonville.

*Continued on page 7*

## Christmas Bird Count Results

### *Medford - by Bob Hunter*

For those who missed it this year, count day was a rare sunny and beautiful day, ideal for looking at birds. Fifteen teams and 65 people participated, counting 121 species. Harry Fuller and John Bullock's team won the number of species prediction contest with a guess of 124 species.

It was a good day for raptors (14 species), plus count highs for 4 species: sharp-shinned hawk (15), red-shouldered hawk (12), ferruginous hawk (3), and prairie falcon (8). The 3 ferruginous hawks were exceptional given that have only been 8 other times in the history of the Medford count that ferruginous hawks have even been reported. There were also 8 peregrine falcons and 8 merlins seen, including one merlin seen by Alan Contreras at his backyard feeders in south Medford.

There were also Medford count highs for greater white-fronted geese (51), western scrub jay (409), oak titmouse (72) and starlings (108,311). Yes that was 108,311 and we know this because Pepper Trail and Chris Uhtoff counted 100,000 themselves, which is why they never made it to the tally at Baci's. It takes a lot of time to count that many birds. Pepper reported that at dusk from the Kirtland Road bridge over Bear Creek, tremendous flocks of starlings (known as a murmuration) were observed flying in to roost in the old Kelly's Slough area. They also observed approximately 14,000 robins, also flying in to roost at dusk.

The most species were counted in the southwest part of the count circle by Stewart Janes and Forrest English who teamed up to get 88 species. Bob Quaccia and Jeff Tufts braved Lower Table Rock and came away with the count's only 2 rock wrens. Joe Shelton's team found the only green heron. Norm Barrett's team found the only two screech owls and they were kind enough to take the press along, resulting in a great story in the Mail Tribune.

### *Ashland - by Harry Fuller*

Nearly 40 birders took part in the 2nd Annual Ashland CBC held on Dec. 29. The weather was cool but above freezing with no wind in the morning and only scattered rain during the day. The count recorded 110 species, up from 106 in 2010. Eleven species were recorded for the first time this year: Virginia rail, Ruddy duck, Canvasback, Eared grebe, Canyon wren, Prairie falcon, Spotted sandpiper, Eurasian Collared-dove, Brown-headed cowbird, and Red crossbill. Some species not repeated from last year include Sora, Great egret, Lazuli bunting, Band-tailed pigeon, Pileated woodpecker, and Pigmy owl.

My personal highlight of the day was watching a Prairie falcon bathing in the frigid waters of Emigrant Lake. We also had sightings of Red-tails in courtship as well as a pair of Golden eagles perching side by side on a bluff overlooking Emigrant Lake. Robins and Juncos were abundant, Cedar waxwings and Varied thrush were present but scarce. One count area recorded five Merlins, largely in forested habitat. The entire count circle recorded 11 Merlins.

The post-count dinner was held at Alex's Restaurant which has already been reserved for next year. Among visiting birders on the count teams were three from California, one park service employee from Nevada and two friends who drove down from Grants Pass. John Bullock was the count compiler.

*More field notes*

**Canvasbacks** are never common in winter, but sightings include one or more at Howard Prairie, Tolo Road, Agate Lake and Mingus Pond (NB, JT, SJ). **Redhead** sightings are rarer but 3 were at Agate Lake on 12/24 (JT), and 12-15 at Hyatt Lake on 12/20 (FL).



**RVAS Calendar of Events**

- Jan. 4:** Bird walk at Denman WMA
- Jan. 7:** Annual Dipper Walk along Ashland Creek
- Jan. 24:** Chapter Meeting
- Feb. 1:** Bird walk at Denman WMA
- Feb. 4:** Field trip to Klamath Basin
- Feb. 28:** Chapter Meeting

A flock of tardy **Sandhill Cranes** was at Emigrant Lake on 11/20 (LB, FE).

Noteworthy raptor sightings of note include **Rough-legged Hawks** in the fields north of Howard Prairie on 12/4 and 12/6 (DA, NB) plus a very unusual bird in Eagle Point on the Medford Bird Count (LN). **White-tailed Kites** are playing hide-and-seek with me being absent from many of their usual haunts. However, other report they are alive and well with four seen on the Ashland Bird Count and additional sightings around the valley (JB, SB, MM, LM).

**Varied Thrushes** were missed on the Medford Bird Count, but there were sightings in Lithia Park on 12/2 (RH). One more year of low numbers. We need the webworms to go away so we can have a good madrone berry crop to bring them in.

Other sightings of note include **Red Crossbills** and **Evening Grosbeaks** in the Siskiyou Pass area on 12/21 (FL). An **Evening Grosbeak** was over Ashland on 12/15 (SJ). **White-throated Sparrow** sightings continue to increase. Additional sightings this month include individuals at the feeders of Bob Quaccia and Ron Ketchum. A **Northern Shrike** was along Industry Way on 12/15 (GS).

Thanks to this month's contributors including Bob Arrigoni, Dick Ashford, Norm Barrett, Liza Bell, John Bullock, Stephanie Bullock, Alan Contreras, Forrest English, Harry Fuller, Rowan Heglie, Frank Lospalutto, Lisa Moore, Marjorie Moore, Liz Northrup, Gary Schaffer, Bob Quaccia, Kate Cleland-Sipfle, Jeff Tufts. Deadline for contributions to the Field Notes in the next edition of The Chat is January 15.

*Green Springs Inn & Cabins*



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## Upcoming Field Trips

**Saturday, January 7:** Annual Dipper Walk on Ashland Creek with leader Bob Quaccia. Meet at 9:30 am at Ashland Plaza, downtown Ashland. The walk will follow both sides of Ashland Creek in Lithia Park (for approx. 1.5 miles) observing and counting American Dippers.

**Saturday, February 4:** Klamath Basin with leader Jeff Tufts. Jeff will lead an all-day field trip to the Klamath Basin to look for wintering waterfowl at the Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge and the Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuge. This trip is limited to 20 participants. To sign up, contact Jeff by e-mail at [tallahto@aol.com](mailto:tallahto@aol.com) or by phone at 541-779-4582.

There are no new field trips scheduled after February 4. If you are unhappy about this, please consider volunteering to schedule new field trips. If interested, contact Alex at 541-482-1964 or [maksbox1@gmail.com](mailto:maksbox1@gmail.com)

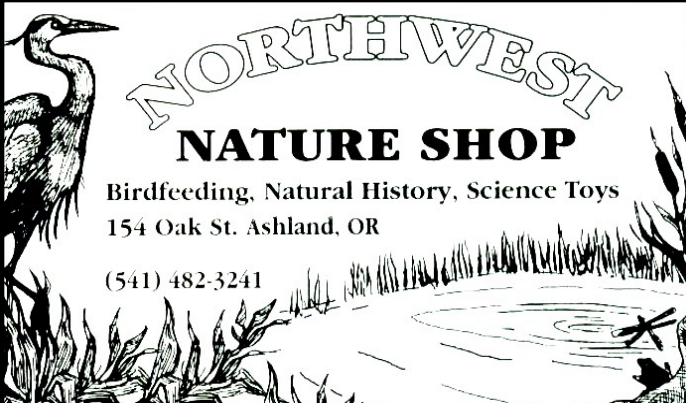
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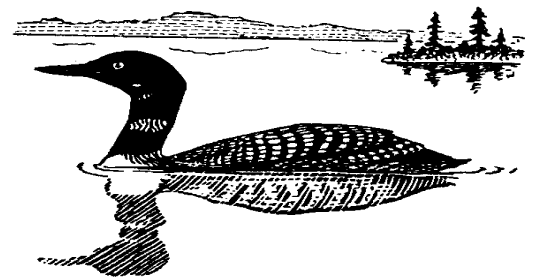
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**Local Membership Renewals Are Due**

Most of you belong to the National Audubon Society, which automatically enrolled you as a member of Rogue Valley Audubon Society. Some of you prefer to only be members of RVAS, your local Audubon chapter. If you have a local membership, that membership expired on September 30<sup>th</sup>. This is true for all local Members except those who joined within the last six months.

Please keep your membership and your support of RVAS active by completing the application below and mailing it with your check for \$20. If you are uncertain of your membership status, or have any questions about membership, please send an e-mail to: [bh@ashlandnet.net](mailto:bh@ashlandnet.net), or call Bill Hering at 541-488-5886, or Stan McIntosh at 541-535-2053. Thanks very much!

**ROGUE VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY**

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/CHANGE OF ADDRESS**

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(Rogue Valley Audubon Society will not share your information with any other organization.)

Circle if this is for **NEW MEMBERSHIP** **RENEWING MEMBERSHIP** **CHANGE OF ADDRESS**

Would you like to receive a printed copy of The Chat, our newsletter, mailed to you (it is also available on line)? **YES** **NO**

Dues alone are not enough to support our many activities, environmental and education efforts. Please consider a contribution in addition to your **\$20** membership. Your additional contribution may be tax deductible as RVAS is a 501 (C) 3 organization.

\_\_\_\_\_ Please check here if you wish your contribution to be anonymous.

Mail this form with your check for **\$20** RVAS dues and any contribution you wish to make, to: Rogue Valley Audubon Society, P.O. Box 8597, Medford, OR 97501.

**Deadline for submission of articles to the next Chat has been changed to the 20th day of the month preceding.**

## 2011 Holiday Raffle and Auction Successful!

We/you did it! RVAS cleared approximately \$2,500 for education and outreach programs in the new year. About 80 people came for a delicious potluck organized by Carol Palmer, wonderful bird slides by Jim Livaudais, followed by the fundraising emceed by our own Bob Hunter.

Please thank these businesses and nonprofit organizations for their products, gift certificates or services offered for the 2011 RVAS raffle and auction when you buy something else from them:

Siskiyou Field Institute - website: <http://www.thesfi.org>  
ScienceWorks Hands-on Museum - website: <http://scienceworksmuseum.org/>  
Crater Rock Museum - website: <http://www.craterrock.com/>  
Wildlife Images - website: <http://www.wildlifeimages.org/>  
Ashland Mountain Supply - Facebook page: [http://www.facebook.com/](http://www.facebook.com/AshlandMountainSupply)  
Mount Ashland Ski Area - website: <http://www.mtashland.com/>  
Bear Creek Animal Clinic - website: <http://www.bearcreekanimalclinic.net/>  
Wild Birds Unlimited - website: <http://medford.wbu.com/>  
Ashland Food Co-op - website: <http://www.ashlandfood.coop/>  
Grange Co-op - website: <http://www.grangecoop.com/>  
McGrath's Fish House (Medford) - website: <http://www.mcgrathsfishhouse.com/>  
Baci's Pizza, Medford - new in Medford, formerly Bruno's; Facebook page (for Rogue River store): <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Bacis-Pizza-and-Pasta/470403525300>  
Four and Twenty Blackbirds Bakery - <http://420blackbirdsbakery.us/>  
Northwest Nature Shop - website: <http://www.northwestnatureshop.com/>  
Green Springs Inn & Cabins - website: <http://greenspringsinn.com/>  
Harry Fuller Birding Tours - website: <http://www.towhee.net/>  
Running Y - website: <http://www.runningy.com/>  
Joan Brown, painter - website: <http://joanlbrown.com/>  
Cheryl D. Garcia, sculptor - website: <http://greatmetalwork.com/>  
Goly Ostovar, painter - website: <http://jeffnet.org/~rickersn/golyostovar/GO.htm>  
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EdenVale Winery - website: <http://www.edenvalewines.com/>

Trium Wines - website: <http://www.triumwines.com/>

Standing Stone Brewing Company- restaurant website: <http://standingstonebrewing.com/ashland-restaurant.html>

All winners and buyers of the raffle and auction items, too!

RVAS members who donated merchandise or services raffled or auctioned at the 2011 fundraiser:

Shelley Tanquary (Langlois guesthouse stay)

Nick Viani (Mac computer help)

Vince Zauskey (North Mountain Park bird walk)

Alex & Lillian Maksymowicz (Wildflower walk and picnic, Mt. Ashland)

Lynn Ledbetter (ceramic art, clock)

Alex and Genita Hamilton (Wood House birdhouse)

Carol Doty (art print, bracelet, backpack)

Sooney Viani (Japanese noren, orange crate art)

Kathy and Tim Simonsen (custom photo greeting cards)

Lynda Stevenson (Pebblestone wine)

Edith Lindner (bird books and note cards)

Kate Nehrbass (books)

Kate Cleland-Sipfle (books with cd's)

Lou Lyman (knitted items)

Alan Drescher (the familiar necklace)

Patricia Peck (binoculars)

And to all who contributed to the evening's organization and success:

Carol Palmer, Lynda Stevenson (also auction), Cherry Gregory (also auction) Katy Reed,

Teddie Hight, Maureen Swift- potluck and hospitality

Sooney Viani, Shelly Tanquary, Lynn Kellogg, Cherry Gregory, Kate Cleland-Sipfle - raffle and auction

Nick Viani, tickets

Jim Livaudais, program speaker

Bob Hunter, emcee and auctioneer

Robert Mumby and Kaethe Fulton, web and newsletter support, respectively

Many of these volunteers did multiple jobs.

Thanks to all and to all a good year.

## Impress your friends and name that bird!

Hint 1. A late summer nester using silky down from wild thistle for nest material. Female builds a cup between 4 and 20 feet above ground in the fork of a bush, shrub, or small tree. The nest is of tightly woven plant fibers, grass, cocoon silk and spider webs, lined with fur or plant down. The female incubates 4-6 pale blue eggs.

Hint 2. Forages on vegetation for thistle seeds, insects, flower buds and berries not to mention hanging feeders.

Hint 3. Habitat: Open areas with some shrubs and trees, farms, suburban yards and gardens.

Hint 4. Common year round resident but less widespread in winter and forages in small flocks.

Hint 5. Has an undulating flight like a roller coaster.

Quiz provided by John Taylor, Siskiyou Audubon. Answer in next issue.

Don't be fooled, the photo below has nothing to do with the quiz above. It's a photo of a Great Blue Heron taken by Robert Mumby at Denman WMA.



# 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 8:30 a.m. on TouVelle Road in the northeast section of Denman Wildlife Area near White City. Leader: Murray Orr 857-9050\*\*\* Please contact Murray 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.

