

The Chat

Number 382
October 2011

A voice for education and conservation in the natural world

Rogue Valley Audubon Society

www.roguevalleyaudubon.org



Tuesday, October 25 Program Meeting— 7:00 pm: Featuring Pepper Trail

Birds are exquisitely sensitive indicators of environmental conditions. Today these "canaries in the coal mine" are providing some of the most dramatic proof that climate change is already affecting the global environment.

Join ornithologist Pepper Trail for his presentation "A Bird's-Eye View of Climate Change." Using a wide variety of species, from Turkey Vultures in the Rogue Valley to penguins in Antarctica, Pepper will show the many ways in which birds are adapting to - or are threatened by—climate change. He will also invite discussion on how our local bird communities may change in coming decades (goodbye Gray Jay, hello California Thrasher). This is sure to be a fascinating presentation, enlivened with spectacular photographs of birds and their environments.

Up-Coming Field Trips:

October 12: (Wednesday) Tour of Denman Wildlife area. Meet at 9:30 a.m., at the Headquarters building on Gregory Road. Assistant Manager Dan Ethridge will lead the tour. To participate, contact Sonney Viani at sooneyviani@gmail.com

October 15: (Saturday) Whetstone Savannah, Leader: Ron Ketchum.

Meet at 8 a.m. across the road from the Pilot Station at the Central Point I-5 Exit 33. Plan for a 1/2 day trip and bring drinks and snacks. We will carpool from there. Dress for weeds and wet if the weather has been rainy. Sparrow and woodpecker species should be present along with mockingbirds and raptors.

November 5: (Saturday): Holy Water (Lost Creek Lake) Leaders: Edith Lindner and Keiko Thurston

Meet at 8 a.m. at the Dollar Tree (east end) at Highway 140 and Highway 62 Please bring a scope if you have one. If the weather is snowy or icy we will do a local trip.

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Volunteer Opportunities

Rogue Valley Audubon needs volunteers to fill the following positions:

Field Trip Coordinator

Master Gardner Fair Coordinator

Birdathon Co-Chair

If you are ready to volunteer for one of these positions, or just want more information, please contact RVAS President Alex Maksymowicz at 541-482-1964 or at maksbox1@gmail.com.

The Conservation and Education committees can always use more volunteers. If you're interested in the Conservation Committee, contact Robert Mumby or Sooney Viani. If you are interested in being a part of the Education Committee, contact Lynn Kellogg. Contact information for these individuals can be found in the Committee Chairs column to the left.

Field Notes: The Changing Seasons
Compiled by Stewart Janes

It's been a busy fall migration. It seems like warblers, flycatchers, swallows and swifts and shorebirds were in every cloud, tree, and puddle this month. After a cool wet spring where both migration and breeding were delayed greatly, birds pretty much got back on track by the time to head to Mexico. Still, some lingering effects could be detected. Straggling **Ash-throated Flycatchers** and **Western Kingbirds** could be seen a good two weeks after the last seen in most years. The last **Western Kingbird** was reported on 8/23 in Talent (SJ) and the last **Ash-throated Flycatcher** was observed on 8/31 at Emigrant Lake (FE).

And **Turkey Vultures** seemed quite content and widely scattered in the valley until 9/21 when the first kettles were reported, just a little later than normal. Indeed our local population appeared to clear out within two days after 9/21. Don't worry. I expect even larger flocks to pour through the valley through the first week of October. These will be from more northerly populations.

A few **Vaux's Swifts** remained as of the last week of September, but a major movement out of the valley appeared to take place between 9/15 and 9/19. Speaking of swifts, 4 **Black Swifts** were noted near Pilot Rock on 9/18 (FL). They breed in good numbers starting in the north Washington Cascades on into British Columbia, but we seldom detect them in transit through the valley.

Violet-green Swallow numbers have thinned, but I expect birds from the north to fill in behind the departure of our local birds and continue with us until mid-October. By 9/25 few **Barn Swallows** remained.

Warblers, tanagers, vireos, and **Black-headed Grosbeaks** were noted just about everywhere through the third week of September, but

Numbers have dropped dramatically since then. **Nashville, Townsend's, Hermit, and Orange-crowned Warblers** were all seen by multiple observers. A few **Western Tanagers, Yellow Warblers, Black-throated Gray Warblers** and **Common Yellowthroats** will linger into the first days of October, if the past is any guide.

Migration brought a special visitor to the valley. On 8/22 an adult **American Redstart** visited Prospect (ML). A few nest in the Wallows in the northeast corner of the state, but their normal migration route is eastward until they clear the Rockies. It has been some years since the last bird drifted through the valley.

For some reason **Rock Wrens** put Jackson County on their itinerary this year. Multiple birds were recorded over several days (8/30-9/9) at Agate Lake (AC,NB, FE) and another was in Bull Gap on 9/17 (FL). Good numbers of **Lewis's Woodpeckers** were also noted this month. The first showed up on 9/3 (PT) and the movement continued into the last week of the month.

Although we have to work hard for fall shorebirds in the County, we have done well this year. Special birds include a **Semipalmated Sandpiper** at Agate Lake on 9/3 (NB) and three **Sanderlings** at Lost Creek Reservoir in the third week of September (NB). Most **Baird's Sandpipers** and **Pectoral Sandpipers** migrate through the Great Plains, but we had plenty of strays this year. Baird's were seen from 8/21-9/18 and Pectorals between 9/3-9/18 (DA,NB,FE,HF). An **American Avocet** was at Howard Prairie on 9/9 (HF) and a **Solitary Sandpiper** at Lost Creek Reservoir on 8/21 (NB). **Red-necked Phalaropes** were noted at Lost Creek Reservoir between 8/25 and 8/28 (NB). And then there was the usual clutter of peeps salted with the odd **Semipalmated Plover** and **Dowitcher**.

Continued on page 5

THE CONSERVATION COLUMN

By Pepper Trail

August 31 marked the beginning of a new era in conservation activity for Rogue Valley Audubon, as our energetic, expanded Conservation Committee held its first meeting. The committee members are John Bullock, Bill Hering, Robert Mumby, Carol Palmer, Pepper Trail, Jeff Tufts, and Sooney Viani, with chapter President Alex Maksymowicz present as an ex officio member.

In addition to our long-time and continuing concerns with regional and national bird conservation issues, the new committee will focus on local conservation. At our meeting, we identified the top priority local issues as the Denman Wildlife Area and management of the Bear Creek Greenway (and associated areas such as Ashland Pond), particularly in relation to blackberry control and other wildlife habitat concerns.

Most of the discussion focused on two broad issues: the Denman Wildlife Area and the Bear Creek Greenway/Ashland Pond/blackberry control issue.

Denman Wildlife Area

Robert Mumby, Sooney Viani, and Carol Palmer are the leads on this. Many RVAS members have expressed concern with access at Denman, and with activities that are incompatible with birding and management of non-game species. Denman is managed by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), which generally emphasizes hunting over other uses of its lands, in part because much of their funding comes from hunting and fishing licenses. It was agreed that RVAS needs to be more connected with local ODFW staff to emphasize the importance of Denman as habitat for non-game as well as game birds. By fostering these relationships, we hope to gain a "place at the table" when management decisions are made.

Major points raised in discussion:

- Denman is heavily used by birders
- Bird species of concern (limited distribution in the Rogue Valley) at Denman include: breeding ducks, rails, bitterns, and Grasshopper Sparrow.
- Can we set up a system so birders can sign up whenever they use Denman? Either at ODFW HQ on Gregory Road, or perhaps on the RVAS website (with updates to ODFW).
- Can we set up a system to provide birders' lists to ODFW, perhaps from eBird.
- How do we make our concerns known to ODFW?
- Does ODFW have data on use by hunters?

Other groups? (e.g. dog trials)

- How do other groups (e.g. hunters) make their interests known to ODFW relating to Denman?
- Compatibility: we need to educate ODFW that hunting, dog field trials, model airplane flying are not generally compatible (at least as presently conducted) with birding and nature study

How can RVAS support ODFW and Denman? What do they need?

It was agreed that the first step in engaging with Denman was to schedule a field trip of the area led by ODFW. This has now been scheduled for October 12. The tour group will meet at 9:30 AM at the ODFW headquarters at East Gregory and Agate Roads (Whetstone Pond).

Denman Assistant Manager Dan Ethridge will lead the tour. If you would like to participate, please email Sooney Viani at: sooneyviani@gmail.com. We hope for a good turnout. Part of the intention for this tour is to find out how Denman management decisions are made, and how we can be involved. Based on what we learn, the conservation committee will plan next steps. In addition, Denman Manager Clayton Barber is scheduled to give our member's meeting presentation in January, which will be another important learning opportunity, both for him and us.

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Bear Creek Greenway

Jeff Tufts and Robert Mumby are already involved with Bear Creek Watershed Council, and will be our leads. It is agreed that this group is the best clearinghouse for information. A major concern is that RVAS be notified of pending management actions in time to provide input. There was much discussion of blackberry control. It was agreed that this is a complicated issue, but that the positive value of blackberries for native wildlife is being lost in public discussions, and that RVAS could contribute by representing this perspective. In particular, "scorched earth" blackberry destruction over wide areas during the nesting season has obvious negative effects on native birds. If management can be done on a rolling basis, and focused during the non-breeding season, some of these impacts could be lessened.

We Need YOU!

There was great energy at the conservation committee meeting. However, more members are definitely welcome. If you have a commitment to local conservation, let us know and join up.

Equally important, we invite RVAS members to write in to the conservation committee - or to the Chat - if you have concerns about a favorite birding area. We depend on you to be our "eyes and ears" so that we stay on top of actions that may threaten local bird populations or habitats. Together, we can be sure that our efforts are directed where they are most needed. My email address is ptrail@ashlandnet.net, and I will forward any messages received on to the full committee.

Thanks for all your efforts in support of our Rogue Valley birds!

Field Notes continued from page 3

It's a bit early for waterfowl, but a few early birds were noted. Four **Northern Pintail** were recorded at Lost Creek Reservoir on 8/28 (NB). This was followed by **Ruddy Ducks** and a **Ring-necked Duck** on 9/21 at Willow and Agate Lakes (NB). The first **Greater White-fronted Geese** were seen at Lost Creek Reservoir on 8/30 (NB). The biggest surprise was the **Red-breasted Merganser** at Howard Prairie on 9/20 (HF). This is usually a bird encountered only on salt water. The early **Common Loons** remained at Lost Creek Reservoir all month (NB). Other waterbirds of interest include 8 **Horned Grebes** on Agate Lake on 9/9 (AC), a **Forster's Tern** at Lost Creek Reservoir on 8/25 (NB), a high of 22 **Caspian Terns** on Lost Creek reservoir on 8/25 (NB) and a gaggle of 23 **Great Egrets** at Agate Lake on 8/31 (NB).

Say's Phoebes showed up in the valley on 9/3 (NB) and there have been several scattered reports since. **Evening Grosbeaks** remain with us in the high country both at Rye Springs and in Shady Cove. **Clark's Nutcrackers** were seen on Mount Ashland on 9/21 (JD) and at Willow Prairie on 9/21 (NB). **Red Crossbills** were at North Mountain Park on 9/5 (VZ).

The first **Golden-crowned Sparrows** were reported on 9/17 (RK), right on schedule. The summer has been the summer of **Merlin** sightings. This is most unusual since they aren't known to breed in the state. This month's observation comes from White City on 9/3 (BH). Other sightings of note include a **Barred Owl** near Applegate Reservoir on 9/18 (AC) and **Gray Jays** in east Medford on 9/6 (CP). What are they doing there? They belong above 4000'.

Thanks to this month's contributors including Dick Ashford, Norm Barrett, Alan Contreras, Jon Deason, Forrest English, Harry Fuller, Bob Hunter, Ron Ketchum, Mo Lolandi, Carol Palmer, Pepper Trail, Jeff Tufts, and Vince Zausky. Deadline for contributions to the Field Notes in the next month's issue of The Chat is October 20.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE PLANS A BUSY YEAR

By Lynn Kellogg, Education Committee Chair

Once again we will present our power point program "Learning About Birds" to local students. We target 3rd grade students with this program but it is appropriate for grades K-5th. We hope to include even more schools this year.

We are offering mini-grants to classroom teachers in Jackson County to support teachers and students working to improve and diversify their schoolyards to create attractive and healthy habitats for wildlife, especially birds and to deepen understanding of wildlife needs. Applications for these grants are due Nov. 15th.

We continue to work with individual teachers to assist them with teacher initiated field trips and projects.

The Education Committee is always seeking new members. If you are interested in birds and like children, we have a spot for you. If you would like to be a member, contact me at rvas.edu@gmail.com or call 541-855-9638.


If you are a classroom teacher interested in a grant application or assistance with a field trip, please contact me at the e-mail address or phone number above.



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A black and white illustration of a heron standing on the left side of a pond. The pond has ripples and is surrounded by reeds and grasses. The illustration is framed by a thick black border.

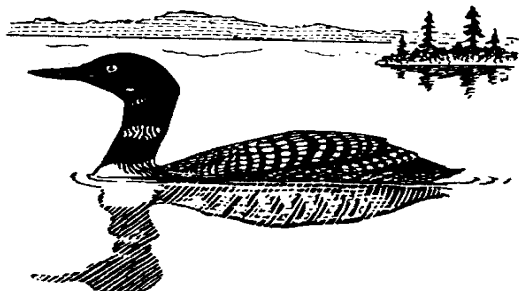
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**12/6/2011 SAVE THE DATE
RVAS POTLUCK AND RAFFLE/
AUCTION**

December 6, 2011—Will this be your lucky day at the RVAS potluck, raffle and auction? Will this be your day to win a splendid raffle prize or be the highest bidder on a trip or art object you want? All while making money for RVAS and having a good time. Bring something delicious to share at 6 pm and the raffle/auction fun will begin after 6:30 p.m., when the feasting is done.



RVAS Calendar of Events

- Oct. 15:** Field Trip to Whetstone Savannah
- Oct 25:** Chapter Meeting
- Nov. 2:** Bird Walk at Denman WMA
- Nov. 5:** Field Trip to Holy Water (Lost Creek Lake)
- Nov. 22:** Chapter Meeting
- Dec. 6:** Annual Holiday Party
- Dec. 7:** Bird Walk at Denman WMA
- Dec. 17:** Christmas Bird Count - Medford Circle
- Dec. 29:** Christmas Bird Count - Ashland Circle
- Jan. 7:** Annual Dipper Walk along Ashland Creek

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The Chat - October 2011

Second season: Dippers on Ashland Creek Barbara W. Massey

The American Dipper is perceived as a bird of the clear, cold, fast-running streams and lakes of western mountains, and that is true picture for the most part. But here at the south end of the valley Ashland Creek meets all the bird's criteria as it rushes down from a source high on Mt. Ashland to Bear Creek on the valley floor. For the past decade, Bob Quaccia has led a dipper walk up the creek every January, and seen the birds on almost every trip. This information, plus many other winter sightings, made us realize that a year-round observation of this unique bird was not only plausible but easy. So in the spring of 2010 a group of us decided to do a more comprehensive study. In late April we began walking the creek weekly to look for dippers. We found two nests during the season, both of which produced young, and I reported our adventures in The Chat last September.

This year Bob and I, along with Eric Setterberg, Larry Wright, Gwyneth Ragosine and Frank Lospalluto began our dipper watching in February. Bob built a nest box which was installed under a bridge just above park headquarters. (Alas, I twas never used, but we will relocate it this winter and perhaps build another of a different design.) Frank developed a website for us on which he posted events as they happened. Plus field notes from 2010. The first exciting event of late winter was the appearance of a bird with white edges on its primaries, a leutistic bird first seen on the annual January walk. We hoped it would stay and nest (and be readily identifiable without bands) but no such luck. Although it was interacting with another dipper below the Main Street bridge on 2/11, we did not see it again.

In early March a pair began building a nest high on a buttress of the reservoir dam at the top of Granite St. It was finished in a week, and we expected to watch the full breeding cycle. But there was never any sign that eggs were laid and attended. And although the pair stayed around for quite a while, and sometimes carried in more nesting material, they apparently went no farther with the breeding process, and had left the area by mid-May. The nest was totally inaccessible so we could not determine whether eggs had been laid. It also looked precarious to us, and might not have withstood the presence of 3-4 active chicks. But that was purely our perception.

In early May we spotted a pair carrying nesting material to the underside of the Water St. bridge in the center of Ashland. The nest was visible from the rocks below the bridge and we watched nest building, the long period of egg laying and incubation, and finally there were chicks being fed in the last week of May. The pre-fledging period is reported to be 25-28 days.

This nest was accessible and we very much wanted to band the 4 chicks, but decided against doing so lest they try to leave the nest prematurely. But the parents can be banded safely while they are attending eggs or chicks, so we pursued that course. Both RVAS and KBO were very supportive, With funding from RVAS we hired David Hodkinson, a KBO intern who had banded many dipper in the United Kingdom and was not intimidated by the furiously rushing stream that Ashland Creek was this spring! KBO also contributed the banding equipment. On June 14 David and two helpers strung a net across the creek and caught both parents. It sound so simple, but was an amazing feat to observe. Eric took great photos of the whole procedure and they can be viewed on line at lithiadipperwatch. They were color banded and released, and back at the job of feeding their young within the hour. We watched them feeding for the next 3 days, and on the 4th day they fledged. We were able to follow the family for 2 weeks as they moved up- and down-stream and then disappeared from the area.

Color banding made a huge difference in our ability to understand the adults' behavior, as there are no plumage differences to distinguish them from each other. We hope they will be back next spring, and since they were so successful, there seems to be a good chance. And next year perhaps there will be more nesting pairs and we can do more color banding, including chicks if a nest is accessible and it is safe to do so. Meantime we will be meeting once a month to walk Ashland Creek and keep abreast of dipper activity throughout the year.

If any reader(s) would like to join us on this study we would welcome your help. We will be walking the creek monthly until early spring (or whenever nesting behavior is seen). Then weekly during the breeding season. We could use more enthusiasts, and I guarantee that this adventure is fascinating and provides a unique learning experience to all participants from beginning birders to the most experienced among us. Our website has field notes from both seasons, photos of dippers, nests, and a great series on the color banding session. Most photos were taken by Eric and Larry. If you are interested in joining us, you can contact me at bmassey@mac.com or Bob Quaccia at bquaccia@hotmail.com.



RESEARCH GRANTS AVAILABLE

As detailed in the May issue of The Chat, RVAS lost one of our "Pretty Good Birders" - Bob Black on April 5. Since that time, RVAS has received \$1,000 in donations in memory of Bob. At their annual retreat on June 19, the RVAS Board decided to simultaneously honor Bob and provide small grants for bird studies in Jackson County by using this money to set up the Bob Black Research Fund.

For details regarding who may apply for one of these research grants, what sorts of projects are eligible, and the procedure for submitting an application, please visit the RVAS web site www.roguevalleyaudubon.org) and click on the 'Research' link.

What will tomorrow be like? Riparian Restoration on Bear Creek

Audubon and **Toyota** launched the five-year *TogetherGreen* initiative in 2008 to fund conservation projects, train environmental leaders, and offer volunteer opportunities that significantly benefit the environment. It is funded by a \$20 million Toyota gift to Audubon, the largest in the conservation group's long history.

Tomorrow (like in 2040), Bear Creek in Medford will be cleaner and will better reflect the original native habitat thanks to a TogetherGreen grant awarded to RogueValley Audubon Society. The grant is a collaboration of RVAS with the City of Medford Tree Committee, Rogue Valley Council of Governments (RVCOG), Bear Creek Watershed Council, Lomakatsi and Logos Charter School in Medford. The goal is to lower the Total Maximum Daily Load* (TMDL) -- a move toward compliance with the Clean Water Act of 1972 -- to remove debris and invasive species, and to plant approximately 2000 native plants by December 1, 2011. There will be a substantial educational component initially, focused on Logos Charter School, then expanded to other schools in the area.

This is a wonderful opportunity for community organizations to join in to a riparian restoration project that will expand the native habitat along Bear Creek in Medford. If you would like more information and would like to get involved, contact Mary Sinclair at 541-772-2372. There are opportunities for hands on involvement at the site, in the education component, and in additional fundraising. What would you like to do?

Local Membership Renewals Are Due

Did you know that RVAS has over 600 members? Most of you belong to the National Audubon Society, which means you are also a member of Rogue Valley Audubon Society. This national /local partnership is true across Audubon societies in every state, and results in the healthy membership size in local chapters.

Some of you prefer to only be members of your local Audubon chapter, and some of you want to pay additional dues to show your support for RVAS as a joint member of National Audubon and Rogue Valley Audubon. In either case, if you have a "local membership", that membership will expire on September 30th. This is true for all "local Members" unless you joined within the last four months.

Please keep your membership and your support of RVAS active, by completing the application below, and mailing it with your check before September 30th. If you are uncertain of your membership status, or have any questions about membership, please send an e-mail to: 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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Phone (optional): _____ Email (optional): _____

(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.

ROGUE VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

THE CHAT

Newsletter of the ROGUE VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

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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.

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, record observed species, and to lead the walks when he is not available.

