

The Chat

Number 380
Summer 2011

A voice for education and conservation in the natural world

Rogue Valley Audubon Society

www.roguevalleyaudubon.org

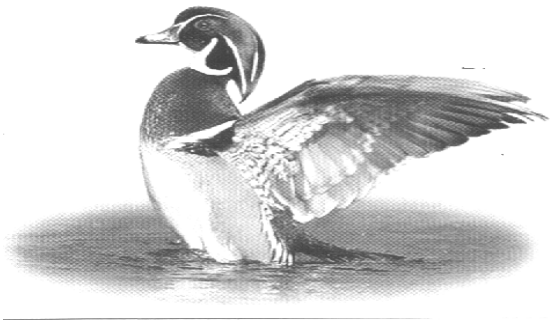
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No program in July or August. The next program will be in September. Check the September Chat for details.

The annual spring picnic at Tou Velle Park was great success.

A big thanks to Gaylene and Judd for all their organization and to all attended and brought items to share.



THANKS TO MORE RVAS VOLUNTEERS!

Here's a big shout out of acknowledgement and thanks to those who made RVAS a presence at the Master Gardener Spring Fair, continuing the tradition of a decade or so. This year about 6500 people visited the fair, despite Mother's Day and several conflicting events. Everything starts with someone's vision, idea and hard work; in this case that's Dennis Niebur, who kept it going for years. Then Lynda Stevens picked up the ball, contributing ideas, putting her own stamp on details.

Pairing with Klamath Bird Observatory gives both organizations exposure to these fair participants and KBO offers a great selection of educational material. Thanks, Annie Kilby! It's fun to have some real birds overseeing the booth, courtesy of Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and some real nests for close inspection in their display boxes.

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. This year special thanks go to Lynda Stevenson, Mary Sinclair, Kathy Simonsen, Alex Maksymowicz, Sue Polich and Michael, Robert Mumby, Sooney Viani, Jim Harleman (who has a long history as well and continues to help with booth set up each year), and Judd and Gaylene Hurley who stayed on after their (second!) shift to help Tricia Peck and me pack up.

Behind-the-scenes contributions include those of board members, Chat editor Kaethe Fulton, web-master Mary Sinclair, people who made calls, passed along messages, delivered things, suggested things...well it takes a whole flock to raise a booth in the spring fair. And we have a great flock.

Cherry Gregory, MGF coordinator

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The President's Report—Summer 2012

Never a Dull Moment!

As usual there were lots of happenings and changes during the past year. Here are some of the highlights.

After 15 years at the First Presbyterian Church, the location of RVAS chapter meetings moved to the Westminster Presbyterian Church. Due to cost considerations, the location will move once again to the Medford Congregational Church. Hopefully, this will turn out to be a long-term venue. Address and map will appear in the September *Chat*.

Harry Fuller and John Bullock successfully organized the first Ashland-centered Christmas Bird Count since 1940. The Medford and Ashland CBCs took place some 10 days apart, and many local birders participated in both of them. In the long-term, this expansion of the winter bird census will aid conservation efforts by providing a better insight into the state of the birds in Jackson County.

After leading the First Wednesday bird walks for seven years, the Birding Buddies, under the leadership of Denny Niebuhr, decided it was time to bow out. Fortunately, Murray Orr agreed to take on the leadership role and is still trying to organize a core group to help him out. Please take note and volunteer! The effort is minimal, the reward is great.

RVAS awarded a research grant of \$200 to the Ashland Creek Dipper Project to defray the cost of banding the birds. This grant was the inspiration for setting up a longer term research fund in memory of our late member, Bob Black. Details elsewhere in this issue.

Continued next page

Harry Fuller and Ron Ketchum were the organizers and leaders of this year's overnight field trip to the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, June 9 -12.. By all accounts it was a great success with 127 species seen by the 20 participants. Details elsewhere in this issue.

A major change in the format of our annual Holiday Party and Potluck in December 2010 was the replacement of the auction by a raffle. Although some members said they missed the traditional auction, a raffle is much easier for RVAS volunteers to organize. And with Pepper Trail announcing the prize winners in his usual exuberant manner, the difference in format was hardly noticeable.

Field Notes: The Changing Seasons Compiled by Stewart Janes

By the time you read this, summer weather will be here.....so the forecasters have promised. Forgive me if I am skeptical, but I was recording **Nashville Warblers** while snow was falling on my shoulders on 5/28 on Anderson Butte. Then there was the beautiful male **Western Tanager** singing vigorously in my yard in Medford on 6/18. Apparently he still had amorous intentions and hopes of raising a family somewhere to the north. He had better hurry or he will bump head long into the first southward drifters beginning the first of July.

Observer after observer had tales of late spring migrants including **Townsend's Warblers**, **Wilson's Warblers**, **Swainson's Thrushes**, **Willow Flycatchers** and others on into the first week of June. Most unusual. Typically spring migration through the Rogue Valley begins to wind down in the third week of May with the last stragglers bringing up the rear over Memorial Day weekend.

I just returned from chasing hybrid **Hermit** and **Townsend's Warblers** in the Mount Rainier area. Breeding there appears to be about two

10.5

weeks behind schedule. This is a lot for a small bird that must raise a family, then molt, and then skip south usually by late August or early September. I'm betting there is an egg or two less in most nests this year as most of our neotropical migrants try to make up for lost time.

Let's back it up to late April and early May when the waterbird and shorebird migration was in full swing. We don't see much of shorebird migration anymore given the loss of habitat. However, if you looked quick, there was an impressive movement at the Kirtland Ponds between 4/24 and 4/29. On 4/24 you would have seen **300 Dunlin**, **12 Semipalmated Plovers**, **16 Short-billed Dowitchers**, **150 Western Sandpipers**, and **125 Least Sandpipers** (NB). A **Willet** was present at the Avenue G Pond on the same day (BH). On 4/28 **200-300 Black-bellied Plovers** and **16 Red-necked Phalaropes** joined the party (GS). The last shorebird reports were of **Black-bellied Plovers** on 4/29 (EL) and **40 Least and Western Sandpipers** on 5/3 (LM,MM).

The most unusual waterbird sighting of spring migration was the flock of **250-350 White-faced Ibis** over the Medford Airport on 4/26 (DV). They breed in the Klamath Basin but no farther west or north in western Oregon. Where were they headed?

Migrant **Common Loons** were seen through 5/28 (PK), and **Caspian Terns** through 6/7 (AM). This is rather late for both. A grebe conference was held on Agate Lake on 5/9 (NB) with a **Red-necked Grebe**, **3 Eared Grebes**, **4 Clark's Grebes**, and numerous **Western Grebes** taking a break in their trek north. A couple of **Bonaparte's Gulls** were with us from 4/28 through the end of May at the Kirtland and Boise-Cascade Ponds. **White Pelicans** continued at Howard Prairie at least through 5/30 (LM,MM).

A **Hooded Merganser** was reported on 5/20 (KC-S). I find this interesting. More than one authority has them breeding as far south as Jackson and Josephine Counties.

Continued page 5

THE CONSERVATION COLUMN

By Pepper Trail

What Are We To Do...Here?

In the Conservation Column for the May *Chat*, I reviewed a variety of conservation priorities that had been identified this year by the Oregon Audubon Council, a statewide coalition to which Rogue Valley Audubon belongs. These are all important statewide issues, including promoting marine reserves to protect fish, seabirds, and other marine resources; opposing proposed wind developments on Steens Mountain, and working to assure the future of the Klamath Basin National Wildlife Refuges. Rogue Valley Audubon has played its part in all these issues, by signing on to letters, contacting our elected representatives, and keeping our membership informed. In other *Chat* columns through the year, Conservation Co-Chair Bill Hering and I have written about such diverse topics as climate change, the Gulf oil spill, the mysterious black-bird deaths in Arkansas, and political developments in Washington, DC related to the environment. I hope that our columns are interesting and informative, and that they keep readers tuned in to significant environmental issues.

But, it is reasonable to ask, what conservation work is Rogue Valley Audubon doing HERE?

The answer is, not much.

This is not because there are no important issues to work on in the Rogue Valley. "Hot-button" local environmental issues include:

- Proposed timber sales, especially by the Bureau of Land Management
- Fuels-reduction and fire management in the Ashland Watershed and on Forest Service and BLM land elsewhere, especially in the Applegate
- The on-going battle over expansion of the Mt. Ashland Ski Area
- Land-use planning in Jackson County, including proposed major developments in Medford
- Management of the Bear Creek Greenway and adjacent areas like Ashland Pond, particularly issues such as blackberry removal
- Wildlife management and public use policies at Denman Wildlife Area

There are many reasons why RVAS is not working more on these issues. In the case of the Mt. Ashland Ski Area expansion, we never reached a group consensus and so have and so have taken no official position.

In other cases, such as federal timber sales, we have largely left the work to groups that have the specialized expertise needed, such as KS Wild.

However, by far the most important reason for our lack of local work is a lack of local workers. There is no getting around it: to be involved with an issue, we need an RVAS member who is passionate about that issue and can put in the time required. Conservation is like every other process involving local government: if we want to have a voice, early and sustained participation is essential. On occasion, RVAS has mounted such an effort: our work to protect the Bear Creek Greenway from golf course development is an example. But that was several years ago now. So, my question for us all to consider over the summer is this: **what are we to do, here?**

Perhaps what we are doing is adequate. Perhaps our outstanding environmental education programs are all we need to do locally, and satisfy our membership. But speaking strictly for myself, I hope not. I hope that there are members out there who want to do more, who want to be involved with local issues on the decision-making level. We have committed volunteers who have stepped forward to form the Education Committee – why not a similarly effective Conservation Committee?

Of the important local wildlife-conservation issues listed above, I think there are two in particular that are not receiving adequate attention from other environmental groups. These are the management of Denman and of the Bear Creek Greenway. Both these areas provide critical wildlife habitat and are well-used by RVAS members – but are also used by many other groups, all with their own opinions and priorities. The managers of Denman and the Greenway are subject to pressure from all sides, and need to hear from the conservation community. What I hope is that RVAS members who use and love these areas will "adopt" them by becoming involved with their management.

I promise to assist any Audubon members who are willing to take on either issue as part of a Conservation Committee – and I'm open to other new ideas about how to structure our conservation work. And, yes, if someone with fresh ideas and energy would like to step forward and take my place as Conservation Co-Chair, I promise to help with the transition!

I look forward to receiving feedback on this column, which can be emailed to me at ptrail@ashlandnet.net, and/or to RVAS President Alex Maksymowicz at maks-box1@gmail.com.

In the meantime, have a great summer, everyone!

Field Notes continued from page 3

Yet, I have not had any reports of breeding birds since moving to the valley 25 years ago. Keep an eye out.

Spring migration typically brings a few vagrants, and this spring was no exception. Perhaps the most noteworthy was the **White-winged Dove** at the feeder of Jim Hostick on 5/15. White-winged Doves are indeed drifters from the desert southwest, but they are more often encountered along the coast after breeding when they do appear.

Then there was the **Black-throated Sparrow** north of White City on 5/14 (BH). This is not the first time this desert bird has made a brief appearance in Jackson County. They never stay long, however.

Gray-crowned Rosy Finches were photographed near Howard Prairie on 5/27 (PK). These are not strangers to the county, but the date and location were unusual. They should be attending snow fields near timberline at this time.

Purple Martins were reported from Tou Velle Road on 5/29 (NB). Reports have been increasing in recent years for this species in the valley. There are even reports (unconfirmed) of breeding birds in the Central Point area. I can only hope this is the beginning of a growing population.

Other unusual sightings include **Black Swifts** over Medford on 5/2 (RB). They migrate through our area each year, but are seldom seen. A **White-throated Swift** was again reported from Lower Table Rock this year, this one on 5/27.

A **Costa's Hummingbird** was photographed at the Horseshoe Ranch Wildlife area on 5/27 (LM) just across the California line. **Black-chinned Hummingbirds** were reported on 5/16 (JH) and 5/26 (HS). Calliope Hummingbirds visited the valley floor through 5/19 (EL,SJ).

Two **Swainson's Hawks** were spotted this spring 4/23 (NB,JL) and 5/19 (JB,SB,HF), the first along avenue G and the second over Ashland. Sightings have become more regular in recent years.

A **Harris's Sparrow** was in Ashland accompanied by **White-throated, White-crowned, and Golden-**

crowned Sparrows on 5/2 (DA). Both **Rock and Canyon Wrens** were reported from the dam at Emigrant Lake on 6/12 (JB,SB).

Grasshopper Sparrows continue to breed in the north county. This singing male was seen along Tou Velle Road on 6/4 (NB).

Great-tailed Grackles are becoming rare but regular spring visitors to the Rouge Valley. At least 2 males were roaming about the White City area from 4/29 through 5/15 (RB,BH,NB,HS).

Black-billed Magpies also continue in their usual places of residence. Birds have been seen along the Greensprings Highway at MP 12, at the Valley View transfer station, and along Dead Indian Memorial Road MP 5-6 (KB,SB,LP,HF,LM,MM). So, all is well. The only colony not reporting in this spring is the one that once and maybe still does occur behind Roxy Ann. I don't think anyone has checked on this one in years.

Finally, there have been an unusual number of **Common Nighthawks** reported from the south end of the valley this year. Reports were submitted from Tyler Creek, North Mountain Park, and Talent (KM,HF,FE).

Thanks to this month's contributors including Dick Ashford, Norm Barrett, John Bullock, Stephanie Bullock, Ralph Browning, Kate Cleland-Sipfle, Forrest English, Harry Fuller, Jim Hostick, Bob Hunter, Ron Ketchum, Peter Kreisman, Edith Lindner, Jim Livaudais, Frank Lospalutto, Alex Maksymowicz, Barbara Massey, Kristi Mergenthaler, Lisa Millbank, Lisa Moore, Marjorie Moore, Gary Palmer, Liz Pusch, Gwyneth Ragosine, Gary Schaffer, Pepper Trail, and Dennis Vroman. Deadline for contributions to the Field Notes in the next edition of The Chat is August 20.

RVAS Organizational News

Three new Board members were elected at the chapter meeting on April 26: Robert Mumby, Gary Palmer, and Sooney Viani. Profiles will appear in a fall issue of *The Chat*.

At the May 3 Board meeting, Alex Maksymowicz, Kathy Simonsen, and Shelley Tanquary were re-elected as president, treasurer, and secretary of the Board, respectively. Gary Palmer was elected vice-president.


Two long-serving members, Lynda Stevenson and Mary Sinclair, have left the Board. We thank them for the significant contributions they have made to the governance of RVAS.

Lynda had been on the Board for over six years and served as secretary for one year and as vice-president for four years. When the vice-president position remained unfilled during the 2010-11 period, Lynda informally fulfilled the many duties of the vice-president in addition to her other RVAS commitments. These included the demanding job of chairing the education committee as well as handling publicity and book sales. She will continue to take care of publicity and book sales for us. She also served twice as the coordinator of RVAS activities at the annual Master Gardener Fair and as the co-organizer of two birding workshops. Mary had been on the Board for four years, serving as treasurer. She maintained RVAS accounts on the Quicken software program, made recommendations on investments and implemented an automatic bill-paying system through our bank. At the beginning of 2010 she took on the role of webmaster and successfully converted the RVAS web site developed by Ric Thowless to a group web site on Yahoo. Thanks to Mary, the RVAS web site is now fashionably located in the Cloud. In 2010 Mary wrote a proposal that resulted in a \$500 grant from the National Audubon Society for signage in Bear Creek park in Medford. This year she coordinated the efforts of multiple local organizations to write a Together Green proposal to National Audubon requesting \$49,000 to help fund riparian habitat restoration efforts along a section of Bear Creek in downtown Medford. Awards for Together Green will be announced in August

Lynn Kellogg has replaced Lynda Stevenson as chair of the education committee, and Robert Mumby has taken over the role of webmaster from Mary Sinclair. Robert will also be co-chair of programs with Bob Quaccia. Carol Palmer will be the organizer of the Holiday Party this year; however, we still urgently need someone to volunteer to organize the Holiday Party raffle.

RVAS Abandons Analog Communications Technology

Due to the low volume of calls, the Board has decided to disconnect the RVAS telephone. Voice-mail messages will be answered through August 25. Despite switching to a prepaid phone last year, the cost to RVAS was about \$10 per call received. Henceforth, outside communication with RVAS will be strictly digital, either via our website, www.roguevalleyaudubon.org or via e-mail, roguevalleyaudubon@gmail.com. Sue Polich has volunteered to read our e-mail messages and forward them to the appropriate person for action.



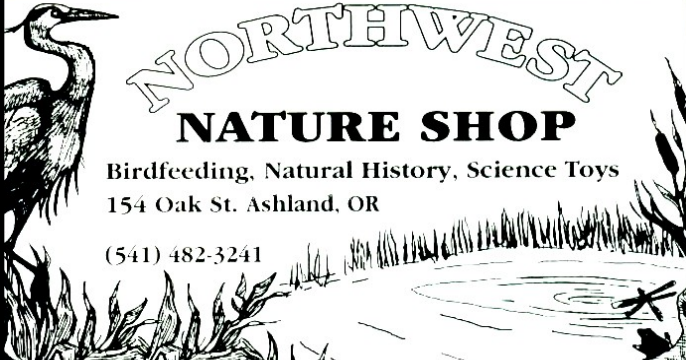
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Common Nighthawk and Bobolink at Malheur

ROGUE VALLEY AUDUBON FIELD TRIP TO MALHEUR

Twenty birders from Jackson and Josephine Counties went to Malheur on June 9, birded there for two days and returned on the 12th. Stops en route included Howard Prairie, Rocky Point on Klamath Lake, Collier State Park, Klamath Marsh NWR and several spots along the road in Lake County, Riley and Sage Hen Rest Area in Harney County.

The group saw a total of 127 species. We got some of the typical birds of the sagebrush steppe: Sage Thrasher and Sage Sparrow, Brewer's Sparrow, Mountain Bluebird, Loggerhead Shrike. Our raptor list included several views of both Ferruginous and Swainson's Hawks plus both eagles. In western Lake County both White-headed Woodpecker and Clark's Nutcracker were fly-overs. The nutcrackers even landed on the ground for good viewing.

At Malheur and the rest of Harney County flooding is extensive this year. Malheur Lake is over 90 square miles instead of the average of just over 30. Water-loving birds are having a great spring: from Wilson's Phalarope to White Pelican. And many roads are lined with bird-filled marshes where last year there was dry grassland.

At the Malheur Field Station we were given a mist-net demonstration that produced TWO Common Nighthawks for close-range viewing and

Other target species we saw: several Bobolink and Eastern Kingbirds, a group of male Yellow-breasted Chat competing for territory at Page Springs, Willow Flycatcher, White-faced Ibis by the hundreds, nesting Long-billed Curlew and Wilson's Snipe, two families of Great Horned Owls, Horned Larks. Among the mammals were pronghorn, mink, coyote, muskrat, pygmy rabbit, Belding's ground squirrel and jackrabbit.

Unexpected birds seen: Common Moorhen, Cape May Warbler, Cordilleran Flycatcher.

There's a complete list of birds seen on Harry Fuller's blog:<http://atowhee.wordpress.com/2011/06/13/malheur-in-early-june-a-summary/>

Wild Birds Unlimited



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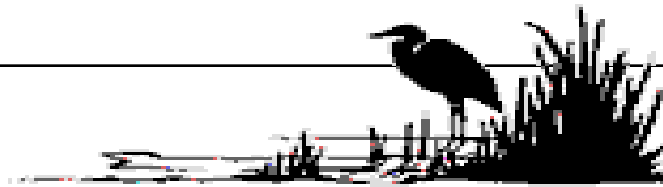
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**Western Field Ornithologists Conference:
Sierra Vista, AZ August 17-21, 2011**

If you've never been to southeast Arizona during the late summer season (or even if you have), this is an opportunity you won't want to miss. Besides a program of speakers and workshops, we will offer field trips to all the southeast Arizona hotspots looking for local specialties like Scaled and Montezuma quail, Gray, Short-tailed, and Zone-tailed hawks, a dazzling variety of hummingbirds and flycatchers, Elegant Trogon, Red-faced Warbler, Cassin's, Botteri's, Rufous-winged, and Five-striped sparrows and much more.

To register and see full details go to www.westernfieldornithologists.org and click on the 'Annual Conference' banner in the middle of the page. You will probably want to download the Conference Details document and review before you begin registration.



**ROGUE VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/CHANGE OF ADDRESS**

Name: _____

Address: _____

Town: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ - _____

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

Riparian Outdoor School

The Education committee finished its final event in May, the Riparian Outdoor School at the Jefferson Nature Center. Thanks to Bob Quaccia, our instructor, this year's program has been even better than in past years! Bob gave 8 presentations to 5th graders from four different schools on "Birds, Their Nests and Behavior".

Many thanks to Bob and a special thank you to Lynn Kellogg, who assisted Bob. Her son, Ross Kellogg, made us 10 boxes for displaying 10 different nests to show the 5th graders.

Thank you also to RVAS volunteers Edith Lindner, Sooney Viani, and Sally Peterson for their participation in this program. Jefferson Nature Center provided us with two other volunteers, SOU students Laura and Rael. It is important to remember that it is the contributions of RVAS members and the work of volunteers within RVAS that make these kinds of activities possible.

THANK YOU TO ALL who made this year's education program so successful.

Desperately Seeking Help

RVAS urgently needs volunteers to fill two open positions: field trip chair and raffle organizer for the December Holiday Party and Raffle. Our first field trip usually takes place in September, and that needs to be scheduled in less than two months in order to get the announcement into the September issue of *The Chat*. Submission deadline for the September issue is August 25.

There is a little more time left before the Holiday Party and Raffle, but it takes time to organize a group of people to contact potential prize donors. Raffle tickets go on sale in early October. The Raffle is one of the principal fund raisers for RVAS, so we cannot do without it. Carol Palmer has volunteered to organize the actual party, so the open position involves only the organization of the raffle.

Both the field trips and the Holiday Party and Raffle are lots of fun for RVAS members, but they cannot occur without volunteers to organize them. Perhaps it's your turn to do this? Please contact Alex Maksymowicz at 541-482-1964 or maksbox1@gmail.com to volunteer or ask for information.

An open position with a more distant time horizon is that of coordinator of the RVAS activities at the Master Gardener Fair, which takes place on the

First weekend in May. Again, it's a lot of fun for RVAS participants, but it does need someone organize their participation. Again, please contact Alex if you want information.

Birdathon Fundraising

The May issue of *The Chat* detailed the performance of the Birdathon teams. Now the fundraising results are in!

As of June 16, the total amount raised was \$2,823. This is very close to the RVAS budget target of \$3,000. Of the total amount, \$2,363 came from pledges for the seven teams, and the balance of \$460 came from direct donations.

The two top fund raisers were the *Great Grays* at \$897 and the *Old World Warblers* at \$505. Between them, these two teams raised one-half of the total.

Thank you *Great Grays* and *Old World Warblers*, and thank you all other teams and donors for making this year's Birdathon both a birding and fundraising success.

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.

