

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

Deadline for the April 2023 issue is March 20



March VIRTUAL Program
Tuesday, Mar. 28, 2023 at 7:00 pm
Greater Sage-Grouse: The Charismatic Ambassador
of the Sagebrush Sea



Greater Sage-Grouse are famously -- some might say, infamously -- known for their association with, and impetus for, a twenty-year effort to conserve and restore their sagebrush habitat across the American West. Hear the latest on the ecology, threats, and continuing campaign to save this fascinating icon of the Sagebrush Sea!

About the Speaker

Mark Salvo is the Conservation Director at Oregon Natural Desert Association, a conservation organization based in Bend with a mission of protecting, defending, and restoring Oregon's high desert for current and future generations -- and for Sage-Grouse, pronghorn, pygmy rabbit, Lahontan cutthroat trout, and hundreds of other native flora and fauna that depend on this region.



The March program will be over Zoom. We will hold a watch party at the church for people who would like to gather together in person.

Zoom option: The Zoom link will be posted on the Rogue Valley Audubon webpage the day of the meeting.

Watch party location: Medford Congregational Church of Christ- Lidgate Hall, 1801 E. Jackson St.,
Medford

Time: 7:00 pm (coffee/tea/cookies will be served beginning at 6:30 pm)

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Letter From the Board

Dear RVAS Members,

We are in need...of volunteers!

We have been getting many requests to go out into the community to teach the public about birds. This is a tremendous opportunity to create a greater awareness of who we are and what we do. We are an organization of individuals who are passionate about birds. Won't *you* consider taking that passion and getting others excited about the birds in our area? The more we get the word out about what we do the more support we will get. We need to be vocal and we need to be seen! We need to get others to care as much as we do, or at least care more than they do now.

Our work is important and without people to spread the word, our group will not grow and thrive. I am so appreciative of every minute each person has put into volunteering in some capacity for RVAS. It is a priceless gift. Please consider taking an hour or so to pass along your love for birds. I promise you will feel wonderful about it afterwards!

Erin Ulrich
President

Help Needed! RVAS to Speak at Jackson County Libraries

As a new employee to Jackson County Library Services, I was eager to let the organization know that I was a member of Rogue Valley Audubon Society. They were VERY excited to learn this, and quickly asked if RVAS might be interested in coming out to various library branches to talk about backyard birds and birds that are in Jackson County. Naturally, I said yes, and a Spring talk series was created.

If you are interested in helping out with these programs please let me know. Twelve libraries are interested in having a RVAS member come out to talk about birding in your backyard, and a stipend will be provided for each talk. Dates and times vary in April and May. I will be happy to provide you with a presentation that you can use.

Erin Ulrich
eulrich44@gmail.com

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

NOTE: If deemed unsafe for gathering, chapter meetings will be held on Zoom.

Status of upcoming events

Field trips: Denman Bird Walk is back! Apr. 5, May 3, Jun. 7

Project Feeder Watch: Mar. 18

March Chapter Meeting: Tuesday, Mar. 28 at 7pm

RVAS Birdathon: May 12 & 13

The Conservation Column

In lieu of our usual column, we're reprinting this fact sheet regarding an important new bill up for consideration in Oregon's House of Representatives. If you're excited about House Bill 3464, call your Oregon Congresspeople!



HB 3464: Enhancing Oregon's Fire Resiliency and Water Security through Common-Sense Wildlife Management

THE PROBLEM: *Beavers are classified as "predatory animal" on private lands in Oregon. As a result, can be killed with little to no regulation or monitoring in the Beaver State*

Beavers: our allies against climate change impacts

- Beaver modified habitat enhances fire resiliency and creates climate refugia for other species
- Beavers improve water security, sequesters carbon, and creates healthy habitat for salmon.
- Fewer beavers mean increased wildfire risk, less salmon habitat and decreased water security
- For the above reasons, beavers are considered keystone species. If they are gone, other species will follow.

Why are beavers classified as "predatory"?

- Beavers fall in the scientific Order "rodentia" and under current Oregon law ORS 610, all rodents are classified as "predatory". It is not a result of the animal's biology or ecology. "Predatory" status is erroneous and unscientific.
- Beavers are herbivores, that is, they do not prey on other animals.

Challenges Because of "Predatory" Status

- Because of their "predatory" status on private lands, Oregon allows unlimited killing of beavers. There is no tracking of this beaver removal.
- Because of their status, ODFW has no authority to manage them or regulate harvest on private lands
- There is no state wide population monitoring of beavers by ODFW – we do not know how many beavers we have in our state!

THE SOLUTION: HB 3464

If we change this one classification, Oregon will be more fire resilient, will have healthier salmon runs, and more!

- **HB 3464** is common-sense legislation that would remove the predatory animal designation from beaver in Oregon. It allows ODFW to begin to manage beaver on private land in Oregon, as it does other wildlife species
- The bill also prompts Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission to establish a system for beaver management and beaver removal on private lands
- It will allow ODFW and the Commission to:
 - Promote the use of non-lethal beaver management tools before resorting to lethal removal
 - Set standards on when beavers can be removed.
 - Create a reporting system on beaver removals in the state
 - Require landowners to report beaver killings to ODFW so the state can have a better picture of the landscape and make effective decisions to minimize harmful impacts of wildfires.



Photo: Beaver habitat mitigates damage after Idaho's Sharps Fire, by Dr. Joe Wheaton, Utah State University.

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HB 3464: FAQs

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife manages fish and wildlife on private lands and water. Doing the same for beaver opens up possibilities to improve Oregon's resilience to wildfire, water security, and overall ecological health.



How do beavers help with climate change?

Wetlands and wet meadows created by beavers are natural carbon capture-and-store areas that extract large amounts of carbon from the atmosphere via photosynthesis, a natural process that helps draw down carbon by storing it in roots and decaying matter below ground, in riparian vegetation, and in beaver ponds.

Beaver habitat improves the ability of fish and wildlife to survive climate changes. Their habitats are more stable and less sensitive to short-term climate variability because they contain reservoirs of surface and groundwater that buffer habitats from drought and they create conditions for groundwater recharge to occur during flooding.

Beaver ponds, wetlands and wet meadows hold water in storage and slowly release it, partially offsetting declines in stream flows and water quality related to declining snowpack and spring melt. These natural fire breaks create safety zones for wildlife to survive extreme fire events that are expected to increase with climate change, and can help slow down the spread of fire across a landscape.

How do beavers help with wildfires?

Beavers create and maintain wetlands, wet meadows, and ponds which are natural fire breaks. The areas provide refuge for livestock and wildlife during fires and habitat post-fire which are critical to helping wildlife survive the winter. Because vegetation remains, these areas trap soil eroding from surrounding hillsides post wildfire and prevent it from reaching streams, helping protect water quality.

How do beavers help native fish?

Beavers create habitat that improve the function and diversity of the biological and physical systems native fish need to survive and thrive. Ponds provide critical winter rearing habitat for juvenile Coho salmon. Ponds and wetlands temporarily store surface and groundwater which later contribute to cooler stream temperatures. Currently, ODEQ has identified more than 89,000 miles of streams as too warm. Improved riparian conditions result in greater vegetation and insect life, which enhances food sources for native fish.

How many beavers are there in Oregon?

We don't know. The only information on beaver numbers comes from the number killed and reported by people hunting and trapping with a "furbearer" license. Between 2000 and 2020 more than 51,000 beavers were reported to ODFW as killed under the furbearer regulations and more than 10,000 were killed by Wildlife Services. Hence, 61,000 is the minimum number because not all human-cause mortality is reported.

How do beavers help farmers and ranchers, and cities and towns?

Farmers and ranchers need water during to grow crops and raise livestock. Cities and towns need dependable high-quality water, and drinking water for many Oregonians come from our forests. Beaver created habitats temporarily store water in ponds and in the ground, which is then slowly and sustainably released. Because the ponds create conditions that allow for regular groundwater recharge, benefits are maintained over time. This temporary storage helps offset impacts of drought, decreases the frequency and magnitude of downstream flooding, and improves water quality (i.e. stream temperatures, turbidity) and stream flows.

HB 3464 removes beavers from the definition of "rodents" under Oregon statute ORS 610.002 that defines "predatory animals" in Oregon. It does not change the scientific classification of beavers.

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COALITION OF SUPPORTERS OF HB 3464



March Field Notes 2023

By Frank Lospalluto

*time upon time on its solitary way
once more I hear it without understanding
and without division in the new day*

from "The Wren" by W.S. Merwin

Flocks of **Greater Sandhill Cranes** have been seen and heard over the valley as I write this.

Female **Anna's Hummingbirds** are building nests and seeking males to father their young. **Rufous Hummingbirds** are starting to show up in Oregon. **Tree Swallows**, **Violet-green Swallows**, and even **Barn Swallows** are gliding and swooping sometimes at eye level. **Bewick's Wrens** are singing and pairs are beginning the first of two nestings. **Oak Titmice** pairs are strengthening their pairs bonds and defending breeding territories, mostly with song. **White-breasted Nuthatches** do the same.

Young sparrows deep in the shrub cover work out melodies to themselves.

Above, the **Red-tailed Hawk** dance in courtship; **Red-shouldered Hawks** mate. Nest building and refurbishing well under way. **Golden Eagles** are on nests and **Bald Eagles** will be soon enough.

This is my last column as *The Chat's* Field Notes writer. It has been a great opportunity and experience, but it's time for me to step aside. I thank everyone for their contributions. You are all much appreciated.

Good birding! Peace.

Editor's Note: RVAS wants to thank Frank for his dedicated work on the Field Notes column! We would love to be able to continue this column into the future, but we need a new author. If you have enjoyed Field Notes and think this might be you, please get in touch!

- Kate Halstead, chateditor@gmail.com

Good news, RVAS Flock - the Birdathon is back!

Save the date for Fri. May 12 and Sat. May 13, 2023

Details to come in the April Chat and on website.



Sandhill Crane
Credit: Jim Livaudais

BIRDCENTRIC EVENTS FROM AROUND THE REGION

RVAS

First Wednesday Bird Walks: April 5, May 3, June 7

Join RVAS for our monthly outing to Denman Wildlife Area. Walks begin at 8:30 am and end before noon, and are led by Jim Hostick. The gate will be open from 8:00 - 8:20 am. Participants need to purchase an ODFW Area Parking Permit at the ODFW Office, Sportsman's Warehouse on Delta Waters and Highway 62 in Medford, or at Bi-Mart. We request that all participants be vaccinated for COVID-19.

Directions to meeting spot: We will meet at the entrance off Agate Rd. between 1/4 and 1/2 mile past the fire station on the left side of the road. Coming out Table Rock Rd., turn right on Antelope Rd. and go to the light on Agate Rd. and turn left. The fire station will be on your left at the corner of Ave. G and Agate Rd. Go 1/4 to 1/2 mile past the fire station and the gate will be on your left. Coming out on Highway 62 to Antelope Rd., turn left and go to the next light. Turn right and continue to the gate on Agate Rd.

Birding the Bluff Hike

Join bird biologist Frank Lospalluto for a birding trip to the Fisher Preserve at Pompadour Bluff near Ashland. Be prepared to (slowly) walk cross-country on steep terrain. Common birds include Acorn Woodpecker, California Towhee, White-breasted Nuthatch, and Red-tailed Hawk. If lucky, we may detect Canyon Wren, Rock Wren, and Black-billed Magpie. Kristi Mergenthaler, Stewardship Director for Southern Oregon Land Conservancy, will come along too, and can provide background on the preserve and identify flowers. We will meet at 8am and carpool from Ashland. To register and more details, please contact Frank at fdlospalluto@gmail.com.

DATE: Saturday Mar. 18

TIME: 8:00 - 11:00 am

Project Feeder Watch: Final 2023 Date!

Come check out this citizen science project at North Mountain Park. To volunteer, contact Jennifer Aguayo at jennifer.aguayo@ashland.or.us. For more info, visit www.roguevalleyaudubon.org/project-feeder-watch/.

DATE: Saturday Mar. 18

TIME: 9:00 - 10:00 am

Wild Birds Unlimited

Mingus Pond Walks

Max McClarnon and Erin Linton will be leading walks to Mingus Pond along the Bear Creek Greenway. Good birding for spring migrants, woodpeckers, and raptors. Space is limited to 9 participants. To reserve your spot, come in or call the store at (541) 772-2107.

DATES: Saturday Mar. 11 (led by Max McClarnon)

Wednesday Mar. 15 (led by Erin Linton)

TIME: 9:00 am

Educational Talk: "Getting Started with Mason Bees"

Laura will show you the basics of being a native bee landlord including how to choose your bee house, where to place it, how the bees use it, and how to take care of it throughout the year. All participants will receive 20% off all in-stock bee supplies on the day of the talk. Space is limited to 10 participants. To reserve your seat come in or call the store at (541) 772-2107.

DATE: Sunday Mar. 19

TIME: 1:00 - 2:00 pm

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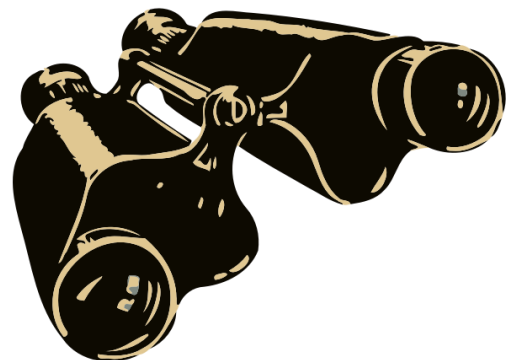
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Get Ready for the Swifts - Counters Needed!

Our Vaux's Swift friends are getting ready to move, and that means that we are getting ready for our Spring counts at Hedrick Middle School. We saw record numbers last year. Our small band of volunteers recorded over 60,000 birds!

I'd love to get at least ten people to help with counts, which will take place from about mid-April through May. Please send me an email if you would be willing to help. It's most helpful if you are able to count once per week over the six-week span. Each count lasts about two hours and training and equipment (a hand counter) will be provided to you. It's very easy and incredibly fun - and maybe you will be the lucky one that gets 10,000 birds in one night!!

Erin Ulrich





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ROGUE VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

THE CHAT

Newsletter of the
ROGUE VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY
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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 online.

At the bottom of every page on our website roguevalleyaudubon.org you will find a form where you can request to be added to our mailing list. And be assured, we will never share your e-mail address with any other organizations.

