

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

Deadline for the November 2023 issue is October 20



October IN PERSON Program
Tuesday, Oct. 24, 2023 at 7:00 pm
Gardening for the Bees (and the Birds)
With Dave Kollen



Dave Kollen will share about pollinators and their importance in ecosystems and our food system. He will introduce the natural history and diversity of our pollinator species including native bees, butterflies, and moths. How can we play a role in pollinator conservation in general, as well as our own landscapes and communities? Join us for this exciting talk to learn more!

About the Speaker

Dave is a Xerces Society Ambassador and in that role is involved in educational and outreach work. Additionally he is an Oregon Master Naturalist and Master Melittologist Apprentice. His involvement in community science includes the Pacific Northwest Bumble Bee Atlas, the California Bumble Bee Atlas, and the Oregon Bee Atlas. Dave also writes pollinator-focused articles for the Oregon State Federation of Garden Clubs newsletter, Mahonia.



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)

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

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RVAS
P. O. Box 8597
Medford, OR 97501

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.

Save the date!

Who: YOU!

What: RVAS Holiday Party and Auction

Where: Medford Congregational Church

When: Saturday, December 2, 2023 at 6:00PM

Why:

- ◇ To celebrate the amazing volunteer-based machine that is Rogue Valley Audubon Society!
- ◇ To celebrate our past year's successes! To celebrate the 50th Anniversary of our organization!
- ◇ To eat lots of delicious food and win auctions for fabulous birding experiences!

More details to come, but mark your calendars now as we have secured the host with the most, Dr. Pepper Trail!



Project FeederWatch

By Mary Pat Power

Project FeederWatch kicks off its 22st season November 10, 2023 at North Mountain Park in Ashland. Over the years, this has become a favorite with new birders and "old timers" alike. Often a dozen or more eager souls will show up for the Saturday counts, which are open to the public. Bird feed is provided by RVAS.

We're seeking volunteers to assist with this project! The counts take place every other Friday and Saturday from 9-10 am. Both Friday and Saturday counts require a volunteer to head things up. If you can help out once or twice during the season, that would be great! Please contact me at marypat1010@gmail.com.

Status of upcoming events

Field trips: Denman Bird Walk - Nov. 1, Dec. 6, Jan. 3

Chapter Meeting: Tuesday, Oct 24 at 7pm

White City Lagoons Update

By Frank Lospalluto

By now many of you have had the opportunity to bird the mud flat enhancement project at the White City Lagoons, and marvel at the seemingly miraculous nature of shorebird movement and migration. This location on Kirtland Rd. is but a speck of the planet's real estate and the visitors are momentary, but by our witness we elevate their prominence both in our imaginations and our own planet's history.

Rogue Valley Sewer Services (RVSS) and the advisory committee for the White City Lagoons enhancement are moving toward implementing some plantings within the mud enhancement area. RVSS and the Watchable Wildlife Foundation have each pledged \$5000 for this part of the project.

The vegetation out at the lagoons currently is a mix of native and non-native forbs and grasses. There are some noxious weeds like puncturevine, skeleton weed, purple loosestrife, star thistle, and Italian thistle. Many of the other plants are common ditch plants - some like smartweed and Eleocharis are native, and some like the dock and purslane are nonnative. Some of this is okay and is used by the birds for cover and for food. Our goal is to have more open mud area along with roosting and nesting habitat on the islands that are out there. It's difficult to really see them but there are a couple of raised areas.



American Avocet
Credit: Gary Shaffer



Snowy Plover
Credit: Gary Shaffer

The plan calls for planting a variety of willows and native shrubs on these islands along with native forbs, grasses along the dry banks, and rushes out in the wet areas. That is where we hope to focus our attention before moving to the drier areas, such as adjacent to the parking area and outside the dike that contains the wetland habitat.

Overall, the public access trail around the mud enhancement area has proved popular both with the birds and the birders.

Thanks to RVSS, especially Carl Tappert, for the cooperation and the opportunity. And thank you to the RVSS membership and the board for the pledge of funding.

Some noteworthy visitors at the Lagoons this past spring and summer:

An **American Avocet** on March 19 was an exciting proof of concept that the graded mud flat would come alive with food when water was added. **Black-bellied Plover** were present on multiple dates starting March 18 with a single individual, then on multiple dates in April with four on April 17. A fourth county record **SNOWY PLOVER** was spotted by Brian Barr in the early morning of April 23. (Brian has been an integral member of the Lagoon Advisory Committee as the director of the Rogue River Watershed Council.) The Western Snowy Plover were listed as threatened by the US Fish and Wildlife Service in 1993. In 2022 there were an estimated 508 breeding adults in Oregon up from 55 breeding adults in 1993 when they were listed.

A **Whimbrel** stopped by on April 11. The beautiful but not uncommon **Baird's Sandpiper** were seen from early August through mid-September. Baird's Sandpipers breed in the high Arctic and winter in South America all the way down to Tierra Del Fuego, often traveling anywhere from 6,000 km to 15,000 km in five or six weeks.



Black-bellied Plover
Credit: Gary Shaffer

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Lagoons Update continued from page 3

Pectoral Sandpiper have been seen from late July through September. Seven birds were counted August 19. They are regular yearly visitors and seemed to revel in hiding in the purslane that is growing on a good portion of the enhancement area. Males of this species average 25-30% larger than the females. A number of **Semipalmated Sandpipers** were spotted this summer from the end of July into late August.

A **Short-billed Dowitcher** was recorded on August 31 through September 2, though it may have been lurking in the purslane with a couple of Long-billed during the previous week. The last part of August is usually the best time to find Short-billed Dowitchers away from the coast. There was an amazing spectacle of an estimated 2,100 **Long-billed Dowitchers** on May 8. While not a record in Oregon, it is quite unusual left observers awestruck.



Long-billed Dowitchers, Credit: Frank Lospalluto

and

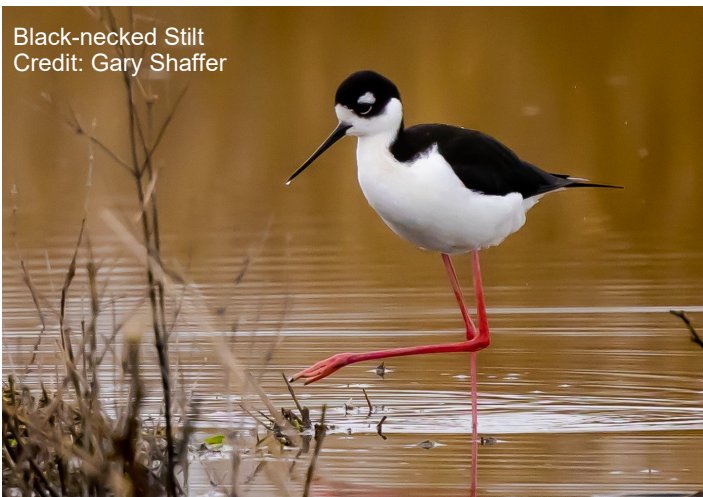
Both **Wilson's Phalarope** and **Red-necked Phalarope** have been at the lagoons this year, with Red-necked being more common.



Semipalmated Sandpiper
Credit: Norm Barrett

It has been a great season for **Solitary Sandpiper** in our region and a number have been out at the White City Lagoons both in the spring and then after midsummer. Both **Greater Yellowlegs** and **Lesser Yellowlegs** have been regular visitors.

Happy birding!

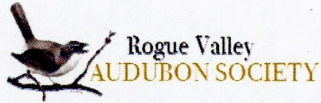


Black-necked Stilt
Credit: Gary Shaffer



Solitary Sandpiper
Credit: Gary Shaffer

It's membership renewal time! To renew, clip and send in the form below, or visit www.roguevalleyaudubon.org!



Rogue Valley Audubon Membership Application

Mail check to: Rogue Valley Audubon, P. O. Box 8597, Medford, OR 97501 or join online at www.roguevalleyaudubon.org using PayPal. Welcome to the flock. We are a dedicated group.

☐ \$20 Regular membership ☐ \$25 for paper newsletter Additional donation (amount)

Name

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E-mail (required to receive newsletter online, the preferred method and other RVAS announcements):

☐ Check here if you wish to be sent a printed copy of *The Chat* by U.S. mail. Add \$25 to membership check.

☐ Check here if you would like to volunteer for Rogue Valley Audubon.

☐ Check here to opt out of all electronic communications from Rogue Valley Audubon.

Field Trip Leaders Wanted

By Frank Lospalluto

RVAS would love to offer more field trips this fall and winter, but we are lacking one key ingredient: field trip leaders. Many of us have been doing field trips for years and are ready to pass the baton on to a new group of folks.

Are you someone who has a passion for raptors? Perhaps you have been on numerous Dick Ashford trips and readily have taken in all that Dick offered; well now, here is your opportunity to pay that forward. How about a fall trip to Butte Valley or a winter trip to the Klamath Basin?

Enjoyed birding with Pepper Trail along the greenway or with Bob Quaccia on the Table Rocks? Or Janet Kelly at Givan Ranch or Vince Zauskey at North Mountain Park? Well step up and step in by leading a trip for us at a location of your choosing. (And we'll have suggestions, too.)

You don't have to be an expert because there are no experts. You just have to be willing to show up. Interested? Contact me at: fdlospalluto@gmail.com

BIRDCENTRIC EVENTS FROM AROUND THE REGION

RVAS

First Wednesday Bird Walks: November 1, December 6, January 3

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.

White City Lagoons Bird Walk

Join us at the White City Lagoons, aka Kirtland Ponds, with birder Bob Hunter and Carl Tappert from Rogue Valley Sewer Services (RVSS). We will learn about the Shorebird Enhancement Project, a partnership between RVAS, RVSS, Bear Creek Watershed Council, and Southern Oregon Land Conservancy, and look for birds. Located about 4 miles off I-5, exit 35 (Blackwell Rd). Bear right onto Kirtland Rd (Hwy 140 East/Hwy 62), left at White City Lagoons sign, and left to public parking. Limited to 15 persons. To register, email: fdlospalluto@gmail.com

To learn more about the project funded by Watchable Wildlife and RVAS and supported and hosted by RVSS: https://www.rv-times.com/localstate/former-sewage-lagoons-in-shadow-of-table-rocks-smell-sweet-to-birds/article_b1062784-cdad-11ed-93ff-cfae0913b50e.html.



Credit: Frank Lospalluto

DATE: Saturday Oct 28

TIME: 9 - 10:30 am

Wild Birds Unlimited

TouVelle and Denman Bird Walk

Erin Ulrich will be leading a bird walk to TouVelle State Park and Denman Wildlife Area on Table Rock Rd. along the Rogue River this month. October is a good time to be searching for our fall migrants including our wintering sparrows. Limited to 9 participants. To reserve your spot, come in or call the store at (541) 772-2107. We will meet at the store and carpool to the park as there is an entry fee for every vehicle.

DATE: Sunday Oct 22

TIME: 9:00 am

Mason Bees, Part 2: "Autumn clean up and preparing for spring"

Laura Fleming will lead a workshop on preparing your mason bee cocoons for the winter and getting them set up for next spring. This will be a hands-on workshop with limited space available. Limited to 8 participants. To reserve your spot, come in or call the store at (541) 772-2107.

DATE: Sunday Oct 8

TIME: 3 - 4:00 pm

Solar Eclipse Watch

Did you know Medford is in the direct path of totality for the Annular Solar Eclipse this year? The eclipse begins in Oregon @ 9:13am on October 14th and should pass over Medford at 9:18:18 am.

****We have a limited number of eclipse glasses that meet the "Transmission Requirements of ISO 12312-2 Filters" for direct observation of the sun available to purchase ahead of time. \$3.99 each.**

DATE: Saturday Oct 14

TIME: 9:00 am

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Birdcentric Events continued from page 6

Vesper Meadows

Program: Restoration Tour and Tend + Community Potluck!

Join friends from Vesper Meadow, Rogue Valley Audubon, the Siskiyou Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Oregon and the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy for a day of learning, stewardship and celebration at the Vesper Meadow Restoration Preserve.

We'll start with a tour of the restoration demonstration sites in the meadow and creek, and then folks will have a chance to participate in creek restoration by creating beaver-based restoration structures and planting willow stakes. Afterwards, we'll treat ourselves to a celebratory potluck - bring a dish to pass and your own bowl and utensils. Plus, potluck guests will enjoy the debut of our new short film about beaver-based restoration for butterflies on the Vesper Meadow stage!

RSVP and more Information at VesperMeadow.org/new-events.

DATE: Sunday Oct 8

TIME: 2 - 7:00 pm

LOCATION: Vesper Meadow Restoration Preserve

COST: Free

Beaver Days: 2nd annual, headwaters restoration with Rogue Riverkeeper and Project Beaver

Join us and 'behave like beavers' and implement our biggest single push for Latgawa Creek and Spencer Creek restoration yet. Many hands are needed for this huge turning point in restoring the hydrologic system, wildlife habitat, and the native plant ecosystem.

Registration required. Find more important event info and register at VesperMeadow.org/new-events.

DATE & TIME: Friday Oct 13, 11:00 am - 4:00 pm

Saturday Oct 14 9:30 am - 2:30 am

LOCATION: Vesper Meadow Restoration Preserve

COST: Free

Where Have All the Swifts Gone?

By Erin Ulrich

Medford's Hedrick Middle School was the place to be in Spring 2022. We had thousands upon thousands of swifts roosting in the chimney on their migration North, and we thought Fall 2022 was guaranteed be a big one. But...we had none. Spring 2023 was just as uneventful. This Fall, sadly, we again had none. Counts at Edenvale Winery yielded a few hundred at most, but we haven't seen numbers anywhere near what we've had in the past. So, where the heck are these birds, and why are they bypassing us?

I've checked in with Hedrick Middle School, and as far as anyone knows, nothing has been done with the chimney. There was a slight alteration to the lunch area right beside the chimney, but one wouldn't think that that would be a deciding factor for the birds. Birds just haven't been seen in the vicinity of Hedrick at all. They haven't been at the residence on the nearby street either. Where might they be going that isn't Medford? Theories are that they are just using a different migration route to avoid the smoke, or they are finding new roosts or just bypassing Medford altogether.

As we wrap up our counts for this Fall, our numbers are grim and volunteering to count zero birds isn't any fun. I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to all who participated in counting zero nights, and for those who continued to count at Edenvale Winery where at least some birds showed up. No data is still data, and our persistence in providing these observations is important to understanding more about their ecology. I have hope that next Spring the birds will find their way back to us so we can celebrate them once again. I hope it's just a glitch in the system. According to the VauxHappening.org data machine, the overall number of birds migrating is at a normal level. So, I guess that's good news. I just miss the little buggers!

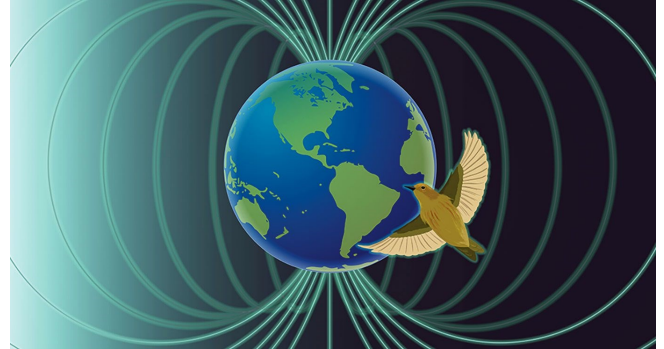
Geomagnetic Disturbances and Wrong-way Bird Migrations

Abridged from National Audubon: www.allaboutbirds.org/news/geomagnetic-disturbances-and-wrong-way-bird-migrations/

By Marc Devokaitis, Illustration by Jillian Ditrner

Birds have an uncanny ability to navigate long distances along specific routes, but once in a while, things go wrong: a Townsend's Warbler that nested in the Pacific Northwest migrates east instead of south in October and ends up along the Massachusetts coast; an Indigo Bunting, which should be headed from the Midwest to Mexico in the fall, shows up in southern California.

Vagrancy, as this phenomenon is called, adds zest and unpredictability to birdwatching. Weather events such as strong storms can blow a bird off track and likely cause many wayward bird journeys, but a [new study published in the journal *Scientific Reports*](#) in January shows that disturbances in the Earth's geomagnetic field may also play a big role in causing birds to veer off course.



Birds use magnetoreception—a sort of sixth sense for detecting the Earth's magnetic field—as one of their tools to navigate during migration. The research, conducted by a team of scientists from UCLA, showed that following a period of geomagnetic disturbance (a temporary perturbation in the magnetic field that surrounds the Earth) the rate of vagrancy among birds migrating through North America in the fall more than doubled. During normal conditions, vagrant migrant birds constituted around 2% of all records at bird-banding stations. But following a geomagnetic event, that vagrancy rate shot up to 5%.

"It basically means that if you go out birding during fall migration in the weeks following a geomagnetic disturbance, you're around twice as likely to find a bird that is way outside of its normal range," says Benjamin Tonelli, who led the research. Tonelli is a PhD student studying the ecology of migratory birds at UCLA.

The research team started with over 2 million banding records of 152 species of birds from banding stations across North America, going back to 1960. Then they used eBird Status and Trends distribution maps to create a "vagrancy index," the first time such a measurement has been conceived.

"Previous research has looked at vagrants in black-and-white terms: a bird is either a vagrant or not a vagrant. The index allows us to take some of the uncertainty out of the process," says Tonelli. "Each bird gets a score based on how many kilometers outside of their core range they were when banded."

As expected, birds that migrated longer distances showed higher rates of vagrancy overall—warblers, vireos, and flycatchers were the groups containing the most species with high vagrancy-index scores. Tonelli said that for long-distance migrants, a small error in navigation can easily get magnified once the bird has traveled thousands of kilometers. For example, if a Blackburnian Warbler leaves Toronto heading south, gets off course by 20 compass degrees, and travels 2,000 miles, it could end up more than 700 miles off course.

Interestingly, Tonelli's results showed that sometimes rates of bird migration vagrancy actually decrease during geomagnetic disturbances, when those disturbances coincide with periods of increased solar activity. The sun's energy output varies over an 11-year period. When geomagnetic disturbances happen toward the height of this solar cycle, the vagrancy effects are less intense than during times when the sun is quieter. According to Tonelli, increased solar activity may somehow be a clue to birds that they should pause migration or switch over to other avian navigation methods. In addition to magnetoreception, birds also take cues from the position of the sun, the stars, and geological features such as mountains and rivers to find their way.

"It could be that when these solar events happen [in conjunction with geo-magnetic disturbances], birds are saying to themselves, 'This is not a good time to be using this geomagnetic sense. So we should probably either hang out or switch to another mechanism,'" says Tonelli.

Tonelli and his team have launched a beta version of the Rare Bird Forecast—an online tool that uses real-time geomagnetic conditions to predict bird vagrancy probability during migration. (Find it here!: <https://bentonelli.github.io/rarebirdforecast/>.)

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A couple of bonus birds from the White City Lagoons.
Lucky you!!

Above: Semipalmated Plover, credit: Gary Shaffer

Below: Long-billed Dowitcher, credit: Janet Kelly


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THE CHAT

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