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Rogue Valley Audubon Society  
[www.roguevalleyaudubon.org](http://www.roguevalleyaudubon.org)

Deadline for the February 2024 issue is January 20



## January VIRTUAL Program

Tuesday, Jan. 23, 2024 at 7:00 pm

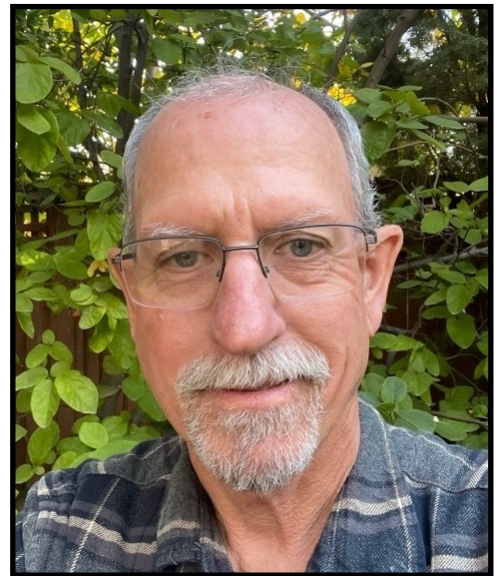
### *Ecology and Conservation of the Purple Martin in California, and Application to Southern Oregon*

With Dan Airola

Purple Martins have been in long-term decline in California. Since the 1990s, Dan Airola has been studying and working to conserve the last Central Valley population, which nests uniquely in elevated freeways and overpasses in Sacramento. He also has conducted status surveys throughout Northern California. His talk presents these study results, and describes conservation measures that have been implemented and are needed to protect and recover the species.

#### About the Speaker

Dan Airola is a Wildlife Biologist and Ornithologist who has worked on Purple Martins research and conservation issues for over 30 years in Northern California. Dan is a member of the Western and California Purple Martin Working Groups. In addition to martins, his recent conservation research topics have included the Tricolored Blackbird, Swainson's Hawk, Yellow-billed Magpie, Osprey, fire-adapted forest species, migrant songbirds, and diving ducks. Dan also serves as the editor of the Central Valley Bird Club's regional ornithological journal Central Valley Birds, and is a recent president of the Western Section of the Wildlife Society.



**Note:** Although this is a Zoom Program, we will be gathering in person as usual to experience the talk together. Please join us if you're able!

**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.



## Bear Creek Community Bird Survey Update

By Frank Lospalluto

Bear Creek Community Bird Survey (BCCBS) is now completing its third year of twice monthly surveys at seven sites along Bear Creek. As many know, the project was started the January after the Almeda and Central Point Fires in September 2020. Klamath Bird Observatory was originally asked by Rogue River Watershed Council to conduct community science surveys along a few stretches of Bear Creek as a metric of watershed health. The Covid Pandemic of 2020 delayed their plans. Then the fires occurred, spurring a few members of RVAS to consider starting some surveys to monitor and track conditions along the Bear Creek Greenway. Thus, a collaboration was born between KBO, RRWC, RVAS, and SOLC.



As of this writing, we have completed over 900 survey transects led mostly by volunteers, in which over 160 different bird species have been observed. We have only missed one survey over the past three seasons and that was due to inclement conditions (snow in the valley). We have had close to fifty different community scientists participate, with a core group of fifteen or so individuals dedicated to keeping the project going. One side benefit, besides the continued monitoring of the Bear Creek Greenway, is the opportunity for so many surveyors to improve their birding skills. It has been very rewarding to witness! We hope to make this a long-term monitoring project, with the goal of sustaining the surveys for at least five years and possibly ten.

In 2021 and 2022, Dr. Sarah Rockwell and Jaime Stephens analyzed the survey results for the breeding season months of May and June at the various sites\*. In 2021, only one of the seven survey sites had >75% of the riparian focal species considered in the report, and the overall grade calculated for the Bear Creek Greenway was “poor”. No real surprise there, as the fire was quite intense and regrowth and restoration efforts were just starting. In 2022, again only one of the seven sites had >75% of the riparian focal species, so the grade for the Bear Creek Greenway remained “poor”. In 2021, the single site that contained >75% of the focal species was Dean Creek, one of the unburned sites. In 2022, Dean Creek lost this status, but North Mountain Park, the other unburned site, attained it. At the onset of the 2022 breeding season, Dean Creek was impacted by mechanical brush cutting, bulldozing and invasive blackberry cutting along the transect areas, which may have been a major cause of the change to its riparian bird community.

This past winter Nate Trimble looked at our data and wrote an article for Oregon Birds which is expected to be published very soon. We will make an effort to post that article on the RVAS website. And we hope to have some of Dr. Jamie Trammell’s SOU students work with KBO scientists to analyze our current dataset.

The Bear Creek Greenway is not static and there is reason to believe it will improve as habitat for birds. The trauma of the fire has caused many of the governing bodies of the greenway to launch an extensive offensive against the non-native blackberry which fueled the wind-driven fires that occurred that day.

Unfortunately, this means that until native vegetation is restored, either through the plantings or by natural regeneration of plant stock that exists in some of these areas, some birds may have difficulty finding enough cover for foraging and nesting. While the fires did provide numerous snag habitat, many trees have been removed under hazard tree guidelines. We tend to want to clean up the habitat, while (and yes this is oversimplification) wildlife like messy!

It is understood that Bear Creek is a stream that runs through a basically urban environment. In this Anthropocene Epoch, we will continue to face the dangers of wildfire, and the impulse to control the forces of nature can often place human needs over the needs of other organisms, be it spawning salmonids or Yellow-breasted Chats.

We welcome new surveyors! Information on how to contact us, along with our protocol, is available on the RVAS website.

Many thanks go to Jaime Stephens, Sarah Rockwell, Juliet Grable, Kristi Mergenthaler, Pepper Trail, Brian Barr, and Nathan Trimble. Dedicated scientists and writers and even better people.

And of course, our deep gratitude to all the great and wonderful survey volunteers. Conscientious and trustworthy doesn’t even begin to describe them. Thank you all!

\* Rockwell, S. M., and J. L. Stephens. 2021. Bear Creek Community Bird Survey: 2021 summary report. Rep. No. KBO-2021-0012. Klamath Bird Observatory, Ashland, OR.

Rockwell, S. M., and J. L. Stephens. 2022. Bear Creek Community Bird Survey: 2022 summary report. Rep. No. KBO-2022-0013. Klamath Bird Observatory, Ashland, OR.

## Oregon Audubon Council (OAC) Draft Priorities for 2024

By Jamie Trammell

This October, Rogue Valley Audubon Society was able to join 11 other Oregon Audubon chapters for a weekend in Klamath Falls to discuss and rank statewide priorities for 2024. While they are still drafting priorities at this writing, we wanted to give you a sense of how, statewide, Audubon is working on critical issues impacting our avian colleagues.

Most priorities discussed are carryovers from last year, including:

Protecting key Oregon wetlands (specifically Klamath, Malheur, and Lake Abert) for their critical role in survival of birds on the Pacific Flyway. For more information, please read [this great article from our own Pepper Trail](#).

Forest conservation, especially private forests through the Oregon Forest Practices Act, state forests through the Western Forests Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), and federal forests through the new Northwest Forest Plan update.

Ocean and coastline conservation, supporting the establishment and maintenance of marine reserves, conserving rocky habitats and estuaries, and ensuring that offshore wind is sited properly.

Imperiled bird species and their habitats, with a specific focus on Western Snowy Plover, Northern Spotted Owl, Marbled Murrelet, Streaked Horned Lark, and the Greater Sage-grouse.

Reducing avian hazards, especially those associated with new drone (UAV) rules, light pollution, and of course building collisions. Lane County Audubon is piloting a new Bird Safe Communities program as part of this priority, so stay tuned for future developments there.

Managing for coexistence, encouraging policies that do not demonize species that provide key ecosystem services and bird habitat (like beaver).

Funding from Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife for non-game programs.

One new priority discussed this year was around how conservation organizations might respond to some of the houselessness challenges that are emerging statewide. Realizing that many groups are working on different pieces of this challenge, we settled on prioritizing statewide green infrastructure. This will help us reemphasize the importance of urban greenways (like our Bear Creek) for biodiversity, and ensure that any solutions to houselessness challenges should not jeopardize our urban green infrastructure.

Although it's a huge list, it isn't comprehensive of all the activities of the individual Audubon chapters, so know that your local RVAS, along with other statewide Audubon chapters, are all working hard to ensure avian species are being properly supported in the new year.

### Jacksonville Elementary Project FeederWatch Update

By Kali Fox

My name is Kali and I am the lead ornithologist this month for Mr. Williams 3rd grade class at Jacksonville Elementary. This month has been filled with bird sightings! We have seen some new birds but mostly Juncos, they have even come up to our feeders. The most exciting bird sighting has been a Downy Woodpecker perched on the very top of our feeder! Juncos have been hoarding the feeders. Thankfully though, they have gone back to being ground feeders to give the other birds space. Thank you for your support in our class feeders. I love to watch the birds come and go there and back at our class feeders.



**BIRDCENTRIC EVENTS FROM AROUND THE REGION**

**RVAS**

**First Wednesday Bird Walks: January 3, February 7, March 6**

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 Brophy Road Loop with Janet Kelly & Vince Zauskey**

Birds we may see include: Snow and Cackling Goose, Tri-colored and Yellow-headed Blackbirds, Northern Shrike, and Prairie Falcon. Meet at the Dollar Tree parking lot near the intersection of Highways 140 and 62 in White City at 7:45 am for carpooling. With limited pullout spots, we will limit the trip to three cars and 8 participants. If raining, the trip will be canceled. To register and to reserve a space for this free hike email: [chamkell@msn.com](mailto:chamkell@msn.com)

DATE: Saturday Jan 6

TIME: 7:45 am - 12:00 pm

**Wild Birds Unlimited**

**Agate Lake Bird Walk**

Max McClarnon will be leading a bird walk to Agate Lake this month. Limited to 9 participants. To reserve your spot, come in or call the store at (541) 772-2107.

DATE: Saturday Dec 9

TIME: 9:00 am



Prairie Falcon  
Credit: F. Lospalluto

**"Attracting and Sustaining Hummingbirds in the Rogue Valley" with Robin McKenzie**

This class explores the 4 types of hummingbirds that are likely visitors to your garden, and how to sustain them by planting both native and non-native flowering plants. We'll explore the plants by growing season to keep the hummers visiting from early spring to late fall. If you have a sunny or shady garden, you'll learn what plants will attract these flying jewels. We will also cover overwintering our Anna's by keeping their nectar feeders from freezing.

DATE: Sunday Jan 21

TIME: 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm

**Registration Opening Soon!**

**Wild & Winged Snow Goose Festival of the Pacific Flyway**

Join us in the search for winter birds of the Pacific Flyway on 4-days of action-packed field trips with experienced trip leaders, plus more. Registration begins in early December. If you have any questions, you can reach us at [info@snowgoosefestival.org](mailto:info@snowgoosefestival.org), or by calling the Festival Office at 530-592-9092

DATE: Thursday Jan 25 - Sunday Jan 28

LOCATION: Patrick Ranch Museum, Chico, CA

**Tour of White City Lagoon, October 28, 2023**

By Kate Cleland-Sipfle, Bob Hunter, and Carl Tappert (Photos from Kate Cleland-Sipfle)

A thick fog greeted the 13 who showed up for a tour of the White City Lagoons the chilly morning of October 28. Led by Bob Hunter of RVAS and Carl Tappert of the Rogue Valley Sewer Services, the group was oriented to the site layout and a brief history of waste management at the site. They then headed around the mudflats and on to the north lagoon, where bacteria-rich, treated water attracts a variety of waterfowl (bufflehead, green-winged teal, northern shoveler, and eared grebe seen).

The walk began along the mudflat area, where Wilson's Snipe flew overhead, Killdeer were seen, and a variety of

*White City Lagoon, continued on page 6*

*White City Lagoon, continued from page 5*

sparrows (Savanna, White-crowned, Golden-crowned, and Song), Juncos, and House Finches. Bob explained that the mudflat area is graded to leave three islands above the waterline in any season. A canal surrounds the islands and connects to a large pond. The canal and pond will have water in it all year, and the islands will be dry all year. The mudflats will be flooded seasonally to provide for migrating shorebirds in both the spring and the fall. Right now, the mudflats are dry.

American and Lesser Goldfinch moved about in the shrubs as the group made their way to the north lagoon. Meadowlarks and Red-winged Blackbirds were also heard. The area is popular with birders, with some 213 species reported historically and 21 species of shorebirds plus waders alone in the past year. Recently reported rare birds include Loggerhead Shrike and Solitary Sandpiper.



RVAS, Watchable Wildlife Foundation, L&S Rock, and Rogue River Watershed Council all contributed to the cost of the study and planning for development of the mudflat, while the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy provided technical support. Rogue Valley Sewer Services, besides allowing and supporting the project, provided the grading, parking area, kiosk, and signage. Adjacent to the mudflat area is an area utilized by Rogue Valley Sewer Services to treat septic effluent - which is discharged into and flows through three plastic-lined lagoon cells before the treated water flows to the lake-like north lagoon. From there, flows can be released to the mudflat area as needed. There is no outside discharge from the lagoons; all dissipation of treated water is through evaporation. Initial expenditures from the recent RVAS donation will be used for revegetation with native vegetation.

## White City Lagoons Test Planting

By Frank Lospalluto

On November 15<sup>th</sup>, a small group of volunteers from Southern Oregon Land Conservancy (SOLC) and RVAS took a big step in the White City Lagoons Mud Enhancement project, planting out shrubs and seeding in native grasses and forbs on the small nesting islands. The SOLC crew included staff members Kristi Mergenthaler and Tara Laidlaw, along with SOLC members Bryan Nelson, Jim LaVally, and Kevin Talbert. RVAS's own Norm Barrett provided much needed supervision along with impressive shovel work! Both Kristi and Norm are on the Lagoon Advisory Committee.

We hope to do another small planting of rushes and willow stakes in December. And we will continue to work the addition of native trees and shrubs to the parking area, along with seeding some of the dikes and controlling the spread of noxious weeds near the path.



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## Thank You Funagain Games!

We wanted to extend a very special thank you to Funagain Games in Ashland for donating a copy of the beautiful board game *Wingspan*. This 2019 Game of the Year features 170 illustrated bird cards which include accurate bird facts, wingspan, and nesting behavior! And congratulations to the lucky raffle winner at the 2023 RVAS Holiday Party for winning this delightful game!



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*Happy Holidays,  
Dear flock!  
See You in the  
New Year* 😊



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## 20% OFF One Regularly-priced Item

\*Valid 10/1/23 thru 9/30/24 at the Medford, OR WBU store. One discount per purchase. Not valid on bird food, previous purchases, optics, gift cards, DSC memberships, or sale items.

# 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.

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