

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

Deadline for the June/July 2025 issue is May 20



Here on page 1 of the May Chat, and throughout the issue, enjoy some of the beautiful artwork from Mr. Williamson's 3rd Grade at Jacksonville Middle School - our favorite Project Feederwatch class!



Ashland Dark Skies Initiative

By Cat Gould

As you all know, light pollution is a huge problem for migrating birds and I would consider it a big win if Ashland city embraces the Dark Skies initiatives.

The climate energy policy advisory committee (CEPAC) in Ashland is about to look at Dark Skies initiatives. If anyone shares my hope for darker skies, please email bsohlmm@icloud.com and let him know you would like to present to CEPAC on June 11 3-5:00 pm at the city community development center. If you can't come to the meeting, emailing the committee and city to voice your support is also a helpful step.

If you are new to dark skies initiatives, here is some info: <https://abcbirds.org/news/dark-skies-help-birds/>.

Thanks for joining me in advocating for our beloved birds. It takes a village!

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Chapter Program meetings are held on the fourth Tuesday of the month (unless otherwise noted), 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: Chapter meetings will be held on Zoom if deemed unsafe for gathering, or as otherwise needed.

Rogue Valley Bird Day 2025

Enjoy a local celebration of World Bird Migratory Day on Saturday, **May 10th, 8 am – Noon** at North Mountain Park Nature Center in Ashland. Rogue Valley Bird Day will include educational exhibits from Klamath Bird Observatory, Wildlife Images, and more, as well as fun all-ages activities.

Adult and children's binoculars will be available for check-out, with bird walks leaving every 30 minutes. These easy walks travel along the park's bark-chipped trails, or along the accessible paved bike path. Visitors may also sit down and enjoy the bird watching from the covered pavilion.

This year's theme "Shared Spaces", will highlight small actions everyone can take to create space and care for our avian friends, especially during migration.

Crafts, games, and a self-guided activity booklet will be on hand for kids to learn about birds and earn prizes. At 11am, all ages are invited to compete in the annual Bird Calling Contest and "Name that Bird" contest, with prizes provided by the Rogue Valley Audubon Society.

Join us for a day of birding fun!

To learn more, visit [RogueValleyBirdDay.net](https://www.roguevalleybirdday.net), or see the beautiful event flyer (with QR code) on the Events page of our website: <https://www.roguevalleyaudubon.org/calendar/>



Status of upcoming events

Field trips: Denman Bird Walk - Jun. 4, Jul. 2, Aug. 6

Rogue Valley Bird Day: Sat. May 10

RVAS Birdathon: Fri. May 16 - Sat. May 17

The Conservation Column

By Pepper Trail

Dire Threats to the Endangered Species Act

Until recently, the Trump Administration's attacks on endangered species protections – though far-reaching and devastating - had been largely indirect. These had focused on prioritizing fossil fuel extraction over every other use of public lands, and gutting any federal action to limit (or even study) the effects of climate change.

Now, however, the direct assault has begun, with the release of a proposed federal “rule-making” entitled “Rescinding the Definition of “Harm” under the Endangered Species Act.” Under the current ESA definition, “harm” includes actions leading to “significant habitat modification or degradation where it actually kills or injures wildlife by significantly impairing essential behavioral patterns, including breeding, feeding or sheltering.” But under the proposed definition, “harm” would apply only to the direct killing or injury of endangered species. There would be no protection from habitat destruction.

It is patently obvious that destroying an endangered species' habitat constitutes harm. This is true even if no individual animals are directly killed in the course of the habitat destruction. A huge mining operation in grizzly bear habitat might not kill any bears, but would leave them with no place to live. Putting an oil drilling platform in the middle of a sage-grouse lek might not kill any of the birds, but would be a fatal blow to the reproduction – and thus survival – of the population.

Environmental groups have been quick to react to the proposal. “It upends how we've been protecting endangered species for the last 40 years,” said Noah Greenwald of the nonprofit Center for Biological Diversity. Earthjustice has promised to take legal action against the proposed rule, with senior attorney Kristen Boyles stating that the notion that habitat destruction is somehow not harmful is “nonsensical both legally and biologically.”

The proposed rule, and a link to submit comments, can be found at: <https://www.regulations.gov/document/FWS-HQ-ES-2025-0034-0001>. I will be preparing comments on behalf of RVAS. The deadline for comments is May 19.

Another troubling development for endangered species might at first seem to be good news: the recent claim by a company called Colossal Biosciences to have produced three pups of the long-extinct dire wolf through genetic engineering. The company's press release claimed the pups to be “the world's first de-extinct animals...brought back from extinction using genetic edits derived from a complete dire wolf genome, meticulously reconstructed by Colossal from ancient DNA.”

This claim received huge media coverage – and immediate scientific pushback. One leading expert in paleogenetics pointed out that only 14 genes, with 20 differences between living gray wolves and extinct dire wolves, were involved in the “edits.” He asked “would a chimpanzee with 20 gene edits be human?...These individuals seem optimistically 1/100,000th dire wolf.”

Conservationists noted other concerns. What is the plan for dire wolves and other “de-extinct” species? Where is the habitat for an animal that was adapted for preying on now-extinct megafauna like ground sloths and giant bison? How might “dire wolves” and gray wolves co-exist, and might they hybridize? Would not Colossal's enormous financial resources be better utilized in conserving existing species? According the *Washington Post*, the company has been valued at \$10.2 billion and has raised \$435 million in funding; billionaire and conservative mega-donor Peter Thiel is an investor.

Despite all this, there is one place where the scientifically dubious and ethically problematic goal of “de-extinction” has been embraced without reservation: the Trump Administration. In a post on X, Interior Secretary Doug Burgum claimed that most species listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) have not recovered “because the status quo is focused on regulation more than innovation,” and went on to hail Colossal's announcement: “The revival of the Dire Wolf heralds the advent of a thrilling new era of scientific wonder, showcasing how the concept of “de-extinction” can serve as a bedrock for modern species conservation.” In a meeting with Interior Department employees, Burgum's endorsement of Colossal went even further: “If we're going to be in anguish about losing a species, now we have an opportunity to bring them back. Pick your favorite species, and call Colossal.”

In fact, the ESA has produced some spectacular recovery successes, including the Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, and American Alligator. And the ESA has succeeded in preventing the extinction of over 99% of listed species. But

Conservation Column, continued on page 4

The Chat - May 2025

Conservation Column, continued from page 3

Burgum is correct that most ESA-listed species have not recovered sufficiently to be “de-listed” – declared no longer at risk of extinction. But the reason is not excessive regulation.

A peer-reviewed analysis of species listed on the ESA from 1992-2020 concluded that the reasons for the low rate of de-listing were “small population sizes at time of listing, coupled with delayed protection and insufficient funding.” To this can be added the fact that by the time many species are listed, their suitable habitat has dwindled too much to support robust recovered populations.

The “innovation” needed to protect America’s biodiversity is not the high-tech resurrection of extinct species. It is simply to list declining species earlier, when their populations are still large enough to benefit from the protections that the ESA provides. And funding must be sufficient to support scientifically sound recovery plans. The paper cited above found that spending per listed species declined by nearly 50% from 1985-2020.

Burgum’s statements ignore the most basic goal of conservation: not to preserve individual animals, but rather self-sustaining populations existing in their native habitats, fulfilling their ecological roles and exhibiting the full range of their natural behaviors. The idea that species can be conserved by picking up the phone to “call Colossal” and order up a few genetically engineered survivors is a delusional and disingenuous fantasy.

Obedying Trump’s priorities, Burgum has made clear that his management of the over 500 million acres of public land under his authority will be all about energy extraction. On his first day in office, he released six Secretarial Orders, all of which were focused on increasing fossil fuel production. None mentioned the words “wildlife” or “conservation”, much less “endangered species”.

Endangered species like sage-grouse, gray wolves, and grizzly bears are inconvenient obstacles to this Administration’s goal of unleashing fossil fuel extraction, mining, and logging everywhere across the public lands of the West. Allowing uncontrolled destruction of their critical habitat is a key strategy to removing this obstacle. Another is the cynical ploy of using cute genetically engineered “dire wolf” pups to distract from the urgent needs of actual endangered species.

We can expect further attacks on endangered species – and all wildlife – from this Administration. I’ll try to keep RVAS members informed, and I encourage you all to take whatever actions you can. We need every last wildlife defender. Thanks!



Bird Feeding: Trayed or Betrayed?

By Harry Fuller

Lots of us feed birds in the United States. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service did a feeder survey two years ago. Their conclusion: 50 million of us feed birds. Yet I just read that the New Jersey legislature is considering a statewide feeder ban. Why? To protect wild animals from the spread of deadly, contagious diseases. Dirty and infected feeders can kill their customers.

A total ban seemed surprising. As I read one media account of the potential law, I was more surprised to read "The proposed ban, inspired by real-world precedents like temporary feeder restrictions in states such as Oregon during a 2022 salmonellosis outbreak, would aim to safeguard New Jersey's 700+ bird species, including spring migrants like the Eastern Bluebird and Baltimore Oriole." Link to this article: <https://www.shorenewsnetwork.com/2025/03/24/new-jersey-bird-feeder-ban-looms-in-trenton-as-spring-hatches>.

Some research shows there was a feeder ban here in Oregon. It was passed in October, 2022 in Bandon, a birdy coastal town I love to visit. You can read that ordinance here: <https://www.bandon-or.gov/media/15451>.

Oh, by the way, Bandon did NOT ban feeding songbirds. For a coastal town there was understandable concern about feeding gulls and mammals.

Maybe, New Jersey will pay attention if Oregonians get good at safe bird feeding. Grain and seed feeders need bi-weekly cleaning and scrubbing after soaking in a diluted bleach solution (1 part bleach to 9 parts water) for 5-10 minutes, and then thoroughly drying. Better than mere soap and water. Safer than flammable alcohol.

Suet feeders are more difficult to clean. Dense fat coats the surfaces. According to Cornell Lab of Ornithology, wash them with hot, soapy water first. Then soak the suet feeder in diluted bleach solution as with standard feeders. Rinse thoroughly, and dry completely before refilling.

Hummingbird nectar (sugar water) feeders need frequent cleaning. Again, Cornell recommends using a diluted bleach solution.

A wide variety of local birds will use your feeders, depending on the habitat around you. Even crows occasionally, but mostly smaller birds: jays, sparrows, finches (including the dozens of siskins that may descend into your part of the valley every fall), warblers, nuthatches, kinglets, and Bushtits. There are local birds that rarely use a feeder - robins, for example. And any hawk (except to perhaps grab a winged snack).

Woodpeckers generally go for suet feeders only, but suet is also popular with Bushtits, nuthatches, jays, warblers, even an occasional junco. If you live amongst orioles, they will go for a slice of orange at least three feet off the ground.

Speaking of ground - sparrows, quail and even some finches will feed happily on your drive or a cement patio. Reminder: that could attract wild turkeys, and ODFW asks you to avoid feeding them.

Squirrels will also gather at feeders. Trying to prevent those agile acrobats from getting the goods is always a mental challenge for big, ground-dwelling mammals like us. Vertical or horizontal in approach, squirrels can jump several feet to a hanging feeder. Visit your local Northwest Nature Shop (Ashland) or Wild Birds Unlimited (Medford) to check out the squirrel-resistant options on offer.

ODFW News Release: "Keep feeders clean to avoid sickening birds": https://www.dfw.state.or.us/news/2020/12_Dec/122220.asp



Bushtits at suet feeder
Credit: Harry Fuller

New White City FeederWatch Site!

By Erin Ulrich

I recently completed setting up a third FeederWatch site sponsored by RVAS. It is located at the White City Library. Our other two sites are at North Mountain Park in Ashland, and Jacksonville Elementary School in Jacksonville.

Library Spark Space Specialist Amy Fann summarizes the intent for the station at White City Library:

“The White City Library is in the process of adding native pollinator plants, bird feeders, and mason bee houses to our patio and garden area, creating ecological and educational opportunities for students who participate in our Spark Space STEAM programs, and for the enjoyment of community members of all ages. We sincerely thank the Rogue Valley Audubon Society for donating and setting up two feeding stations, a hummingbird feeder, and a bird bath; providing bird feed; and signing us up to participate in Project FeederWatch in 2025-2026. We are already using the feeders, and we look forward to identifying and learning about the birds that come to feast as we prepare for participation in Project FeederWatch. We welcome everyone to our library, and hope you will join us on the patio for birdwatching.”

As always, thank you RVAS members for supporting programs like this. We are hoping to continue to connect all ages to the beauty and importance of birds here in Jackson County and beyond.

BIRDCENTRIC EVENTS FROM AROUND THE REGION

RVAS

First Wednesday Bird Walks: May 7, June 4, July 2, August 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.

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.

RVAS, North Mountain Nature Center, & Friends

Rogue Valley Bird Day 2025

Enjoy a local celebration of World Bird Migratory Day! Rogue Valley Bird Day will include educational exhibits, bird walks, crafts, games, and activities for all ages. Win fame and prizes at the annual Bird Calling Contest and “Name that Bird” contest, with prizes provided by the Rogue Valley Audubon Society. Join us for a day of birding fun! Event partners include the Rogue Valley Audubon Society, the Klamath Bird Observatory, Wild Bird Unlimited, Wildlife Images, and more. To learn more, visit RogueValleyBirdDay.net.

DATE: Saturday May 10

TIME: 8 am - 12 pm

COST: Free

LOCATION: North Mountain Nature Center, Ashland

Klamath Bird Observatory

“Oaks and Other Creatures” with Harry Fuller

Join us for this presentation with Harry Fuller. The oak tree family is widespread in temperate parts of both hemispheres. It is often the keystone species around which mammals, birds, invertebrates, fungi, lichens, and myriad other organisms build their survival. From the acorn to the tree, from creviced bark to hanging mistletoe, the oak is an enriching element in its habitat. It is not just acorn Woodpeckers that depend on oaks. Fortunately, KBO is involved in active restoration efforts at work across western Oregon. The presentation will be hosted at the KBO office in Ashland, and there is a virtual option. Register here: <https://klamathbird.org/callnote/oaks-and-other-creatures-with-harry-fuller/>

DATE: Monday May 12

TIME: 5:30 - 7:30 pm

COST: Free

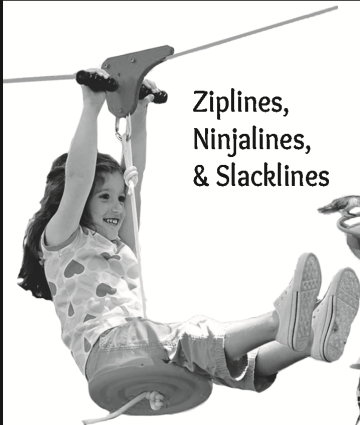
LOCATION: KBO office, Ashland (location and virtual option info to be sent upon registration)

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Black-bellied Plover, White City Lagoons
Credit: Jim Livaudais



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THE CHAT

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