

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

Deadline for the September 2025 issue is August 20



Birdathon 2025 was Remarkable (and Wet)!

By Carol Mockridge (Birdathon Coordinator), and Kay Simmons

How many bird species can you find in Jackson County in 24 hours? Birders took on the challenge starting at 6 pm on Friday, May 16, 2025.

The Birdathon is the main fundraiser each year for RVAS. Birding teams compete to find the most species, but the coveted Birdathon trophy owl goes to the team that raises the most donations for RVAS. Four birding teams scrambled through birding hotspots. Teams hiked up Lower Table Rock trail, checked White City Lagoons, Agate Lake, Denman ponds, Lily Glen, the Howard Prairie circuit, Emigrant Lake and North Mountain Park. Biker Nate Trimble found good species at the Medford Airport marsh and along Bear Creek Greenway. No snow this year, but cold rain on Howard Prairie chilled our birders. All four teams met to share birding observations and pizza after the 6 pm end on Saturday night. The Black-capped Chickadees found the most species. The winning team that raises the most donations for RVAS will be announced in the September *Chat* after all donations are counted.



Presenting, the Black-capped Chickadees - the team who tallied the most species this year! From left to right: Amanda Alford, Janet Kelly, Kay Simmons, Leslie Hart, Carol Mockridge. Credit: Leslie Hart

The Birding Buddies – 82 species; Aaron Peterson and Chrissy Shepard. Aaron Peterson said "We had gone to Hyatt Lake in search of new species, including the White-headed Woodpecker. When we arrived at the wildlife viewing area, we looked around and saw some birds on the lake. As I was looking at them, I heard a noise coming from a tree. My teammate said to me, "There's a bird! It's a woodpecker!" I looked, and sure enough, it was the White-headed Woodpecker we were searching for. We were both overjoyed at this awesome find. It was the highlight of our day."



Great Grays (from left to right): Anne Goff, Brian Barr, Teresa Thome. Credit: Teresa Thome

Black-capped Chickadees – 128 species; Amanda Alford, Leslie Hart, Janet Kelly, Carol Mockridge, and Kay Simmons. Found a black-capped night heron juvenile at dusk at Avenue G pond. Janet had the Chickadees departing Ashland at 4 am before first light. As we turned on to Dead Indian Memorial Rd a barn owl flew by the windshield. Higher up the mountain we were awed to hear poorwill calling, ruffed grouse drumming, spotted a great gray owl, and found a Townsend's Solitaire singing. Leslie dove the chariot, Amanda's fingers flew with over 50 eBird lists, and the team was powered by Carol's banana bread.

Birdathon, continued on page 3

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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 programs are often available via Zoom. The Zoom link is posted the day of the meeting on the RVAS website.

Ornithologist Report

Hi I'm Lucy, and I am in Mr. Williams's 3rd grade class. I'm the lead ornithologist this month at Jacksonville Elementary. We just saw a new bird this month, it was a European Starling. This month we have continued to see goldfinches, American Crows, and Scrub Jays.

The most exciting bird we have seen this month was a European starling.

Now I am going to tell you about a European Starling. First, I'm going to tell you about the size and shape of a European Starling. A European Starling's length is 7.9 - 9.1 in. Their wingspan is 12.2 - 15.8 in. European Starlings are usually black. With a good view in summer, the feathers shine purple and green, and the bill is yellow. Here are some habitats of European Starlings. First, starlings are common in towns, suburbs, farms, and the countryside. Next, European Starlings eat grasshoppers, beetles, caterpillars, snails, earthworms, and spiders. They also eat fruit and berries, seeds, nectar, livestock feed, and garbage. Thank you for your support of our class bird feeders.



Find a photo of Mr. William's entire 3rd grade class on page 10!

Status of upcoming events

Field trips: Denman Bird Walk - Aug. 6, Sept. 3, Oct. 1

The Chat - June/July 2025

Birdathon, continued from page 1

Great Grays – 115 species; Ann Goff, Brian Barr, Teresa Thome. Reported many mosquitos and ticks at Denman. One highlight was finding a green heron at dusk at Whetstone Pond.

Biking Bushtit – 112 species; Nate Trimble.
Please find Nate's trip report on page 4.



The Birding Buddies: Aaron Peterson & Chrissy Shepard. Credit: Aaron Peterson



Final celebration! Credit: Greg Hart



The Birding Bushtit: Nate Trimble. Credit: Kay Simmons



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 _____

Address _____

City/State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

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.

Birdathon 2025 Report from The Biking Bushtit

By Nate Trimble



The Jackson County Birdathon by bike has become a tradition for me in the past few years, and is one of my favorite days of the year. As a lifelong endurance athlete and naturalist, the Birdathon by bike is the ultimate expression of my interests and skills rolled into one amazing day. 2023 was hot and windy, 2024 had bitterly cold and wet conditions all day, but 2025 gave us some decent weather, and I really enjoyed my Birdathon this time around. I didn't keep track of my exact mileage, but likely rode and hiked around 120 miles between Friday afternoon and Saturday night. Last year, I found 111 species. **This year, I was saved by a Belted Kingfisher at the Medford Airport in the last two minutes to get my highest tally yet of 112!**

Like the past two years, I started my ride up to Lily Glen Park on Friday afternoon, leaving my house in Ashland a little after 4 pm. I was feeling strong and made great time up the mountain to begin my count at Lily Glen at 6 pm. My first bird of the competition was a singing Hermit Thrush. I found most of the high elevation species I was looking for before sunset, including Vesper Sparrows, Cassin's Finches, Mountain Quails, and a Mountain Bluebird, amongst others. I also got lucky on the descent back down DIM, with calling

Red Crossbills and a Great Horned Owl that flew over the road.

After a 4:45 am wake up on Saturday and breakfast listening to singing Wilson's Warblers and Western Flycatchers on my porch, I did a little birding around Ashland, finding Band-tailed Pigeons, Hammond's Flycatchers, and American Dippers. I then began my ride along the Bear Creek Greenway, stopping at strategic locations for riparian specialists, before heading to several wildlife refuges in the Medford and White City area including White City Lagoons, Lower Table Rocks, and a few locations in the Denman Wildlife Area. This year, ducks, shorebirds, and gulls were down, but I had good luck with songbirds. I hiked to the top of Lower Table Rocks and was rewarded for my efforts with many beautiful songbirds. This included my favorite sighting of the Birdathon, a big flock of mostly Townsend's Warblers with other species mixed in. I finished my count at the Medford Airport before meeting the other bird nerds in Medford to celebrate. After an entire large pizza, some beer, and some serious nerding out, I was refueled for the 20-mile ride back home.

Some of my other favorite observations included many Sandhill Cranes in the mountain meadows, a Rufous Hummingbird that buzzed right in front of my face while I was eating mozzarella sticks on the porch of the Touvelle Tavern, watching a Red-winged Blackbird chase an American Bittern across the Avenue G Pond, and hearing a Hutton's Vireo singing in the forest below as I took a rest on a cliff edge at Table Rocks. I also literally jumped for joy when I saw the only kingfisher of the count at 5:58 pm. All in all, it was great fun, and I'm already scheming about how to get more birds next year. Big thanks to everyone who supported me!

You can check out my eBird Trip Report at the address below, which has a map of everywhere I went and a species list.

<https://ebird.org/tripreport/371981>

Happy birding,
Nate



The Conservation Column

By Pepper Trail

There is so much terrible news coming out of Washington, DC that it is impossible to keep up. Certainly, that is true with the over 1000-page “Big Beautiful Bill” that passed by small partisan margins in the Republican-controlled House and Senate, and was signed by the President on July 4, 2025. It is likely that very few, if any, Representatives read the whole thing.

The bill has attracted a lot of attention for its attacks on Medicare and SNAP, its reduction of taxes for the rich, and its explosion of the deficit. But it also contains radical attacks on environmental protections and investments. Fortunately, some of the worst provisions were stripped out at the last minute, including one notorious provision that would have sold off millions of acres of public lands across 11 Western states. However, what remains qualifies the bill, in the opinion of EPIC (the Environmental Protection Information Center) as “the worst environmental bill the House has ever passed.”

According to EPIC, these are “some of the provisions that will have lasting impacts on our forests, rivers, wildlife, and local and Tribal communities”:

- **Cuts to Forest and Wildfire Resilience Programs (Section 10201).** Rescinds all unobligated Inflation Reduction Act funding for forest restoration and wildfire risk reduction projects that improve forest health on both federal and private lands. This includes efforts to protect river corridors from development, maintain water quality, and preserve scenic and wildlife values essential to recreation.
- **Eliminates River and Climate Data Programs (Section 40008).** Defunds NOAA programs supporting river hydrology research, forecasting, and climate resilience. These programs provide data that help river runners and land managers understand short-and long-term flow changes and plan safe outdoor experiences.
- **Mandates Public Land Oil and Gas Leasing (Section 50101).** Requires the Department of the Interior to hold quarterly oil and gas lease sales in multiple states, including Wyoming and Alaska. This removed agency discretion and public input, forcing leasing even in sensitive areas and preventing new mitigation measures to protect recreation or cultural resources.
- **Expands Drilling in the Western Arctic (Section 50105).** Mandates five large oil and gas lease sales of 4 million acres each in the Western Arctic. It revokes Biden-era protection for sensitive wildlife habitat and subsistence areas, reinstates weaker environmental reviews, and threatens wild rivers like the Colville and Utukok that support critical subsistence and recreation uses.
- **Accelerates Coal Leasing with Little Review (Section 50201).** Orders leasing of 4 million additional acres for coal mining, an expedited approval process that severely limits public comment and environmental review. Also authorizes mining on adjacent lands using outdated permits, increasing the risk of unchecked environmental damage.
- **Requires Unsustainable Timber Sales (Section 50302).** Compels the Forest Service and BLM to increase timber sales by hundreds of millions of board-feet annually under 20-year contracts. These contracts reduce opportunities for public input and limit agencies' ability to adapt management to evolving ecological, wildfire, or recreational needs.
- **Discourages Clean Energy on Public Lands (Section 50303).** Imposes higher fees and greater financial risk on renewable energy developers, undermining investment in wind and solar projects on public lands. Meanwhile, fossil fuel leasing incentives are expanded, contradicting climate goals.



Courtesy: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Conservation Column, continued on page 6

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Conservation Column, continued from page 5

- **Cuts National Park Staffing and Climate Resilience (Section 50305).** Eliminates critical funding for National Park Service staffing, visitor services, law enforcement, and educational programs. Also cancels capital improvement projects designed to make park infrastructure – roads, trails, and utilities – more resilient to wild-fires, flooding, and other climate impacts, threatening visitor safety and access.
- **Opens the Door to the Shasta Dam Raise (Section 50501).** Includes an amendment that allows up to \$1 billion in federal funding for raising [the height of] the Shasta Dam, a controversial project that would flood the wild lower McCloud River. This would violate California's wild river protections, inundate sacred Winnemem Wintu tribal sites, and destroy a renowned whitewater section.

Find the original EPIC blog post here: <https://www.wildcalifornia.org/post/big-beautiful-bill-passes-senate-and-house>.

Many battles lie ahead, and economic issues will attract the most attention. But the fight is not over. Please support the numerous organizations that continue to stand up for wild nature in the face of strong headwinds. And messages to our Senators and Representatives are always needed to remind them that their constituents want them to prioritize environmental protections, scientific research, and investments wherever they can.

Contact our Senators:

Senator Ron Wyden:

Washington office: (202) 224-5244

Medford office: (541) 858-5122

Email contact form: <https://www.wyden.senate.gov/contact/email-ron>

Senator Jeff Merkley

Washington office: (202) 224-3753

Medford office: (541) 608-9102

Email contact form: <https://www.merkley.senate.gov/connect/contact/>

Contact our Representative (2nd Congressional district of Oregon):

Cliff Bentz

Washington office: (202) 224-3121

Medford office: (541) 776-4646

BIRDCENTRIC EVENTS FROM AROUND THE REGION

RVAS

First Wednesday Bird Walks: August 6, September 3, October 1

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.

North Mountain Park

Saturday Morning Bird Walks

Enjoy an opportunity to see and hear a variety of birds that spend the summer in the Rogue Valley on this easy walk through NMP. Binoculars and field guides will be available for check-out. Call the Nature Center with questions at 541-488-6606. More info and to register: <https://www.ashlandoregon.gov/Calendar.aspx?EID=3302&month=7&year=2025&day=6&calType=0>

DATES: Saturday Aug. 16, Saturday Sept. 13

TIME: 9 - 10 am

COST: Free

LOCATION: North Mountain Park, 620 N Mountain Avenue, Ashland, OR 97520

Rogue Valley Bird Day 2025

By Kay Simmons

Hundreds of bird enthusiasts gathered at Rogue Valley Bird Day on May 10, 2025, for exhibits, bird walks, and activities at North Mountain Park in Ashland. Wildlife Images brought a Peregrine Falcon and a Great-horned Owl. Dick Ashford led the Big Sit bird observations. Children and adults competed in the bird calling and Name that Bird contests. Event partners include the Rogue Valley Audubon Society, the Klamath Bird Observatory, Wild Bird Unlimited, Wildlife Images, and more. RVAS provided contest prizes with all young bird callers receiving Audubon plush birds featuring authentic bird sounds. Photos by Kay Simmons.



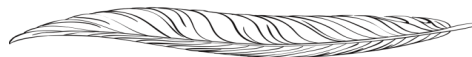
Kim with Peregrine Falcon, from Wildlife Images



Two budding bird nerds with their plush bird prizes!



Bird Day coordinator Jennifer Aguayo, and Rebekah Bergkoetter, RVAS



A Year Flew By!

Rebekah Bergkoetter

As we move into a summer break for the chapter, we have an opportunity to reflect on the past few months of the organization and all that we have accomplished. Our membership numbers remain consistent, and we even added a new board member. We held seven chapter meetings, with guests sharing their knowledge on a variety of topics from penguins to comics. Our annual holiday party featured a talk by Jim Livaudais and trivia by Pepper Trail. In our financial support of local birds, RVAS has helped fund Project FeederWatch stations, lending pairs of binoculars, and sponsorship support for the Willamette Valley Bird Symposium. We submitted letters of support for improved trails at Prescott Park and for the funding of North Mountain Park, and signed on to letters relating to state legislation such as allocation for saline lakes and Native Plant Appreciation Month. Members mobilized for birding events, raising money through the Birdathon, and continuing a tradition of community science with the Christmas Bird Count. And we talked a lot about birds!

This only scratches the surface of all that RVAS does in our community, and none of it would be possible without the support of our members. Thank you for a wonderful year, and I look forward to seeing you all again! Happy summer birding!

April/May Field Notes 2025

By Frank Lospalluto

"Until we have the courage to recognize cruelty for what it is...we cannot expect things to be much better in this world..."

— Rachel Carson



Lark Sparrow
Credit: Gary Shaffer

Spring migration was slow in coming this year. Many arrivals and momentary visitors seemed to be a couple weeks late, causing some consternation. With an abundance of water this year we hope for an especially productive breeding cycle for our fellow feathered travelers.

A hybrid **Blue-winged x Cinnamon Teal** was found on Howard Prairie Lake April 18 by Elijah Hayes. According to French waterfowl expert Sebastien Reeber in his excellent and highly recommended identification guide *Waterfowl of North America, Europe and Asia* (Princeton University Press 2015), this is a relatively common and well-known hybrid in North America.

A lone and late lingering **Barrow's Goldeneye** was reported by a visiting birder on Fish Lake May 16.

Common Nighthawk are just beginning to arrive, with reports from Ashland (Jeff Miller) and Eagle Point (Howard Sands) on the evening of May 27. This is right on schedule.

Jeff Miller spotted two **White-throated Swifts** flying over Lower Table Rock April 23. A few reports of **Calliope Hummingbird** have trickled in the last few weeks. Calliope favor forest environments and their size limits their detectability. They are the smallest long distance avian migrant in the world.

Black-necked Stilt brought us the number 2, with two reported twice in April and May at two sites, both White City Lagoons and Denman Ave. G ponds.

Black-bellied Plover visited the White City Lagoons the latter part of April and into early May, and were observed by numerous observers. Two fortunate observers spotted a flyover **Whimbrel** at the lagoons, with Ryan Rackley reporting one on April 24; Brian Barr had one May 12. Northern California birder Tony Kurz found a **Baird's Sandpiper** at White City Lagoons April 26. Baird's are more commonly seen here during fall passage and are quite rare here in spring.

The abundance of water has enabled a good show of **Forster's Tern** in our area, with multiple birds reported from Whetstone Pond to the White City Lagoons to Agate Lake and beyond.

Howard Sands found a **Snowy Egret** with a flock of Great Egrets at Whetstone Pond April 23.

There were two different **White-tailed Kite** reports, with a bird observed by Cricket Fegan April 14 in Ashland. Another bird was seen by Brian Barr out at Agate Lake May 10. After an expansion into our region from their former range in California with breeding birds in Jackson County, recent years have seen a drastic retraction and disappearance from the county. So, it is important that any sighting of White-tailed Kite in the county is well documented.



House Wren
Credit: Gary Shaffer

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Field Notes, continued from page 8

An adult **American Goshawk** was seen by Elijah Hayes April 26 near Randcore Pass in CSNM. Goshawks nest up around the Green Springs and the mountain lakes, as well as along the Siskiyou Crest area.

The small dark-eyed **Flammulated Owl** has returned from its wintering grounds in Mexico. To find the owl, learn its low soft hoots and listen for it on warm summer nights. It is a secondary cavity nester that is widely distributed in southern Oregon forests.



House Wren: a "unique" perspective
Credit: Gary Shaffer

There were a couple of **Gray Flycatcher** sightings, with Ryan Terrill and Jess Oswald photographing one in Ashland May 4, and one spotted near Pilot Rock May 14. Gray Flycatchers have been recorded breeding in the county the last few years but are still very uncommon.

A single **Say's Phoebe** was reported by visiting birders May 26 on Denman near the ponds by Pacific Ave. This is a late date for this species to still be here, as they breed on the east side of the Cascades and don't return until August.

A single **Bank Swallow** was seen May 13 over a pond in the Hall Tract unit of Denman, and another single was at White City Lagoons May 25.

A wet and muddy vagrant **Sage Thrasher** was found near Little Hyatt Lake May 3 by two groups of birders (Norm Barrett, Jim Livaudais, Gary Shaffer, Bob Hunter, Anne Goff).

Good numbers of **Evening Grosbeak** have been reported from the mountains, hills, and the valley this spring. A **LAWRENCE'S GOLFINCH** was reported on Upper Table Rock by Adam Clayton May 15.

Good birding and Happy Summer!
Peace.



Young Great-horned Owls
Credit: Frank Lospalluto

Speaker Series Recap

By Rebekah Bergkoetter

During the 2024-2025 Speaker Series and Chapter Meetings, we hosted seven unique talks covering a myriad of bird and bird-adjacent topics. Kay Simmons organized refreshments for folks who met in-person, and this year all talks were available for virtual viewing by Zoom. We co-hosted a talk by author Dorian Anderson about birding by bicycle with the Lane Audubon, attended by over 70 bird enthusiasts. We learned about the details of avian rehabilitation with Badger Run Wildlife Rehab, and the relationship between rehabber and animal. Science communicator and comic artist Rosemary Mosco gave a sneak preview of her newest book, and a look at the confluence of art and science. Fellow RVAS members shared their experiences and knowledge in this series as well. Debbie Paden shared her experiences birding in Africa, Keeley Kirkendell and Karen Barrow shared birding in Ecuador (with a soundtrack!), and Dr. Pepper Trail gave an overview of the impacts of climate change on birds. We were even joined by RVAS family, with Dr. Gitta McDonald, who shared her experience studying penguins.

If you have an idea or (even better) a lead for the 2025-2026 speaker series, please email Rebekah (rebekah.bergkoetter@gmail.com).

Community Science Alert: **Project Phoenix**


Have you observed any unusual bird behavior on smoky days? When it's smoky, do you observe the same species or different species? Are birds more or less abundant? Or, perhaps you've been surprised to observe no obvious shifts in the behavior, abundance, or diversity of birds in your neighborhood – even in the smoke.

Report your weekly observations to Project Phoenix, and help power our research into the impacts of wildfire smoke to birds! Project Phoenix is run by researchers and community science experts at the University of California, Los Angeles and the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County.

Learn more, and sign up to share your data with us at:
www.project-phoenix-investigating-bird-responses-to-smoke.org



Mr. Williams's 3rd grade class at Jacksonville Elementary School (hands down the coolest Project FeederWatch class EVER) with their "Bird Nerd" stickers, courtesy of RVAS, all excited to be official birders!

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Happy summer!

Yellow-breasted Chat
Credit: Gary Shaffer



See you in September!


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ROGUE VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

THE CHAT

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