

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

Deadline for the December 2025 issue is November 20

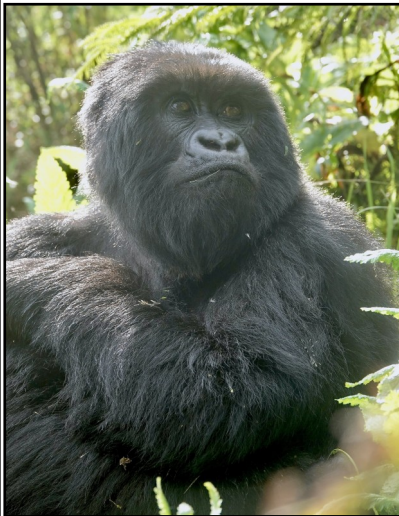


November IN PERSON AND ZOOM Program

Tuesday, Nov. 25, 2025 at 7:00 pm

Uganda Safari: Shoebills, Gorillas, and Chimps, Oh My!

With Dr. Pepper Trail



Join Pepper Trail for a slideshow of his recent trip experiencing the wildlife wonders of Uganda. His primary goals were to see mountain gorillas and the amazing Shoebill Stork, which were unforgettable. But he also had memorable encounters with elephants, chimpanzees, rhinos, and over 200 species of birds – as well as fantastic scenery. It's a November safari!

About the Speaker

Pepper Trail is well-known in southern Oregon as a naturalist and writer. He was the ornithologist at the National Fish and Wildlife Forensic Laboratory for over

20 years, until his retirement in 2021. He is the long-time conservation co-chair of Rogue Valley Audubon Society, and has been active in many regional environmental efforts, particularly the establishment and expansion of the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument. When not pursuing birds, wildflowers, and bumble bees in southern Oregon, he leads natural history expeditions around the world.



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

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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.

Come One, Come All!

To the RVAS

Holiday Potluck Dinner Celebration

Friday, December 5, 2025

6:00-8:00 pm

Medford United Congregational Church (Lidgate Hall)
1801 E. Jackson Medford

Join us to celebrate a wonderful year of birding. See old friends and meet new ones during an evening of great food, fun games, and prizes with Dr. Pepper Trail as our MC!

Please bring a potluck dish to share, and your own cutlery, glass, and plate.

RSVP at this link so we can get a head count:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/rogue-valley-audubon-societys-potluck-dinner-tickets-1968333633885?aff=oddtcreator>.

This year there will be no fundraising, just FUN!



Status of upcoming events

Field trips: Denman Bird Walk - Dec. 3, Jan. 7, Feb. 4

Chapter Meeting: Tues., Nov. 25 at 7pm

Project FeederWatch Begins: Fri., Nov. 7

Holiday Party: Fri., Dec. 5

Ashland CBC: Sun., Dec. 21

Medford CBC: Sat., Jan. 3

Christmas Bird Counts in the Rogue Valley

The most wonderful community science project of the year is upon us! Rogue Valley Audubon members support two Christmas Bird Counts every year, covering the areas around Ashland and Medford. Please see below for information on each of these birding extravaganzas!

Please contact the coordinator for each area if you are interested in joining in on the fun:

Ashland Christmas Bird Count

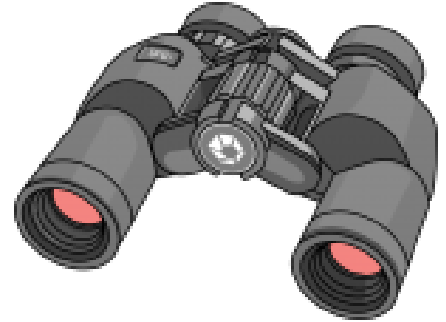
Date: Sunday, December 21, 2026

Coordinator: Jon Pope – jonath.pope@gmail.com

Medford Christmas Bird Count

Date: Saturday January 3, 2026

Coordinator: Rebekah – rebekah.bergkoetter@gmail.com



Boundary Springs Hike 9/22/2025

By Erich Reeder

Mountain Bluebirds winging through the cool air, an American Dipper bouncing and singing from a log crosswise in the river, the newborn river itself having just gushed forth from five springs and become one—the *Rogue*. Not a bad way to spend one of the first afternoons of autumn in Southern Oregon, with many more fair-weather hiking days to come before winter sets in. But this hike is one to keep in mind, throughout the seasons and years to come; because of a recent wildfire which burned much of the surrounding forest, the healing powers of nature will be on full display for all to see and learn from as the forest regenerates once more.



Mountain ash in the burn
Credit: Erich Reeder

Truth be told, I'm not a great birder. I love birds for many reasons and can recognize lots of them, but my mind tends to lose focus on birds and gets easily distracted by other aspects of the landscape. So, this isn't so much about birds directly as about ecological recovery following a natural disturbance like wildfire and how it affects birds. I will end it however, in a flurry of birds.

Thunderstorms shook the area on July 17, 2024, with bolts of lightning sparking many fires. One of these, the Middle Fork fire, eventually grew to 5,200 acres surrounding the Boundary Springs forest in the northwest corner of Crater Lake National Park.

It seems natural for many of us to recoil at a burned landscape, especially those recently traumatized by the devastating fires in our region. But it's actually natural for our forests here to experience fire as part of the dynamic ecology of southwest Oregon. I'll admit it takes a bit of practice to see beauty in the burn, but it is there if you know how and what to look for.

Following the cataclysmic eruption of Mount St. Helens in the Cascade Range of Washington in 1980, scientists exploring the 200 square mile blast zone expected to find a lifeless, sterilized landscape. They were surprised to find a marvelous variety of life forms nearly everywhere.

The varied pathways of ecological recovery observed after this large natural disturbance, along with similar lessons learned following the Yellowstone fires of 1988 and other disturbance events, led these scientists, including Jerry Franklin and Arthur McKee, to embrace a new concept of disturbance ecology. They coined the term "biological legacies" to represent all the living and dead organisms and their spatial patterns that continue through a disturbance and facilitate ecological recovery.

Boundary Springs, continued on page 4

Boundary Springs, continued from page 3

All along the Boundary Springs trail, such biological legacies are on glorious display. The first part of the trail passes through a recovering lodgepole pine forest burned in the 2015 National Creek Complex fire. Four- and five-foot-tall young pines create a sea of bright green beneath the gray snags of their parents. These standing dead trees, especially larger ones, are important “structural legacies” that primary cavity nesting woodpeckers subsequently use and then make available to secondary cavity nesters like the Mountain Bluebirds. Furthermore, insects that arrive to take advantage of all the dead wood provide an abundance of food for many insectivore specialists.

Wax current shrubs grow beside the trail, having sprouted from seeds stored in the soil and scarified by the fire, now providing fruit, seed, and cover for many birds. Dwarf or Pacific lupine grows and blooms purplish-blue and white on otherwise bare soil along the trail as well. Not merely delightful, this little lupine responds well to wildfire and hosts nitrogen-fixing bacteria which enriches the soil. Mountain huckleberries, another species adapted to fire, were just beginning to put on their fall colors; the berries, however, had been picked clean by bears, squirrels, birds, and other residents. Pine-mat manzanita graced the burned slopes above with green. Oregon Juncos flew and foraged among groves of mature mountain hemlock and Shasta red fir, which had survived the fire on the trail down to the Rogue.

Riverside, the riparian area was a vibrant green with thick mosses, grasses, and other lush plants on the riverine logs, rocks, and banks. Cheerful yellow monkeyflowers bloomed among them, and here and there the bright magenta flowers of fireweed swayed in the breeze adding glorious color to the scene. All these plants help their feathered friends by providing seeds, berries, nectar, and shelter. The birds help them in turn by dispersing seeds, gleaning insects, pollinating flowers, and more.



Pacific Lupine
Credit: Erich Reeder

Perhaps these interconnections can be seen more clearly after a recent wildfire, when so much of the vegetation and duff is burned off and the ground exposed. Individual plants, insects, birds, and their interactions catch the eye, as well as the tracks of recently passing animals. The fire also revealed remarkable views of the river. The tiered waterfall below the springs is a tremendous, splashing cascade of dazzling white foam now clearly visible for all to marvel at. And the springs? -Well, you can just see them coming right out the ground, all five on display and perhaps even more spectacular because their subterranean origins are not obscured by the usual lush tangle of plants.



Fireweed along the Rogue
Credit: Erich Reeder

At the springs, mountain-ash grows again among boulders and a dozen Mountain Bluebirds flew singly or in pairs over the new Rogue. And there on a log, angled across the water, was an American Dipper doing its dipper dance. Just as it should be.

Walking back, I again admired how beautiful this place still is. I thought about how important it is for members of our communities to understand and be able to see beauty in these burned landscapes, even when most of the living green forest has died in the fire. How important it is for all of us to educate ourselves, get out in the field and observe, and not just be fearful and despairing of change. Nature is amazingly resilient and has great powers of recovery as long as we human beings allow some time and space for healing to happen.

And this place will have that time and space for ecological recovery because it lies within the northwest corner of Crater Lake National Park. It will not suffer the terribly destructive effects of so-called “salvage logging,” and will be allowed to heal by nature’s diverse pathways and patterns, pathways and patterns that have been recovering and revitalizing this dynamic landscape after disturbances long before Mount Mazama blew her top.

Upon returning to the trailhead, I was bid farewell by a chittering, fluttering flock of Pine Siskins passing by like a whirlwind of life from one young lodgepole pine to another.

Call For Interest!

As you may know, there have been a number of National and Oregon Audubon chapters that have recently changed their names to be Bird Alliance. Is there interest among our members (that's you!) in helping to lead a discussion about a potential process to change our chapter's name? If so, please let us know if you would be interested in volunteering to help guide this important community effort. Scan the QR code to the right, or go to <https://forms.gle/iSqPfhcCpxvt1pRV6> and fill out a simple form to better inform us of next steps.

NOTE: any member with an opinion on this matter can quickly share them with us by using the link or QR code. Your opinion matters!



BIRDCENTRIC EVENTS FROM AROUND THE REGION

RVAS

First Wednesday Bird Walks: December 3, January 7, February 4

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.

Southern Oregon University & Partners

Native American Heritage Month Celebration

Come celebrate culture, community, and creativity at SOU. Shop the Native Artisan Market, enjoy food, watch dancers, and hear from speakers throughout the day. Everyone's welcome!

DATE: Saturday, November 15th, 2025

TIME: 11 AM - 4:00 PM

LOCATION: Stevenson Union

COST: Free



Klamath Bird Observatory

Brazil – Atlantic Forest Adventure

Embark on a 10-day expedition through Brazil's breathtaking Atlantic Forest with KBO and Mantiqueira Bird Observatory. This immersive experience combines birdwatching, hiking, and cultural exploration, while directly supporting an internship exchange program between the two observatories. Highlights include birding in the Mantiqueira Highlands, cultural immersion and scenic hikes, and the opportunity to support international conservation internships. Limited to 12 participants. For more information, go to: <https://klamathbird.org/travel-with-purpose/>.

DATES: September 3rd-12th, 2026

COST: \$6,000 single / \$5,500 double occupancy



Bear Divide – California Migration Hotspot

Experience spring migration like never before at Bear Divide, a narrow mountain pass where thousands of songbirds funnel through each morning. This 4-day trip offers expert-guided outings, a special presentation, and optional excursions, like a Pasadena parrot tour. Highlights include the daylight migration of thousands of birds, morning field sessions and optional afternoon outings, and support of on-site bird banding and outreach. Limited to 12 participants. For more information, go to: <https://klamathbird.org/travel-with-purpose/>.

DATES: May 6th-9th, 2026

COST: \$1,500 per person

October Field Notes 2025

By Frank Lospalluto

Fall migration is spinning south and many familiar winter birds have returned to our region. Here's hoping many of you had a glimpse of the astounding phenomena that is migration. Cheers!

Around Sep 23, thousands of **Greater White-fronted Geese** passed over the Rogue Valley, with small numbers falling out for a short reprieve at various lakes in the area. A number of **Cackling Geese** were seen and heard passing over during that time period, with a few here and there stopping over. A **Surf Scoter** or two were spotted on Lost Creek Lake Oct 14 by multiple observers. They are annual at this location and some of the other mountain lakes. Many other duck species are starting to appear in recognizable plumage throughout our area.

A **Costa's Hummingbird** made an appearance Oct 10 at Tanner Martin's house. Tanner has a resident female Anna's x Costa's hybrid that frequents his feeders.

Two **Red-necked Phalarope** were reported at Lost Creek Lake at the Medco A mudflats Oct 13 and 14. A few **Dunlin** have been reported recently, with a single at Lost Creek Lake Oct 13, and then three found the following day there. A single was at Agate Lake Oct 20. A **Pectoral Sandpiper** was observed in late September and into October, with two at Emigrant Lake and two at Lost Creek Lake in late September, and five at Howard Prairie Oct 15. **Wilson's Snipe** often gather in good numbers up at the edge of Howard Prairie that borders Lily Glen in the autumn; 45 or more were reported Oct 15 by Elijah Hayes.

Two **SABINE'S GULL**, first spotted by Janet Kelly, were out at Howard Prairie Oct 2 and 3. Two more were out at Lost Creek Lake Oct 14 and 15, observed by Janet, Gary Shaffer, and Howard Sands. Amar Ayash, in his recently released *THE GULL GUIDE North America* (Princeton Press 2024), calls the Sabine's "*arguably the most elegant gull species in the world*". Its flight patterns and its tern-like feeding behavior make it an enjoyable bird to watch. A fifth record for the county Oct 12 at Lost Creek Lake, a scavenging of 8 **HEER-MANN'S GULLS**, was found by Howard Sands. A **Glaucous-winged Gull** was out at Lost Creek Lake Oct 14.



Sabine's Gull
Credit: Jim Livaudais

Small numbers of **Horned** and **Eared Grebe** have been spotted the last few weeks on area lakes.

Seven **Common Loon** were on Lost Creek Lake Oct 14 and 15.

They have been spotted at Hyatt and Howard Prairie Lakes recently as well.

A single **White-faced Ibis** was spotted flying over Denman Ave G and H ponds Sept 18 by Jim Hostick.

A **Ferruginous Hawk** was spotted soaring near the border in the Coleston Valley Oct 8.

Terence Phillippe had an inspiring visitor recently at his home in Talent, a **Long-eared Owl**.

Lucky for us he shared a few photos. It is important to note that all the photos display an owl that is comfortable in its roost. Long-eared Owls breed in Jackson County, and we have wintering birds. They are secretive, and in our area are often found in shrubby habitats like manzanita and mountain mahogany thickets or riparian thickets where humans are not very likely to trespass.

It appears to be a fairly good acorn year in many parts of the Rogue Valley, and so something to be truly thankful for is an abundance of **Lewis's Woodpeckers**.

The small falcon that adrenalizes many birders, the **Merlin** is being reported widely throughout our area.

A late **Western Wood-Pee-wee** was on the Ousterhout Farm Oct 7. A few **Hammond's Flycatcher** have been reported in October as well, with one at Ashland Middle School Oct 1, one at Riverwalk Park Oct 11, and one in the forest near the Medco A Flats Oct 13. The subtle beauty known as **Say's Phoebe** is being observed more widely over the last weeks. Look in weedy fields and lots, and listen for the melancholy whine. A late **Western Kingbird** was observed by Jeff Miller at Emigrant Lake Sept 29.

Field Notes continued on page 7

The Chat - November 2025

Field Notes continued from page 6

Clark's Nutcracker was observed on the trail to the Mt. McLoughlin summit. This is a fairly reliable location for this species. A single was heard near Rye Spring Oct 17. Rye Spring was a favorite birding spot of the legendary Otis Swisher in his later years.

A smattering of **Horned Larks** has been reported in recent weeks, with three at Medco A Oct 13, nine at Agate Lake Oct 17, and two at Emigrant Lake Oct 20.

A **Canyon Wren** (possibly two) was reported at the base of Pilot Rock Sept 27. **Varied Thrush** are being heard and seen widely over the last few weeks. Perfect weather for them of late!

American Pipits are widely distributed in the valley on many sparsely vegetated flats now. A single **Lapland Longspur** was out on the Medco A Flats Oct 12 and Oct 13.

Ryan Terrill had a late **Nashville Warbler** Oct 6 at Emigrant Lake, and another the following day Oct 7 at Riverwalk Park.

Thank you to everyone who contributed their observations including: Janet Kelly, Gary Shaffer, Howard Sands, Jim Livaudais, Norm Barrett, Tanner Martin, Elijah Hayes, Shannon Rio, Fianna W, Liam Ehrman, Maxwell Keetch, John Vial, Jim Hostick, Barry Harris, Jeff Miller, Ryan Terrill, Kristi Mergenthaler, Kay Simmons, Gretchen Ousterhout, Terence Phillippe, Marion Hadden Bob Hunter, Anne Goff, Andres Carvalhaes, Jonathan Pope, and Kirsten Michael.

All omissions and errors are my own. Peace.



Project FeederWatch: New Location

By Erin Ulrich

RVAS is sponsoring a new Project FeederWatch site at the White City Library! It is going to be part of the library's Spark Space (STEAM education) program, which is geared for school age children and teens. I gave a presentation for them on Tuesday, November 4, to help local residents learn about the program.

From December through February, White City Library will open up their FeederWatch to community participation on Saturdays from 11 am to 12 pm. This is an hour before the library officially opens. Staff will provide treats to all comers! Just bring your own coffee or beverage of choice.

If you have any questions about the White City FeederWatch, please contact Amy Fann, Library Specialist at White City Library at afann@jcls.org.

The Conservation Column

by Erich Reeder

Report from the Oregon Audubon Council Meeting

On October 11, Pepper Trail and I represented RVAS as the Oregon Audubon Council convened in Newport, Oregon to discuss and set conservation priorities for the coming year. After individual chapter reports, we moved on to ongoing and upcoming conservation challenges. With only 20 minutes set aside for each conservation concern, ranging from forests to wetlands, high deserts to the coast, and urban to rural areas, the topics flew by quickly. Specific topics included mining in the Kalmiopsis and the proposed logging of our old-growth public forests in western Oregon, sage grouse protections in shrub-steppe ecosystems in eastern Oregon, and conservation of oak woodlands and wetlands of the Willamette Valley.

Frustratingly, the common refrain throughout the day seemed to be “we lack capacity” to actively respond to all the conservation challenges we face. Therefore, despite the importance of all these issues, it was necessary to focus in on only a couple of priorities that were of statewide concern and which multiple chapters could work on, chiefly the conservation of our threatened forest and wetland ecosystems.

Not surprisingly, underlying the uncertainty and urgency of these concerns are the assaults by the current administration and Congress on the laws that help protect our shared environment (e.g., Endangered Species Act, National Environmental Policy Act, Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Roadless Rule, Northwest Forest Plan, etc.), and on our magnificent public lands which are essential to our conservation efforts (National Forests, Parks, Monuments, and Wildlife Refuges; BLM lands; wild and scenic rivers, etc.).

All of this makes it clear to me that now more than ever it is vital we continue to share information, ideas, and resources with each other, our associated Audubon and Bird Alliance chapters, and most importantly our fellow conservation organizations both locally and nationally. Many of us already are members of some of these organizations, including Klamath Bird Observatory, Southern Oregon Land Conservancy, Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands (KS Wild), Rogue Riverkeeper, Soda Mountain Wilderness Council, Friends of the Cascade Siskiyou National Monument, Native Plant Society of Oregon, Cascadia Wildlands, Oregon Wild, Center for Biological Diversity, American Bird Conservancy, The Nature Conservancy, and Earthjustice, among many others.

During these trying times, it is vitally important to remember that RVAS is not alone in our conservation efforts, that there are many more like-minded individuals and organizations out there, and that there is strength in numbers. We must keep our networks of communication, participation, and support for conservation open and vital, for together we will remain resilient in the face of these many challenges.



Western Screech Owl
Credit: Cat Gould



White-throated Sparrow
Credit: Howard Sands

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THE CHAT

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