

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

Deadline for the March 2026 issue is February 20



February IN PERSON AND ZOOM Program

Tuesday, Feb. 24, 2026 at 7:00 pm

Peregrine Falcons with Jeff Rucks



This month, join retired wildlife biologist Jeff Rucks for a special presentation on Peregrine Falcons. Jeff enjoyed a 40 year career as a wildlife professional. His early career included work for the U.S. Forest Service in California and Bureau of Land Management in Alaska and Colorado. He also spent three years on Colorado's peregrine falcon recovery effort. After a short stint with Boulder County Open Space, he was hired by the Colorado Division of Wildlife in 1987. Throughout his career he found great joy and satisfaction in sharing his love of the outdoors and wildlife with other people, especially children. This eventually led to supervising the agency's Outreach and Education staff, which continued until he retired in 2009. After retirement he went to work as an educator for The Wildlife Experience museum in Colorado. Jeff continues to write outdoor articles for local publications and accepts several public speaking engagements each year.

Remembering Norm Barrett

Longtime Rogue Valley Audubon member and accomplished wildlife biologist and naturalist Norm Barrett passed away December 26, 2025. At the monthly February meeting there will be time for folks to share some remembrances of Norm before the regular program begins.

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.

OFFICERS and DIRECTORS

President: Vacant

Vice-President: George Peterson,
sgpeterson1@msn.com

Secretary: Rebekah Bergkoetter,
rebekah.bergkoetter@gmail.com

Treasurer: Kay Simmons,
mwsimmons1@verizon.net

BOARD MEMBERS

Kate Halstead	katherine.elspeth@gmail.com
Jamie Trammell	trammelle@sou.edu
Rebekah Bergkoetter	rebekah.bergkoetter@gmail.com
Erich Reeder	erichmreeder@gmail.com

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Archivist: Vacant

Annual Picnic: Wendy Gere, wendy.gere@gmail.com

Birdathon: Carol Mockridge

The Chat Editor: Kate Halstead, chateditor@gmail.com

CBC-Ashland: Jonathon Pope, jonath.pope@gmail.com

CBC-Medford: Rebekah Bergkoetter,
rebekah.bergkoetter@gmail.com

Conservation: Pepper Trail, ptrail@ashlandnet.net &
Juliet Grable, julietgrable@gmail.com

Education: Erin Ulrich, eulrich44@mac.com

Field Notes: Frank Lospalluto, fdlospalluto@gmail.com

Field Trips: Kristi Mergenthaler, coprolitemerg-
ie@yahoo.com

Holiday Party: Vacant

Hospitality: Vacant

Outreach & Tabling: Vacant

Membership: George Peterson, sgpeterson1@msn.com

Programs: Rebekah Bergkoetter,
rebekah.bergkoetter@gmail.com

Project FeederWatch:

Mary Pat Power, marypat1010@gmail.com

Publicity: Vacant

Swift Monitoring: Erin Ulrich, eulrich44@gmail.com

CHAPTER COMMUNICATIONS

Email: info@roguevalleyaudubon.org

The Chat: chateditor@gmail.com

Webmaster: Tom Pratum, tkp9551@gmail.com

Website: www.roguevalleyaudubon.org

Facebook: Kristi Mergenthaler,
https://www.facebook.com/RogueValleyAudubonSociety/

Mailing Address

RVAS
P. O. Box 8597
Medford, OR 97501

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.

New Edition of *Birds of Jackson County, Oregon* Available Now!

Find out what nine new species were added to the newly revised sixth edition of the *Birds of Jackson County* brochure. Lead Editor Nate Trimble and his volunteer team worked on the update over the past year. Nate meticulously researched the many changes to birds and their favorite habitats in the Rogue Valley over the past five years. The taxonomic order was also updated along with species whose names have changed. Many birding hotspot locations were also changed or deleted due to access issues or the recent wildfires.

The new cover art is an original color drawing of the Nashville Warbler by Nate. Four other Trimble drawings grace the back cover and inside pages. His team included Norm Barrett, Bob Hunter, Jim Livaudais, Frank Lospalluto, Carol Mockridge and Kay Simmons.

The popular brochure can be purchased for \$5 at Wild Birds Unlimited in Medford, Nature Shop in Ashland, at monthly chapter meetings or from any board member. You can also purchase a copy for \$7.50 on the RVAS website under the "Resources/Birding" tab. It is a must-have for every local birder; it also makes a great gift.

Lead Editor Nate Trimble displays the new 2025 *Birds of Jackson County, Oregon*. Credit: Carol Mockridge



BIRDCENTRIC EVENTS FROM AROUND THE REGION

RVAS

First Wednesday Bird Walks: February 4, March 4, April 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.

Wild Birds Unlimited

Klamath Basin Wildlife Refuge

Join Max McClarnon and Erin Linton for a bird walk to the Klamath Basin Wildlife Refuge! This will be an all day trip. Limited to two vehicles, so come in or call the store at **(541) 772-2107** for more information and to reserve your seat today!

DATE: Saturday, February 21

Jacksonville

Join Max McClarnon for a walk in Jacksonville this Saturday. This will be a new location for us. What will we see? Join us and find out! Limited to 9 participants. Come in or call the store at **(541) 772-2107** to reserve your spot today.

DATE: Sunday, March 1

Klamath Bird Observatory

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

Medford CBC Re-cap

On January 3, 2026 48 volunteers spread out across Medford for the 126th annual Christmas Bird Count. This nationwide effort is one of the longest-running community science projects. Medford is the third longest running participant of the count after Portland in Eugene, with 72 consecutive years.

This year, Medford participants logged 113 identified species with a whopping 90,186 individual birds. American Robins were the most abundant species, with 73,887 individuals counted, in large part from a magnificent dawn migration. Other common species were Brewer's Blackbird (1,037), Canada Goose (2,420), and European Starling (2,401).



Golden-crowned Sparrow
Credit: Frank Lospalluto

In case you missed it, the Grants Pass Courier ran a front page article about this count on January 6, 2026. Their lovely write-up included information about the bird count, the volunteers, and some great photos. Thank you volunteer birders for another wonderful Christmas Bird Count.

November & December Field Notes 2025

By Frank Lospalluto

*These tiny birds are the living jewelry of the gods.
They clothe my life in proper mystery telling me
that all is not lost....*

Jim Harrison "Songs of Unreason"

Twenty-one **Snow Geese** were spotted at Emigrant Lake Nov 13 and one was reported from Denman on Dec 12. A single **Tundra Swan** was at Emigrant Nov 4. Five Tundra Swan were in the field by the big bend in Table Rock Rd. A single male **Cinnamon Teal** was spotted taking flight from a small pond near Mingus Pond Nov. 8. A single **Eurasian Wigeon** continued at Lost Creek Dam Dec 9 and a single was in a pond by Lynn Newbry Park Dec 13. **Barrow's Goldeneye** are being seen near the Holy Waters by Lost Creek Dam of late, as are a few **Greater Scaup**.

Thirty **Band-tailed Pigeon** were observed in the Ashland Watershed Dec 20. Band-tailed Pigeon are often seen during the winter months in the Rogue Valley in small numbers.

Two **Sandhill Crane** were at Emigrant Lake Nov 19 and 1 was at Whetstone Pond Nov 13.

Greater Yellowlegs are numerous this early winter, with 22 spotted at White City Lagoons Dec 27.

Two **Pacific Loon** were on Howard Prairie Lake in mid-November. A single was first spotted by John Vial on Nov 11 and was re-spotted a few days later. A photograph by Anne Goff revealed a second bird in the same area near the jetties by the resort. Likely two birds were there all along, but due to their constant diving for food they were rarely seen on the surface together at the same time—either that or we all need to visit an optometrist!



Burrowing Owl
Credit: Frank Lospalluto

Black-Crowned Night-Heron are at the Whetstone Pond roost and easily seen in the trees across the pond. It is always fun to see how many you can count. The high count this season has been six. There have been multiple late sightings of single **American White Pelican** in the valley in November and through December.

Another lingering bird is an **Osprey** which has been spotted multiple times in November and December at Whetstone Pond. A **Rough-legged Hawk** was spotted multiple times in the Mt. Ashland area over a two-week period in November. Two Rough-legged Hawks were seen off Hyatt Prairie Rd Nov 9, a common location to see them in early winter. A **Ferruginous Hawk** was reported by the Medford Raptor survey group in both November and December in Sams Valley.

The Brophy Ranch **Burrowing Owl** is back in its burrow near the ranch entrance.

Field Notes continued on page 5

The Chat - February 2026

Field Notes continued from page 4



Red-naped Sapsucker
Credit: Kay Simmons

During the Ashland CBC, Barry Harris, Carol Mockridge and friends found a **Red-naped Sapsucker** along Henry St. by the SOU parking lot Dec 21. It was refound by other birders in the following days.

A **Northern Shrike** was seen by multiple birders on the Denman Hall Tract in December. Another Northern was spotted on Vesper Meadow Nov 11.

A **Rock Wren** celebrated Christmas Day Dec 25 with two birders at Emigrant Lake. A **Canyon Wren** was in the quarry area by the Emigrant Lake RV park Dec 17. A fourth county record **SNOW BUNTING** made a one-day appearance on the Mt. Ashland summit Nov 17. Twelve **Lark Sparrow** were counted on Dec 12 at the Elks picnic ground.

Three **Tricolored Blackbirds** were photographed along Agate Rd Dec 7, and one was recorded on Brophy Rd Dec 8. The Brophy Rd area near the feedlot and ranch can be a good location for this species.

A **Nashville Warbler** was photographed along Ashland Creek near the dog park Nov 19 by Dale Fisher. A few **Townsend's Warbler** have been observed since late November, as this species is regularly reported in the valley during the winter.

A **Western Tanager** was calling from a treetop at Siskiyou Summit Nov 1, heralding the end of the year.

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, Liam Ehrman, John Vial, Jim Hostick, Barry Harris, Jeff Miller, Ryan Terrill, Kristi Mergenthaler, Kay Simmons, Gretchen Ousterhout, Terence Philippe, Marion Hadden Bob Hunter, Anne Goff, Andres Carvalhaes, Jonathan Pope, Nate Trimble Carol Mockridge, Shane Jimerfield, Martin Lopez Aguilar, Laura Lovrien, Becca Serdehely, Gary Porter, Brian Barr, Leslie Hart, Vicki Fox, Mary Wells, and Dale Fisher.

All omissions and errors are my own.
Peace.



Common Loon
Credit: Janet Kelly

The Conservation Column

With the “1% for Wildlife” bill, Oregon has a real chance to meaningfully fund conservation. HB 4134 calls for raising the state’s hotel and lodging taxes by 1.25% in order to fund a wide range of wildlife and habitat conservation programs, from wildlife crossings to wildfire resilience. The bill will be taken up by the Oregon legislature when the new session opens on February 2. Please consider contacting your state legislators and voicing your support for this significant legislation. Learn more at 1PERCENT4WILDLIFE.ORG

Below are excerpts from an excellent article about the legislation that recently appeared in *High Country News*, followed by some information from the bill’s advocates.

Would you pay 1% more for wildlife?

By Amal Ahmed

When Oregon’s short legislative session convenes in early February, conservation advocates will once again try to convince lawmakers to pass a major funding bill that could provide nearly \$30 million annually to protect the state’s biodiversity.

The 1% for Wildlife bill, sponsored by state Reps. Ken Helm, D-Beaverton, and Mark Owens, R-Crane, would increase the state’s current hotel and lodging taxes by 1.25%, creating a new revenue stream for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to support long-neglected habitat conservation programs. Last session, the bill passed the House, but two Republicans blocked it in the Senate.

Oregon’s federally required [State Wildlife Action Plan](#) identifies species at risk of extinction or decline due to habitat loss, climate change and other threats. In 2025, as the plan was being updated, dozens of species were added, including the Crater Lake newt, the California condor and the North American porcupine, bringing the total to more than 300.

“It’s a blueprint of the most imperiled species and habitats in the state,” said Sristi Kamal, deputy director of the Western Environmental Law Center, which supports the bill. “But a plan is only as good as the funding to implement it.”

Though Oregon’s Fish and Wildlife Department receives some state funding, most of its budget comes from state hunting and fishing licenses and federal taxes on guns and ammunition via the [Pittman-Robertson Act of 1937](#). The majority of Oregon’s federal funds, about [\\$20 million annually](#), are earmarked for big game species and sport fish. Other federal grants primarily support species already protected by the Endangered Species Act. That means that Fish and Wildlife, like most state wildlife agencies, has little money to prevent species from becoming endangered in the first place. Between 2023 and 2025, it spent just [2% of its budget](#) on wildlife conservation programs.

Increasing hotel and lodging taxes would leverage the state’s robust eco-tourism industry, which annually attracts tens of thousands of out-of-state and international visitors. If the bill passes, Oregon’s statewide hotel tax rate would be 2.5% — the [third-lowest rate](#) in the U.S. and less than half of what Washington, Montana and Idaho charge. The 1% for Wildlife bill could provide a new model for state-level conservation funding, said Mark Humpert, director of conservation initiatives at the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, which advocates for state agencies at the federal level.

“Ninety-five to 99% of species that states are responsible for have no dedicated funding from the federal government. We sometimes joke that state agencies have to offer bake sales to fund this work,” Humpert said. Some [sell specialty license plates](#); others use a small percentage of sales taxes on outdoor equipment. The “gold standard,” Humpert said, is Missouri, where a state constitutional amendment dedicates [one-eighth of 1%](#) of its sales tax to its Department of Conservation.

Conservation Column continued on page 7

Conservation Column continued from page 6

According to a 2016 study by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and its partners, fully implementing every State Wildlife Action Plan in the country would cost around **\$1 billion annually**. But for years, Congress has **failed to pass the Recovering America's Wildlife Act**, a bipartisan bill that would bolster states' conservation funding. Now, as the Trump administration **slashes** federal conservation and climate funding, advocates say that the 1% for Wildlife bill could provide the stable funding needed to implement Oregon's wildlife action plan. "The bill is a very innovative concept, and there are probably 49 other states that are watching closely to see if it's successful," Humpert said.

Last year, two Republican senators, Daniel Bonham and Cedric Hayden, killed the bill by refusing to allow the final committee vote that would bring it to the governor's desk. Now, conservation advocates from across the political spectrum are determined to pass it.

"You won't always see all these logos on the same page," says Amy Patrick, policy director at the Oregon Hunters Association, which is working with conservation groups like Oregon Wild to shape the bill. "The goal of this funding is to keep common species common, and that's something sportsmen can get behind. There's a real sense that this is an investment that will benefit all of our wildlife and habitats."

Why Oregonians Support HB 4134

Investment into Oregon's Natural Legacy: It will conserve and restore Oregon's 300+ vulnerable species and their habitats that support Oregonians livelihoods, quality of life and recreation needs.

Diverse Stakeholder Support: It will solve a long-standing funding gap for wildlife and habitats, and is widely supported by a diverse group of stakeholders with a presence in all parts of Oregon.

Investment in Wildfire Risk Reduction and Workforce Development: It includes stable funding for the Oregon Conservation Corps to keep Oregon's communities safe from wildfire and help build Oregon's workforce.

Reinvestment in Oregon's Tourism: Outdoor recreation is a \$8 billion industry in Oregon and makes up 2.6% of the state's GDP. This concept would reinvest in our natural resources, a major draw for out-of-state tourists, which helps attract more visitors ("if you build it, they will come").

Not a Cost-of-Living Increase: The majority (65%) of those who pay the tax are visitors from other states and countries.

Bipartisan Support: The concept enjoys bipartisan support in both chambers due to its effort to sustainably fund a range of important programs.

Establish Stable Funding: It would make these programs more resilient in an uncertain funding environment.



Support HB 4134

"1.25% for Wildlife"

*Oregon's most significant conservation victory in decades:
for our imperiled lands, waters, and wildlife and the growing tourism
industry that depends on them.*



What HB 4134 Does

By raising Oregon's statewide tourism tax (state transient lodging tax) by 1.25 percentage points, it will fund:

Oregon's State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) Oregon's blueprint to protect and recover our imperiled species and habitats	Wolf Depredation Compensation and Financial Assistance Grant Program Resources can help reduce conflict and improve coexistence with wolves
Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund Engaging communities in the outdoors and conservation projects across the state	Invasive Species Response Addressing chronic gaps in detection and removal of harmful invasive species
ODFW's Wildlife Connectivity Program Supporting wildlife passage and overcoming habitat fragmentation	Wildlife Stewardship Program Supporting wildlife rehabilitation facilities and other stewardship priorities
Anti-Poaching Efforts Stabilizing existing Dept. of Justice capacity to address poaching and supporting state police on the frontlines against illegal poaching.	Oregon Conservation Corps Investment into wildfire risk reduction, community resiliency and natural resources workforce development

NORTHWEST
nature shop 
SINCE 1985

Intriguing gifts,
toys, and tools
for discovering
the natural
world

Ziplines,
Ninjalines,
& Slacklines

Birdfeeders
Suet &
Seeds

\$5 OFF
with any purchase of \$25
or more with this coupon
Redeem at NW Nature Shop
or use at northwestnatureshop.com
Coupon Code:
welovebirds

Binoculars
& Field
Guides

Personalized Shopping & Curbside Service: 541-482-3241
Visit NorthwestNatureShop.com for online ordering
184 Oak Street, Ashland Oregon 97520



Happy 2026!
Let's make this a year for the
birds...and wildlife!
1PERCENT4WILDLIFE.ORG



**20% OFF One
Regularly-priced Item***

*Valid at the Medford, Oregon WBU store
only. 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
Post Office Box 8597
Medford, OR 97501

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



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.

At the bottom of every page on our website roguevalleyaudubon.org you will find a form where you can request to be added to our mailing list. And be assured, we will never share your e-mail address with any other organizations.

