

A voice for education and conservation in the natural world  
Rogue Valley Audubon Society  
[www.roguevalleyaudubon.org](http://www.roguevalleyaudubon.org)

*Deadline for the June 2026 issue is May 20*



**Sat, May 16 | 8am - 12pm**  
**North Mountain Park | 620 N. Mountain Ave, Ashland**

Rogue Valley Bird Day returns to the North Mountain Park Nature Center on Saturday, May 16, from 8 a.m. to noon. This FREE, all ages event is our region's annual celebration of World Migratory Bird Day, a global campaign that raises awareness about migratory birds and the international conservation efforts that support them.

Rogue Valley Bird Day offers visitors a chance to get outside, learn about local birds, and discover how their own observations can support conservation. North Mountain Park, a well known birding hotspot, features streams, ponds, and seasonal wetlands that host a rich variety of species throughout the spring migration season.

The event will feature games and crafts for kids, bird-calling and name that bird contests for kids and adults, prizes, and a live bird exhibit hosted by Wildlife Images.

Guided bird walks, led by expert birders from the Rogue Valley Audubon Society, will depart regularly from the Nature Center pavilion between 8:15–11:00 a.m. Visitors with limited mobility can enjoy birdwatching at the feeders near the pavilion or take a gentle stroll along the ADA accessible path with benches and resting points.

The 2026 World Migratory Bird Day theme—Every Bird Counts: Your Observations Matter! —highlights the essential role of community science in bird conservation. From backyard sightings to coordinated bird counts, individual observations help track migration patterns, population trends, and habitat changes across entire flyways. This year's theme invites everyone, regardless of experience level, to contribute to the shared knowledge that protects migratory birds.

For the latest schedule of walks and activities, visit [RogueValleyBirdDay.net](http://RogueValleyBirdDay.net).

For more information or to volunteer, call the Nature Center at 541-488-6606.

Thank you to our sponsors: City of Ashland, Rogue Valley Audubon Society, Watchable Wildlife, Pollinator Project Rogue Valley, Ashland Middle School, and Klamath Bird Observatory. If you are interested in sponsoring this year's event, contact Elva Manquera-DeShields at 541-908-0040.

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### Mailing Address

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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.

### Malheur Field Stations Improvements

By Kay Simmons

RVAS recently contributed \$2500 towards improvements at the Malheur Field Station, an educational non-profit organization located on the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge near Burns, OR. The funds supported renovation of the entrance hallway at the Field Station, particularly a new filtered water fountain with water bottle refilling for visitors. Elizabeth Basa, Executive Director, reports that improvements also included new flooring, repurposed old school boards (for posting station/community updates), a teak bench, information station, and a reuseable Birding Board for visitors to add their sightings. Elizabeth Basa says that "We're all so thrilled with how it came out and so appreciative of your group for funding."

Photos by Elizabeth Basa



### Status of upcoming events

Field trips: Denman Bird Walk - Jun. 3, July 1, Aug. 5  
Rogue Valley Bird Day: Sat. May 16

## The Conservation Column

by Pepper Trail

### The Trump Administration's Plans Could Destroy the Forest Service

At the end of March, the Trump Administration announced a massive overhaul and downsizing of the U.S. Forest Service. The plan would move the headquarters from Washington DC to Utah, would close or repurpose all nine of its regional offices, create 15 state offices, and shutter research and development facilities in more than 30 states. This summary from High Country News does an excellent job of summarizing this disastrous plan: <https://www.hcn.org/articles/forest-service-overhaul-sows-confusion-concern/>. If you are concerned with the way this plan could impact your public lands, please call your Congressional representatives to let them know.

But I want to devote the bulk of this month's Conservation Column to a local issue, and one on which I hope RVAS can have a strong positive impact: the pending sale of Ashland's Imperatrice Grasslands.



### What the Sale of the Imperatrice Property Will Tell Us About Ashland's Values

Many Ashland residents aren't aware that the city owns an ecologically precious 846-acre property, a remnant of the grasslands that once covered the lowlands of the Bear Creek valley. Known as the Imperatrice, this rises east of I-5 above the truck weigh station. It was purchased as part of a long-discarded plan for dealing with effluent from the water treatment plant. In recent years the lower area, below the Talent Irrigation Ditch, has been leased for livestock grazing, but the upper 556 acres is home to a remarkably intact perennial grassland community.

In the spring, the rolling hills of the Imperatrice are covered with a wealth of wildflowers, large numbers of pollinators, and echo with the songs of meadowlarks. Surveys by the Klamath Bird Observatory have documented that these grasslands are home to one of Oregon's largest breeding populations of a threatened bird, the Grasshopper Sparrow. The Siskiyou Chapter of the Native Plant Society has discovered the round-leaf filaree and other rare plants there. Rogue Valley Audubon, along with the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy, KBO, and NPSO, have long advocated for the permanent protection of this irreplaceable property.

The Ashland City Council, facing serious financial challenges, has decided to sell the Imperatrice. How this sale is conducted will be a critical test of Ashland's values.

On March 16, the City of Ashland convened a "community conversation" at the Bellview Grange on the future of the Imperatrice. (The possible sale of the 15-acre Hardesty property near the Water Treatment Plant was also discussed, but no decision on that has yet been made). I attended as a representative for RVAS.

Mayor Tonya Graham moderated the discussion, and shared some important facts at the outset:

- The Imperatrice was purchased with a grant from the Land and Water Conservation Fund for \$946,000, which must be repaid when the property is sold.
- The land is appraised at \$3.8 million (\$2.4 million for the lower irrigated 290 acres, and \$1.4 million for the upper unirrigated 556 acres). Several audience members expressed that this appraisal seemed much too low.

*Conservation Column continued on page 4*

### Conservation Column continued from page 3

- The land is outside Ashland's city limits, and thus is under county land use rules.
- It is zoned EFU (Exclusive Farm Use). That limits but would not preclude a buyer dividing the property into a number of parcels with homes as long as there is "farm income." EFU zoning would also allow placing solar arrays on the property.

Community members shared a diversity of views on the value and possible futures for the Imperatrice, with two main themes: prioritizing the preservation of the Imperatrice's ecological values, and emphasizing the property's value as grazing land. Many participants noted that these were not mutually exclusive. For example, grazing could be conducted on the irrigated lower area, while protecting the native grassland above the ditch. Staff of the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy were present, and expressed strong interest in helping to secure the land's permanent conservation, potentially including conservation and/or working-lands easements.

What was NOT advocated by anyone in the audience was to simply sell the Imperatrice to the highest bidder, regardless of their plans for the property. Almost all the private land east of I-5 from Emigrant Lake to Medford is chopped up into ranchettes, vineyards, and hemp farms. No one wants that to be the fate of this unique large intact grassland.

The Ashland City Council has fiscal responsibilities. But it also has responsibilities to honor the values which this town holds dear, and to assure that this city-owned property is sold to an owner who respects those values.

I urge members of RVAS who live in Ashland to contact the Ashland City Council and advocate that ecologically responsible conditions be placed on the sale of the Imperatrice, or that the sale be offered to a conservation buyer such as the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy. Insist that this irreplaceable intact grassland must not be sacrificed to subdivision and development.

To contact the Ashland City Council, go to: <https://ashlandoregon.gov/379/City-Council>.

Thanks!



Western Meadowlark  
Credit: Pepper Trail

### Jacksonville Elementary FeederWatch Update



Hi! My name is Grant. I am the class ornithologist (a person who studies birds). Our most common birds are Scrub Jays, Crows, Stellar's Jays, and Lesser Goldfinches. Being an ornithologist is fun because I get to see so many birds!

Hi my name is Rosalie, and I am the class ornithologist. I love being an ornithologist because you can get the opportunity to see varieties of beautiful birds. My favorite birds are Western Meadowlark, Northern Flicker, and Chickadees. They are so fluffy. I am so happy I even got one chance to even experience the ornithologist. The next ornithologist I'm sure is going to have as much fun as me. And also being the ornithologist means climbing out of the window to see my very cute fluffy friends and I get to do bird count reports like this one. I love replacing the food for the birds because you get to pour the bird feed into the bird feeder, and I like to scoop the bird feed into the feeder. It feels like melted ice cream. And you can also tell your parents about your joyful time being the ornithologist.

On May 28, we will round out our birding year in Mr. Williams's 3rd Grade class with a bird walk around Jacksonville.



Marbled Godwit  
Credit: Gary Shaffer

## April Field Notes 2026

*there are only two things in this world:  
birds and poetry... or maybe just one*

Mid-April has seen thousands of **Greater White-fronted Geese** move over Southern Oregon. The 'laughter' of the high-flying flocks draws attention. The striking **Blue-winged Teal** have been seen regularly of late at the White City Lagoons and at the Denman Ave G. ponds, raising the probability of breeding in the county to highly likely.

**Vaux's Swift** are back north and being reported from a number of locations. Two **White-throated Swift** were seen on Lower Table Rock April 22 (AG). Spotted almost annually during spring migration, White-throated Swift have bred up on the Table Rocks in the past and may have bred up on Flounce Rock near Prospect. Their scientific name, ***Aeronautes saxatalis*** (air sailor who flies from rock), seems appropriate.

The diminutive **Calliope Hummingbird** has been visiting local feeders as well as being seen in the wild. One was spotted April 20 on Upper Table Rock (NC), and one near the Buck Rock Tunnel Trail in the CSNM April 24 (JK).

Two **MARBLED GODWIT** were discovered at White City Lagoons April 15 by Janet Kelly and seen by a number of birders before flying off later in the morning. The same day, a **Short-billed Dowitcher** was seen along with a number of **Dunlin**, **Least Sandpiper**, **Lesser Yellowlegs**, and a few **Western Sandpiper**. A **Solitary Sandpiper** was on Denman Hall Tract the same day (GS).

Two **Bonaparte's Gull** were found at White City Lagoons April 12 (LP). Five **Caspian Tern** were at White City Lagoons April 15 (JK, GS).

A **Pacific Loon** was out on Lost Creek Lake April 9 (BH).

A **Swainson's Hawk** was observed on April 16 and 23 in Denman in the Little Butte Unit and along old Touvelle Rd., and was described as likely the same bird by Jim Hostick. One or two Swainson's are seen migrating though the Rogue Valley every spring and it is always a great sighting.

A lone **Short-eared Owl** was flushed up on Upper Table Rock in the early morning on April 7 (SW). There has been a dearth of reports of that species this year.

A **Prairie Falcon** was spotted on Lower Table Rock April 24 (JL, HS, GS). This can be a difficult species to find in the county some years.

Many of the flycatchers who breed in our area have been reported lately. There have been a few reports of **Gray Flycatcher**, which is a bird that breeds intermittently in the county (if not annually). The 'referee whistle' is being blown around the county. Kudos to all who know that flycatcher.

Bob Hunter found a **Loggerhead Shrike** at Agate Lake boat ramp April 22. That species was MIA this winter in the county, which is unusual as we usually have one or two wintering birds.

**Purple Martin** are returning to our area with multiple reports from both Lower and Upper Table Rock, Denman, and Bear Creek.

Many of our summer breeders are starting to arrive; from the vireos and the warblers, to the Yellow-breasted Chat; from the Bullock's Oriole and the Western Tanager, to the lovable Black-headed Grosbeak. Enjoy the sounds of spring with the flash of colorful feathers as you try to catch the fleeting joy of the season.

*Field Notes continued on page 6*

## The Chat - May 2026

Field Notes continued from page 5

Deadlines call so we will cut this short. Peace.

Thank you to everyone who contributed their observations including: Janet Kelly, Gary Shaffer, Howard Sands, Jim Livaudais, Tanner Martin, Elijah Hayes, Jim Hostick, Jeff Miller, Ryan Terrill, Jessica Oswald Terrill, Kristi Mergenthaler, Kay Simmons, Gretchen Ousterhout, Bob Quaccia, Marion Hadden, Bob Hunter, Anne Goff, Andres Carvalhaes, Nate Trimble, Shane Jimerfield, Martin Lopez Aguilar, Laura Lovrien, Brian Barr, Leslie Hart, Myco Schroeder, Roxanne Tessmann, Samantha Webb, Nolan Clements, Tim Sorby, Jonathan Pope, Liam Ehrman, and Violet .

All errors and omissions are my own.



### BIRDCENTRIC EVENTS FROM AROUND THE REGION

#### **RVAS**

#### **First Wednesday Bird Walks: June 3, July 1, August 5**

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, Klamath Birth Observatory, Wild Birds Unlimited, and partners**

#### **Rogue Valley Bird Day**

Come join us and celebrate Rogue Valley Bird Day at N. Mountain Park in Ashland! The theme this year is "Every Bird Counts, Your Observations Matter". Bird walks all morning, as well as educational booths, kids' activities, Name-that-Bird contest, and bird calling contests for youth and adults. Prizes provided by Rogue Valley Audubon Society. For more information, visit [RogueValleyBirdDay.net](http://RogueValleyBirdDay.net).

DATE: Saturday May 16

TIME: 8:00 am - 12:00 pm

LOCATION: North Mountain Park, Ashland

COST: Free

#### **Vesper Meadow**

#### **Golden Hour Photo Blitz and Workshop**

Join us for an inspiring evening, enjoy a photography walk, and choose to participate in the optional follow-up photography contest. Golden hours is one of the most beautiful times of the day and mid-May means you will immerse yourself in the early spring buds, blooms, birds, and butterflies of the meadow! For more info and to register, visit [https://www.vespermeadow.org/new-events/2026/5/16/golden-hour-photo-blitz-and-all-levels-contest?blm\\_aid=22443](https://www.vespermeadow.org/new-events/2026/5/16/golden-hour-photo-blitz-and-all-levels-contest?blm_aid=22443).

DATE: Saturday May 16

TIME: 4:00 - 7:00 pm

LOCATION: Vesper Meadow, 16534 Indian Memorial Rd, Ashland

COST: Free

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Grasshopper Sparrow  
Credit: Pepper Trail



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# ROGUE VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

## THE CHAT

Newsletter of the  
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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](http://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.

