

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

Deadline for the September 2026 issue is August 20



## Birdathon 2026 very birdy, fun, and competitive

By Carol Mockridge, Birdathon Coordinator

The largest number of enthusiastic teams since COVID made this year's Birdathon very competitive. Also, the weather cooperated except for a short squall on Friday evening that drenched a couple of teams at Kirkland Lagoons. Various strategies such as incorporating new hotspots, camping out Friday night to bag nocturnal species, and scouting nesting sites led to high numbers of species recorded in Jackson County. Rare sightings included the Lawrence's Goldfinch, Blue-winged Teal, and Short-billed Dowitcher.

The coveted owl trophy will be announced in the September *Chat* after all the donations are counted. The Birdathon is the main fundraiser each year for RVAS. Bragging rights for most species seen goes to the Great Greys with 143 species. Hopefully more teams will participate next year, since where else can you have 24 hours of birding bliss so close to home? (*Birdathon Teams on Page 3.*)



2026 Birdathon Wrap-up Pizza Party with Owl Trophy. Photo by Greg Alford.

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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.



**Rogue Valley Bird Day** celebrated World Migratory Bird Day at N. Mountain Park, Ashland, on May 16, 2026. The theme was “Every Bird Counts: Your Observations Matter” and highlighted the value of community science in bird conservation. Memorable guests at Bird Day were a live Ferruginous Hawk and Turkey Vulture brought by Katherine from Wildlife Images. Bird walks were led by Vince Zauskey, Nate Trimble, Shannon Rio, Kate Cleland-Sipfle, and Jonathan Pope. More than 30 bird species were spotted from the Pavillion including a Willow Flycatcher. Birding crafts were offered including feather painting, nature drawing and face painting. The event finished with competitive bird calling and identification contests for children and adults.

Contests were led by Vince, Shannon, and Amanda Alford. Sponsors were Ashland Parks and Recreation, Watchable Wildlife, Klamath Bird Observatory, Wildlife Images, and Rogue Valley Audubon.



Story & Photos by  
Kay Simmons

Katherine & the Ferruginous Hawk

**Upcoming RVAS speaker events**

- ◆ **Noah Stryker**— September 15, location TBA.
- ◆ **Kaly Adkins** (ODFW) — October 27, presentation on Motus stations and Lewis’ woodpeckers.

## Birdathon Teams

**Great Greys** – 143 species; Bob Hunter, Ann Goff and Frank Lospalluto. The Great Grays experienced a marvelous choir of Western Screech-Owls up Salt Creek Road along with calling poorwills and finally a Northern Saw-whet Owl that they were able to see with their flashlights. They had an enjoyable night camping on Heppsie Mountain and woke up to a calling Northern Pygmy Owl. “All in all, a great Birdathon,” said Bob Hunter.

*Photo by Kay Simmons (L-R Bob Hunter, Frank Lospalluto, and Ann Goff)*



**Black-capped Chickadees** – 140 species; Amanda Alford, Leslie Hart, Janet Kelly, Carol Mockridge and Kay Simmons. The Chickadees worked hard to add productive new areas to their past routes. This paid off with a Goshawk and several warblers. Highlights were starting at 4 a.m. Saturday up on Grizzly Peak to hear numerous poorwills, Mountain Quail and a Great Horned Owl. And a Great Grey Owl was sitting on the same fence post as last year with three Canada Jays nearby. “We stayed for at least 15 minutes watching him hunt then return to the fence post”, said Carol Mockridge.

*Photo by Lee French (L-R Kay Simmons, Janet Kelly, Amanda Alford, Carol Mockridge, and Leslie Hart)*



**Binosaur**s – 129 species; Jim Livaudais, Howard Sands and Gary Shaffer.

*Photo by Kay Simmons (L-R Gary Shaffer, Howard Sands, and Jim Livaudis)*



*Birdathon Teams continued on page 4*

## The Chat - June 2026

### *Birdathon Teams continued from page 3*

**Biking Bushtit** – 108 species; Nate Trimble on his bicycle. Nate recounts “My most memorable part of the Birdathon this year was riding up Indian Memorial at sunrise and slowly making my way through each habitat type as I climbed the mountain. It was a grueling climb, but the birds were glorious, and I logged 61 species between the start of Indian Memorial and Buck Prairie at the top. This included my favorite sighting of the day, which was a Green-tailed Towhee that perched a few feet from my head between mile 10 and 11. I was thinking about where to stop to listen for them when it came right out into the open and called. I also enjoyed/suffered my way up to the Upper Table Rocks summit and had a nice rest at the top looking over the amazing view into the valley below as a Rock Wren sang and Turkey Vultures and swallows flew around below me. I got my second favorite sighting of the day (Hutton's Vireo) near the top of the hike. I worked hard for that little gray bird!”

*Photo by Kay Simmons.*



**No Playback Woodpeckers** –101 species; Rebekah Bergkoetter, Kristi Mergenthaler, Myco Schroeder, and Lyndia Hammer.

101 bird species were observed by eye, by ear, and with all their hearts but without using playback and *psshing*. Highlights included multiple sightings of White-headed Woodpecker and Cinnamon Teal; waking up at a dispersed camp site on Howard Prairie to the mountain bird songfest at dawn, including the Sand Hill Crane rubber-band call, and ending the adventure looking at Mt. McLaughlin across Whetstone Pond with a flying Green Heron overhead. They visited federal lands, city green spaces, and several SOLC preserves.

*Photo by Kay Simmons (L-R, Rebekah Bergkoetter & Myco Schroeder)*



**Birding Buddies** – 92 species; Aaron Peterson and Crissy Peterson. Aaron reported, “This was only the second time that my wife and I had participated in a Birdathon. Last year, our best moment was when we spotted a White-headed Woodpecker. We were overjoyed to see the woodpecker again this year, sticking its head out of a hole in a stump. We saw some very cool birds this time around, but perhaps our favorite bird was the Lawrence's Goldfinch. Emigrant Lake was our last stop on Saturday, and we decided to go into the park and visit the campground. We went to Site #13, where others had reported the goldfinch. We looked around for a while, when my wife suddenly spotted a different-looking bird in the grass. Sure enough, it was a female Lawrence's Goldfinch! It was a lifer for my wife, and only the second one that I had ever seen. We stayed there for a while longer, and were able to see a male as well. It was awesome to see both the male and female of this rare species. After this, we found a nice, quiet picnic table to sit down at and reflect upon the day. It was a great way to end our second Birdathon.”



## The Conservation Column

### The Desecration of Saint Paul Mountain by BLM's Last Chance Timber

by Erich Reeder

Saint Paul Mountain rises 4,255 feet above sea level just east of Sunny Valley in Josephine County, Oregon. A rounded peak of serpentine geology in the Klamath Mountain province, it has magnificent old-growth Ponderosa, Jeffrey, and sugar pine trees standing tall and mixing among old-growth Incense cedar and Douglas-fir trees, all which age back 200 years or more. Beneath them is a fantastic understory of canyon-live oaks festooned with mosses and liverworts, and eye-catching rock outcrops spattered with colorful lichens that together form a sublime natural forest garden. Altogether, this forest also provides some of the highest quality nesting, roosting, and foraging habitat for endangered Northern Spotted Owls in the area. This is also our forest, or public forest, meaning this treasured landscape belongs to you and me, to care for how we choose. Most of Saint Paul Mountain has remained unlogged, particularly the square mile of public forest where this remarkable area is, and, until recently, was roadless as well.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has been entrusted to care for this forest for us, as well as another 2.5 million acres of our public forests in western Oregon. Managers at the Grants Pass Field Office, Medford District, have unwisely proposed to log this area, under the guise of reducing wildfire risk, as part of the Last Chance Forest Management Project, and spent considerable taxpayer dollars in the process. Western Environmental Law Council (WELC), on behalf of Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center (KS Wild), sued the BLM and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) on legal grounds for, among other things, planning to log 6,248 acres of Northern Spotted Owl nesting,



roosting, and foraging habitat, and for relying on a flawed analysis of the likely impacts to spotted owls based on a woefully outdated survey protocol. This blasphemous logging project has been paused for now for judicial review with a decision pending. Meanwhile, because of an ecologically frustrating loophole, road building has been permitted to continue, as if constructing a road through a pristine forest is simply a harmless endeavor. And so giant heavy machines—70,000-pound feller-bunchers and 50,000-pound bulldozers on metal tracks, 50,000-pound skidders, and/or 40,000-pound grapple-headed loaders—were set loose to cut, gouge, and scrape a 100-foot wide 'road' for over a half mile through this serpentine sanctuary. Why so wide a road? So these giant machines can go to work. These actions have truly been a desecration of Saint Paul Mountain.

Historically, Saint Paul, who the mountain was named after, was originally Saul of Tarsus, a Pharisee or Greek-speaking Jew who persecuted early Christians shortly after Jesus was crucified. While traveling on the road to Damascus to find and arrest followers of Jesus, he was blinded by a brilliant light and heard a voice ask, "why do you persecute me?" Upon reaching Damascus, his sight was restored by a disciple of Jesus and Saul became Paul the Apostle who assumed the role of bringing the teachings of Jesus to the Gentiles, or non-Jewish people. Ever after, his sudden enlightenment has been seen as evidence of the divine grace available to all human beings to profoundly change their ways and this has been called a "road to Damascus moment."

Standing among the shredded stumps, shattered serpentine rocks, and ruptured and compacted red earth of St. Paul Mountain, one wonders if the managers of our public forestlands at the BLM will ever have their road to Damascus moment and become enlightened to the ecological treasures they have been entrusted to care for us, or if they will continue to persecute and exploit the last of our magnificent unlogged and roadless living forests in exchange for board feet and coin. After all, they are allowed great discretion as to where to log and how to go about it and they did not have to go here. At this time, in 2026, we should be well past such brutal and ignorant abuse of our mature and old-growth public forests and our ecologically unique serpentine plant communities.

## The Chat - June 2026

*Conservation Column continued from Page 5*

Indeed, this was an ill-conceived plan to begin with. The unique composition of tree species, old-growth structure providing high-quality spotted owl habitats, live oak understory, exposed serpentine, and open meadows should have caught the eye of anyone upon doing the initial site inspection and the area set aside.

A similar action was carried out recently 50 miles north in the old-growth public forests of the Yellow Creek watershed of the Umpqua region. Likewise, while the BLM's Blue and Gold Harvest Plan was paused for judicial review, towering old-growth trees were cut and a road carved into the pristine forest right during the nesting season of Marbled Murrelets, which had previously been detected nesting in all the surrounding forests. Nobody knows if one, two, three or more murrelet chicks tumbled to their deaths while this 'road' was being cut into the forest. Soon after this ecological travesty was committed, U.S. District Judge Kasubhai vacated the Blue and Gold Project Environmental Assessment (EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), finding the BLM had violated both the Federal Land Policy Management Act (FLPMA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) by misrepresenting the age and structure of the mature and old-growth forests it was planning to log, and for failing to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for a plan with such potentially significant impacts to old-growth forests, Northern Spotted Owls, and Marbled Murrelets. Nevertheless, the damage from the newly constructed road has been done, senselessly fragmenting an old-growth forest which serves as prime habitat for inland nesting Marbled Murrelets.

This does not need to be, and should not be, an adversarial relationship between ourselves as landowners and BLM staff as our property managers. They are our friends and neighbors, members of our communities and, indeed, many of our RVAS members have had careers at one or more of the agencies who oversee our public lands and wildlife. We need to keep a dialog open with our friends at all our federal, state, and local agencies, encourage them to have courage, honesty, and transparency, let them know that we are paying attention and that we want healthy forests, streams, and wildlife populations.

As to Saint Paul's revelation, it is unrealistic, of course, to expect sudden enlightenment to strike anyone, especially those securely cocooned in government offices. But a steady, encouraging dialog may make enough progress over time to reach the same point of ecological awareness and respect for our public forests among even the most hardheaded and timber-centric managers of our public lands.

However, it is also ourselves who must continue to become enlightened to the present situation and act accordingly by engaging with our local, state, and federal representatives and advocating strongly and resolutely for legislation that will conserve the last of our mature and old-growth public forests from such senseless, reckless, and needless destruction. We are the shared landowners, after all, and when we become sufficiently enlightened, we will insist on hiring better, more ecologically enlightened managers of our property and give them clear instructions to conserve our unique and beautiful wild public places.

To this end, it is vital that we continue to pay attention, engage, make comments, and assert our rights of shared ownership. We are a conservation organization, with the mission "*to support the conservation and restoration of ecosystems so that birds and other wildlife may flourish,*" and we should let it be clearly known that we want to continue to have Northern Spotted Owls, Marbled Murrelets, Bald Eagles, Pileated Woodpeckers, Chestnut-backed Chickadees, Pacific Wrens, neotropical migrants and other forest nesting birds and animals in our forests and that we will stand up to conserve their nesting and foraging habitats for them. Let us continue to remind one and all that we love our public lands and the birds and other wildlife who need these wild places, no matter how small, to live their lives however they may, and that we will continue to ring the bell for conservation.

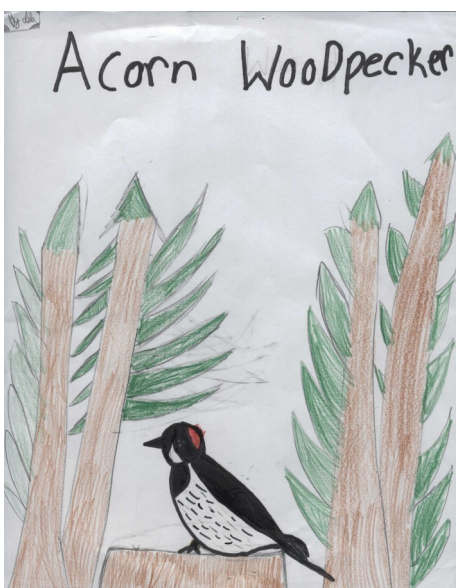


The new road carved into old-growth forest on Saint Paul Mountain.

## Jacksonville 3rd Grade Bird Walk

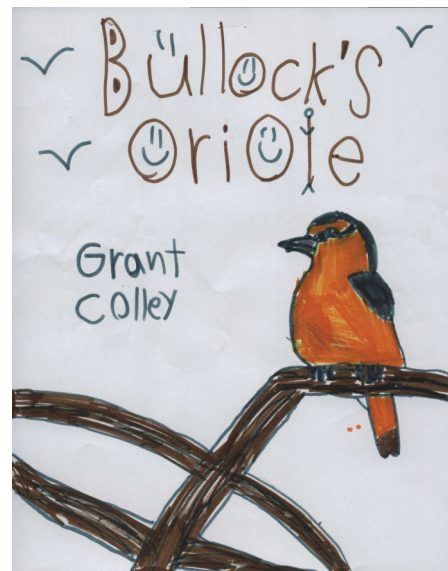
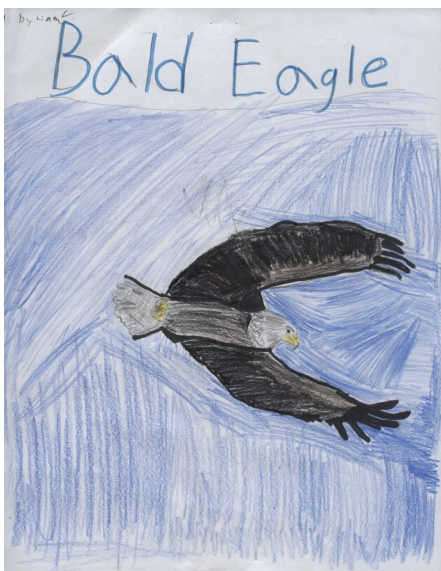
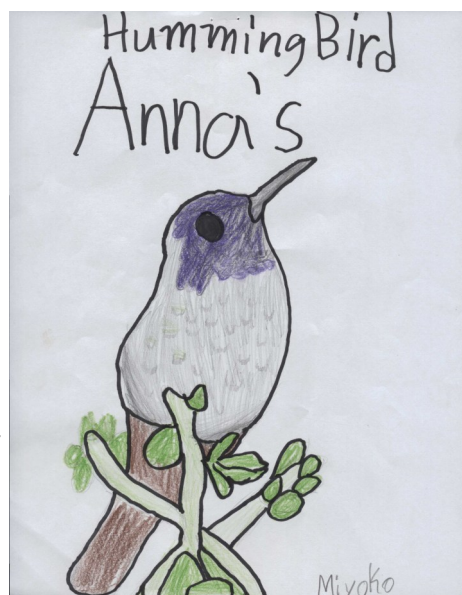
Each year, as we wrap up Project FeederWatch at Jacksonville Elementary School, we schedule a bird walk where the students get to go out and apply what they've learned throughout the year to observe and identify birds around town. This year, our walk took place on Thursday, May 28. The day was cloudy (between Springtime rains) and also quite noisy (with an abundance of leaf blowers, large trucks, new roofing being installed on a home, and even more leaf blowers!). We didn't think we'd be able to hear very many birds, but as we walked away from the school and away from the houses, we began to see and hear more birds. Some highlights of the walk were the Western Wood Pewee, Bullock's Oriole, Red-tailed Hawk, Red-winged blackbird, Western Bluebird, Western Tanager, Violet-green Swallow, Northern Flicker, and a flock of Cedar Waxwings overhead. We logged 25 species in total. Not too shabby!

When we returned to the school, I was given drawings of the students' favorite birds. This is one of my favorite parts, as the illustrations are just so darned adorable. Here they are for you to enjoy as well!

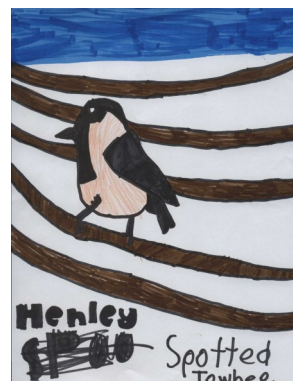
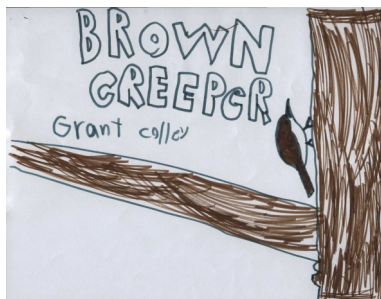
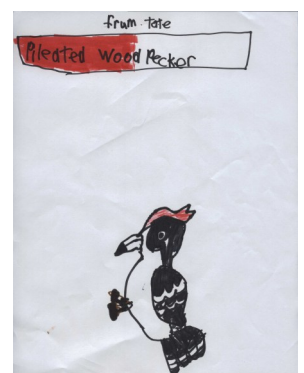
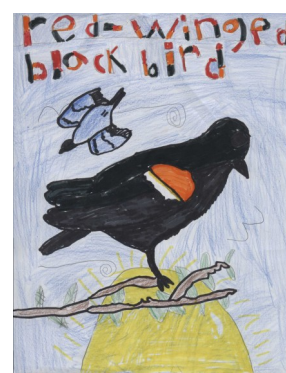
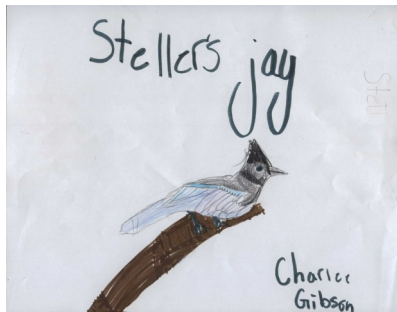
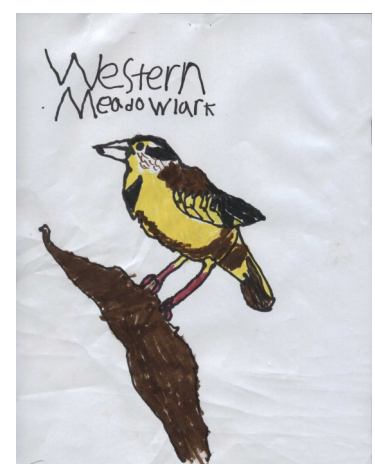
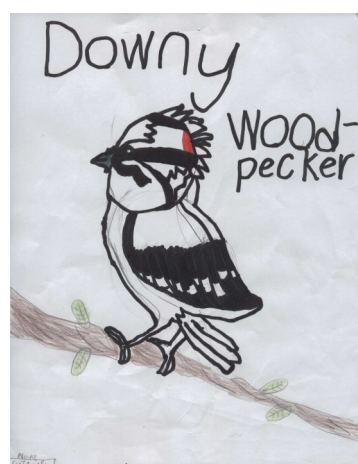
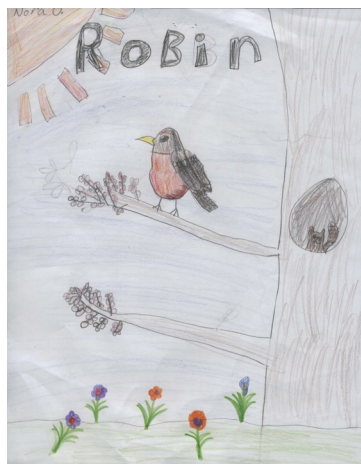
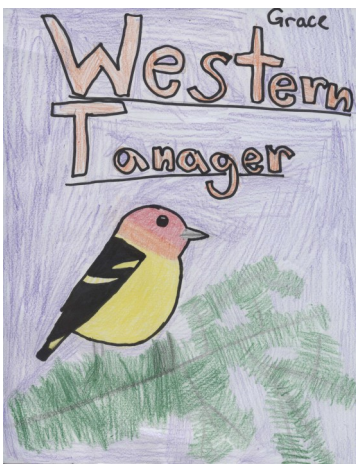
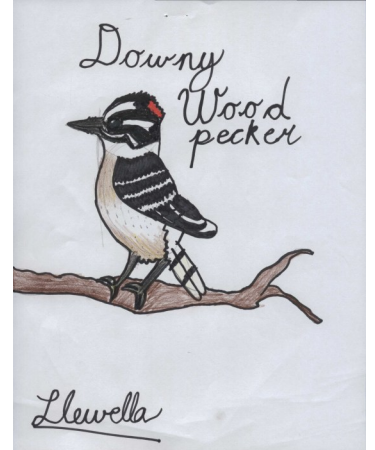
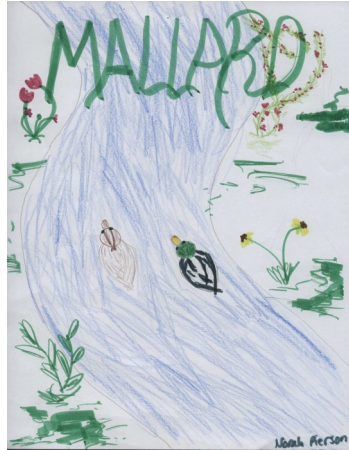


I also want to acknowledge the parent volunteers who helped out with our walk. They were so helpful in keeping our students safe, and were just as excited to be there as the kids. And, of course, Mr. Zach Williams, who creates such an amazing learning environment for his students. He shares his love and enthusiasm for birds and it is just so wonderful to have someone in the community who is passing that on to the next generation. He is the perfect ambassador for this program and I am so grateful that RVAS continues to sponsor it.

Until next year...  
Erin Ulrich



The Chat - June 2026



Thank you to all to of the marvelous 3rd Grade artists!

**Thank You From Jacksonville Elementary School**

Thank you so much for sponsoring our classroom bird feeders and supporting our participation in the FeederWatch program this year. Your generosity created countless meaningful learning experiences for our students and helped grow their curiosity and appreciation for birds and nature.

Some of the highlights from this year included students discovering favorite birds such as Cedar Waxwings, Chickadees, and Western Bluebirds. One especially exciting stretch was when Flickers visited our feeder regularly for nearly a month, giving students the opportunity to observe and discuss the differences between Red-shafted, Yellow-shafted, and intergrade Flickers.

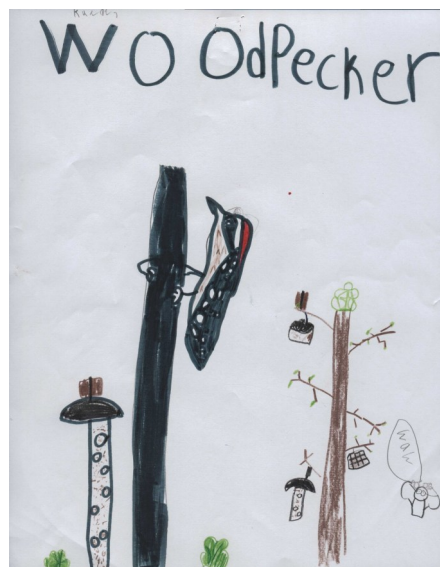
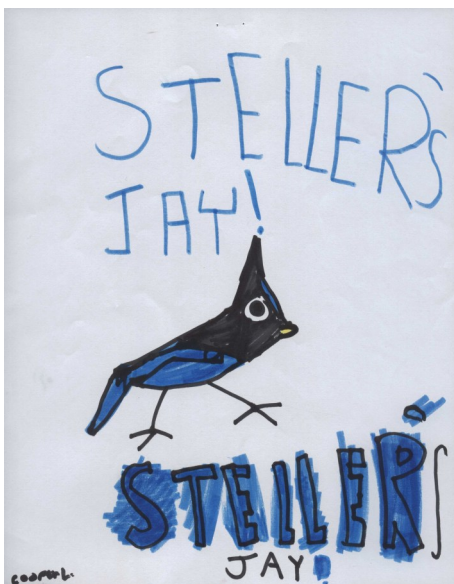
Another unforgettable moment was when a Cooper's Hawk landed on our feeder for about 30 seconds, leaving the whole class amazed. The students also loved whenever a new bird appeared at the feeder. Those moments often led to enthusiastic conversations and observations — often interrupting math class which the students didn't mind.



Our birding hike with Erin was another highlight, especially spotting a Bull-ock's Oriole, and Western Wood-Pewee.

There were so many memorable experiences this year that I could go on for quite a while. Thank you again for your continued support of our classroom feeders and birding program. The birding legacy of our 3rd grade birders at Jacksonville Elementary continues to grow because of your support.

Thank you,  
Zach Williams



## Birding at SOU

Even in the midst of financial woes, SOU faculty, staff and students are finding an opportunity to stay grounded and go birding! First, the SOU Bird Club is alive and active with over 29 registered members, and biweekly bird walks around campus that will pick up again in the Fall. They are very interested in working to establish SOU as an Audubon Campus, so we can be the first Bird, Bee and Tree Campus in the west.

Second, back by popular demand, Dr. Trammell ran a Birding BioBlitz course this Spring term. Twenty students registered for the course in the first two weeks of registration, quickly filling the class maximum. After a couple of class sessions on the basics of birding, they birded from 6am-12pm on Sat May 9 (W to E transect) and Sun May 10 (N to S transect) in Jackson County. In those 12 hours of birding the class saw 83 species! Highlights (from the students) included seeing the White-headed Woodpecker at Mt. Ashland, the Lawrence's Goldfinch at Emigrant, and the American White Pelicans at Hyatt Lake.



## 2026 Jackson County Raptor Review



Photo by Erich Reeder

Throughout Jackson County this spring, a few agency biologists and diehard volunteers have been busy monitoring 30 Bald Eagle, 8 Golden Eagle, and 15 Peregrine Falcon occupied nesting areas, along with surveying some sites which apparently are vacant this year. Many raptor youngsters are getting ready to fly, like these 3 peregrine falcons looking out from their eyrie on a cliff near the Rogue-Umpqua divide.



Hudsonian Godwit  
Photo by Jim Livaudis

## May Field Notes 2026

By Frank Lospalluto

*Birding is like poetry, like reading a good poem, like writing one. The sound, the flash of color, the empty space of existence, and then the bird is gone.*

The last few weeks have been alive with bird song and bird movement. Every morning outside is a free concert. What could be better? While migration is still ongoing most of our breeding birds have gotten to work; so just a few highlights follow.

The first Jackson County record of a **HUDSONIAN GODWIT** was found by Janet Kelly on May 13 at White City Lagoons. Like many first records of such a rare visitor proper identification took a minute. Howard Sands managed an excellent video of the bird and others like Ryan Terrill and Jim Livaudais with more familiarity with this species were able to proffer a definitive identification: male bird in its first alternate or breeding plumage (RT). Hudsonian Godwits in spring are mostly found along the central flyway coming up through the Gulf of Mexico and Texas from wintering areas in southern coastal South America along both the eastern and western coasts. The bird breeds in parts of Alaska, the Yukon, the Northwest Territories, British Columbia, Manitoba and Ontario.

An **American Goshawk** was observed along Corp Ranch Rd. by the *Chickadees* during the RVAS birdathon May 2. Unusual to see one down close to the valley at this time of year.

Andre Carvalhaes and Jon Pope report a **Black-capped Chickadee** and **Mountain Chickadee** pair nesting in a bird box in Ashland feeding some hybrid offspring (which will be interesting to see when they fledge) May 23.



American Dipper nest  
Photo by Frank Lospalluto

The Lithia Park **American Dippers** have been having a resurgent season with three nesting pairs successfully fledging multiple young. These birds are utilizing simple wooden nest boxes under a few of the bridges where the birds are able to securely build their domed moss nests. Inside the dome they build a small grass cup for the eggs. Interestingly one pair utilized a box that was hung from a drain pipe under the Main St. bridge in Ashland near Bluebird Park. Thanks to all the dipper lovers who offered reports including Bob Quaccia, Dorsey Burger, Debbie Levy, Carol Mockridge and Shannon Rio.

Field Notes continued on page 12.

## The Chat - June 2026

Field Notes continued from page 11.

The big stars of the past few weeks have been the **LAWRENCE'S GOLDFINCH** that are nesting in the Emigrant Lake campground. This is the first documented nesting in Oregon. In July 2018 Anne Goff observed an adult male feeding juveniles near Provolt Pond suggesting the species has nested in Oregon on previous occasions. Well-known Oregon birder and author Noah Strycker did a thorough documentation with his May 8 eBird list. (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S334953379>) Harry Fuller has done a few blog posts on this event as well.

The species' presence in the campground was first noted by a KBO training group who were camping there near the end of April. There have been 5 adults reported and now there are nestlings. By the time you read this the birds well may have fledged. Marty Karlin has been photo documenting the event and he has shared a few photos.

Thanks to everyone who shared observations either directly or via eBird. Here's wishing everyone a peaceful and birdy summer!



Lawrence's Goldfinch  
Photo by Marty Karlin

All errors and omissions are my own.

Peace.

*[Editors note: The Yurok Tribe-led Northern California Condor Restoration Program reported that on May 12, a young **CALIFORNIA CONDOR** with a satellite transmitter attached to her right wing, flew into Jackson County from the south to within 8 miles of Medford, then flew west, passing over the Applegate Valley and Cave Junction, down the Smith River, and north to Brookings along the Oregon Coast, before returning south into California. To the everlasting shame of RVAS, this condor, of the largest bird species in North America with a nearly 10 foot wingspan, flew across this region for the first time in 120 years and was apparently and completely unobserved by any of its skygazing members. We will speak no more of this.]*

### BIRDCENTRIC EVENTS FROM AROUND THE REGION

#### **RVAS**

#### **First Wednesday Bird Walks: 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.

#### **50th Annual Western Field Ornithologists Conference**

#### **September 17-20**

Join WFO in Ashland, Oregon, from September 17–20, 2026, for a milestone gathering celebrating our 50th annual conference. Our host venue, the Ashland Hills Hotel & Suites, will serve as your base for an immersive program designed for passionate birders, naturalists, and ornithologists, featuring scientific presentations, field trips, workshops, panels, a keynote address, the annual membership meeting, and community events.

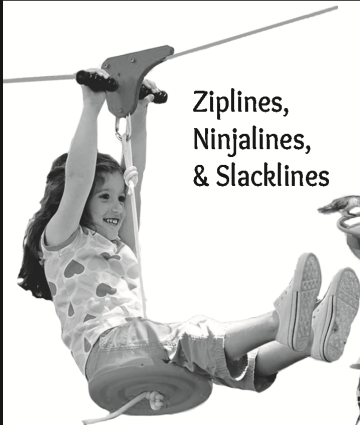
Learn more and register at: [westernfieldornithologists.org](http://westernfieldornithologists.org).

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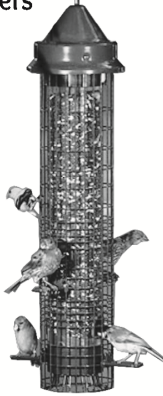
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# ROGUE VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

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