

The Chat

Number 412
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A voice for education and conservation in the natural world

Rogue Valley Audubon Society

www.roguevalleyaudubon.org

Deadline for submissions for the March issue is February 20.



**FEBRUARY PROGRAM
MEETING, TUESDAY,
FEB. 24 at 7 PM**

**"DO YOU WANT TO START
A PURPLE MARTIN COLO-
NY?" A PROGRAM
PRESENTED BY MARNIE
ALLBRITTEN**

This presentation will cover aspects of building, maintaining, monitoring and banding at artificial gourd sites for Purple martins. Included will be: a history of Purple martin monitoring in Douglas County, Oregon, descriptions of various structures and their efficacy, starling exclusion, methods of maintenance, and banding equipment and techniques. There will also be lots of time for questions.

Marnie Allbritten worked with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife for 18 years. During that time she served as the following:

Volunteer Coordinator, Assistant District Wildlife Biologist, District Habitat Biologist and District Wildlife Diversity Biologist. She has been involved in monitoring and maintaining 5 different Purple martin nesting sites since 1998 and has been the lead bander at those sites since 2007. Since her retirement in 2008, she has continued her work with Purple martins as a volunteer.



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**Chapter Program meetings are held
at 1801 E. Jackson St., Medford,
in Lidgate Hall of the Medford
Congregational Church.**

President's Column

Last month in this column I outlined the many things RVAS does to support its mission of Education and Conservation including three grants given to help other local non-profit organizations educate Jackson County school children about birds. This month I'll tell you more about these grants.

Coyote Trail's "Finding Home" Program has been offered for several years to 5th grade classes in Title I schools and exposes students to birds, habitat, and conservation. The program includes 8 classroom visits and 1 visit to the Coyote Trails center where students participate in outdoor activities related to the classroom instruction. This year RVAS gave Coyote Trails a grant to purchase teaching aids for these visits: a tablet with a speaker and birds song audio files and apps and a backyard bird identification brochure from NorthWest Nature Shop for each student.

Stewart Janes' students in the Environmental Education master's program at SOU have been offering a "Fall in the Field" program during fall quarter. They hosted a total of 42 educational groups on either the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument or Deer Creek Center each year for approximately 1100 students. Unfortunately, not all schools can afford the transportation needed to get students to these sites. This year, RVAS has used the remaining funds in The Bob Black Fund to provide funding for this transportation.

Jeanine Moy has been leading Birding in the Schools in Ashland for a few years. The Northwest Nature Shop provides publicity and classroom materials. The Klamath bird Observatory provides additional classroom materials such as binoculars, lesson plans and kits, study skins, and guidebooks. RVAS is providing a stipend for Jeanine for each classroom visit and helping her recruit volunteers to assist with the program (anyone interested?)

Field Notes for Jackson County (Nov. 21, 2014 to Jan. 19, 2015) Edited by Jeff Tufts

If you've been out birding, you know that Fall turned to Winter (briefly) then Winter turned back to Fall. It's hard to know if weather was a factor, but the period covered in these notes was marked by three very unusual sightings.

Birds of Jackson County notes only eight records of **Pine Grosbeaks** (all in Spring or Summer), and several of them were spotted in the Sky Lakes Wilderness in August 2014 (after the publication of the most recent BOJC booklet). So it was very significant when one was found near the Huckleberry Campground in the Siskiyou National Forest outside of Prospect on Dec. 7 by Russ Namitz. He reports that this species "seems to be 'invading' various parts of the Cascades and the Coast Range, mostly between 4000 feet and 6000 feet."

Franklin's Gulls are rare even in Summer and Fall and had never been recorded locally in December until a first-year bird was spotted at Agate Lake Dec. 3 (RVAS). Most of the species are in South America by then.

Six previous records of **Tree Sparrows** (all Nov.-Jan.) indicate that this otherwise common species rarely makes it to southwestern Oregon. Two were found Nov. 30 at North Mountain Park in Ashland, but they didn't stick around (BB).

While it's not easy to measure the impact of the warmer-than-usual weather on most species, waterfowl clearly have benefited from not having to deal with the frozen ponds and lakes that were prevalent at this time a year ago.

Mingus Pond has been a **Canvasback**-magnet—nothing new there—with numbers as high as 60 (Jan. 6, JH) and 64 (Jan. 10, eB) being reported. Some day an enterprising,

scuba-diving biologist is going to explore the bottom of that pond and let us know exactly what it is that the Canvasbacks find so attractive there.

Holy Waters is another local favorite for ducks, and the usual large congregation of **American Wigeon** this winter has included one **American x Eurasian Wigeon hybrid**. The bird was first spotted Dec. 1 (JL). Presumably the same bird was seen there Jan. 18 (FL).

Large flocks of **Common Mergansers** are not unusual during winter, but the 500 birds (>95% males) spotted at Howard Prairie from Willow Point Dec. 7 (FL) was notable. **Hooded Mergansers** won't be found in those numbers, but 21 at Ashland Pond Nov. 29 (KCS) was unusual for that small body of water.

Snow Geese have been casual visitors in small numbers. Nine were in the fields off Corp Ranch Road near Emigrant Lake Nov. 25 (ES), and five were at Emigrant Lake Dec. 6 (HF). One was spotted along Hwy 234 near the Agate Road terminus Dec. 11 (HS). And four were briefly at the Kirtland ponds Dec. 13 (JT).

Tundra Swans returned to their traditional hangout off of Brophy Road north of Eagle Point with the first report of one bird coming on Dec. 1 (NB). Six were seen there Jan. 10 (NB), and they were still there on Jan. 17 (BH). Five were spotted in the drought-shrunken pond along Tresham Lane Dec. 6 (SB).

One notable **Cackling Goose** report came from the Kirtland ponds where 295 of the small geese were seen Jan. 18 (FL).

There were not many notable loon and grebe sightings from this period. The continuing **Pacific Loon** was seen at Howard Prairie Nov. 27 (FL), and single **Horned Grebes** were at Howard Prairie Dec. 7 (FL) and at Emigrant Lake Dec. 25 (HF).

Field Notes continued on Pages 4 & 5

Are the **Turkey Vultures** ever completely absent from Jackson County? Maybe not. Three were seen circling over an orchard west of Foothill Road Nov. 27 (eB), and a single bird was spotted Jan. 7 over Upper Applegate Road (eB), and over Southern Oregon University in Ashland Jan. 8 (SJ).

Any **Osprey** report after October is unusual, so the bird seen Nov. 28 (eB) over Gardner Road (north of Hwy 140) was unexpected. It was seen regularly at nearby Wade Reservoir earlier in the year.

Much less surprising was a **Rough-legged Hawk** in the same area Dec. 8 (HS). Two or more of this winter visitor can reliably be seen in the fields adjacent to the Dead Indian/Hyatt Prairie intersection, and the area around the weigh station on Hwy 62 north of Eagle Point is another favored location.

Ferruginous Hawk reports came from Scenic Hills Cemetery in Ashland Dec. 4 (PK,LK), East Antelope Road near Agate Lake Dec. 22 (MRR), and Blue Heron Park in Phoenix Jan. 15 (eB).

Two late reports of southbound **Sandhill Cranes** were on Dec. 1 (NB) and Dec. 14 (GH). **Killdeer** are rarely worthy of note in Jackson County since so many are year-round residents, but approximately 60 birds seen at the Kirtland ponds Jan. 18 (JT) were almost certainly resting after a significant migration (perhaps from a much more northerly location).

Other than Killdeer, the shorebirds mostly likely to be seen in Jackson County in late fall/winter are **Greater Yellowlegs**, **Dunlin** and **Least Sandpiper**. Thirty Yellowlegs were scattered around the Kirtland ponds Dec. 13 (JT), and 15 were there on Jan. 18 (JT). About 40 Dunlin were at the same location Dec. 13 (JT), and a similar number were there more than a month later (Jan. 18) (JT). Least Sandpipers are the toughest to count as they tend to move around frequently, but a report of 110 at Kirtland Jan. 18 (FL) was definitely significant.

Terns continue to be absent from Jackson County, and very few gulls were spotted during the current period. One first-year **Bonaparte's Gull** was at the Kirtland ponds from Nov. 29 through at least Dec. 8 (RN,BH).

Northern Shrike reports came from Brophy Road Nov. 28 (NB) and Jan. 17 (BH), and from the Hall Tract of Denman WA Jan. 12 (FL). No Loggerhead Shrikes have been reported in the valley yet this winter.

Of the various passerine species that occasionally visit the lowlands of Jackson County in large numbers during colder weather, only **Pine Siskins** have been especially conspicuous. They can be seen associating with **American** and/or **Lesser Goldfinches** or in large flocks of a thousand or more such as those reported Dec. 5 near Hyatt Lake (DK) and in late November in the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument (FL, KM). And speaking of Goldfinches, a "Black-backed" Lesser Goldfinch was a regular visitor to feeders in Ashland in December (BHe).

Varied Thrush reports have been numerous, but they don't seem to have invaded our valley in the large numbers seen in some previous years.

Despite the relatively mild weather, warblers have been fairly inconspicuous. Two or three **Orange-crowned Warblers** were regular visitors to a hummingbird feeder in east Medford through mid-January (GP), and a single **Townsend's Warbler** was a yard-bird in Ashland in January (RT). Even **Yellow-rumped Warblers** have appeared on few birding lists although at least a dozen have been seen on repeated visits to Roxy Ann Peak in Medford (JT).

In addition to the unusual Tree Sparrows, North Mountain Park in Ashland also welcomed a **Swamp Sparrow** that was first seen (and photographed) on Dec. 6 (KSC) and was still there at least as late as Jan. 11. Another Swamp Sparrow report (Jan. 8) from Ashland Pond was probably a different individual (eB).

Field Notes conclusion

Thanks to this month's contributors: Norm Barrett, Sherry Bowlin, Brandon Breen, Kate Cleland-Sipfle, Harry Fuller, Jim Harleman, Bill Hering, Bob Hunter, Gretchen Hunter, Stewart Janes, Doug Kirkpatrick, Linda Kreisman, Peter Kreisman, Jim Livaudais, Frank Lospalluto, Kristi Mergenthaler, Russ Namitz, Gary Palmer, Howard Sands, Eric Setterberg and Roxanna Tessman.

Deadline for submitting contributions to the Field Notes for the next edition of The Chat is February 15.

President's Column *Continued*

For several years, RVAS has been funding scholarships for Siskiyou Field Institute courses to Rogue Valley educators. There is now an unknown, unlimited number of students benefiting from these scholarships and future students will continue to reap the benefits from their teachers and friends who have taken SFI courses with RVAS's support.

We are very pleased to have been able to find worthy partners to help us fulfill our educational mission this year. This summer the Board will evaluate each of these programs when considering next year's funding.

On a closing note I would like to emphasize that RVAS has its own volunteers who go directly into third grade classrooms around Jackson County and present a program developed by RVAS. Lynn Kellogg has been spearheading this effort for several years along with Sooney Viani and other volunteers. Anyone interested in helping the or having them come into a specific classroom should contact Sooney (sooneyiani@gmail.com).

Winter Birds & Spring Arrivals—Birding Event

Ashland Parks & Recreation - North Mountain Park Nature Center

Join Harry Fuller on a Thursday evening this winter for a presentation on the wintering birds of the Rogue Valley along with the first to return in spring. His presentation will prepare you for a field trip the following Saturday. Pre-register online at www.ashland.or.us/register or call the Nature Center at 541-488-6606.

AGES 13—Adult

DAYS/DATES **Lecture / Thursday Feb. 26**
Field Trip / Saturday Feb. 28

(If weather causes postponement, the field trip will be rescheduled)

TIME 6:30—8:30pm | 8:30am—3pm

PLACE North Mountain Park

COST \$15

INSTRUCTOR: Harry Fuller is an Ashland-based birding guide and author of *Freeway Birding, San Francisco to Seattle*. View his website at www.towhee.net, and his bird blog is at <http://atowhee.wordpress.com>.

The Conservation Column

By Pepper Trail

By now, most of you have probably heard of the liquefied natural gas (LNG) pipeline and terminal that has been proposed in southern Oregon. The *Medford Mail Tribune* recently ran a week-long series of articles on the project, all of which are available at: <http://www.mailtribune.com/topics/project-pipeline>. A public hearing held December 11 in Medford by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) attracted an overflow crowd of hundreds of local residents, most of whom spoke in opposition.

Even though this issue may seem to some to be rather unrelated to bird conservation, the scope of this project is mind-boggling, and if approved, it would forever change the environment of southern Oregon. Therefore, it is the subject of this month's conservation column. Furthermore, there is a deadline for public comments coming up on March 13, making it timely to review again some of the facts regarding the pipeline and terminal.

The following information is taken largely from the excellent website of Rogue Riverkeeper (<http://rogueriverkeeper.org/lng>). This local Rogue River conservation group has led the opposition to the project, and its Program Director, Forrest English spoke at the RVAS Members Meeting on January 27.

Basic Facts

Who is behind this project proposal?

Jordan Cove LNG terminal is a project of a Canadian company, Veresen. The Pacific Connector Gas Pipeline is a project of Williams (an Oklahoma-based energy infrastructure company) and California-based PG&E Corporation.

Who authorizes this project?

This is a complicated question because there are many permits the companies have to acquire at federal, state, and county levels. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) is widely expected to approve the Jordan Cove export project as they did for a new defunct original proposal to import gas. The state of Oregon will process applications for use of state lands, impacts to waterbodies, and the dredging proposal at Coos Bay. The U.S. Forest Service, BLM, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA Fisheries all have a role to play in granting, or denying, permits.

Where would the pipeline run?

The 230-mile long, 36-inch diameter pipeline would carry pressurized natural gas from Malin, Oregon across Klamath, Jackson, Douglas, and Coos Counties to end at the proposed Jordan Cove LNG terminal in Coos Bay/North Bend.

Conservation Column continued on Pages 7 & 8

Conservation Column *continued*

How are water resources and salmon impacted?

One of the principal threats presented by these proposed facilities is to wild salmon, an integral part of the Pacific Northwest's cultural, ecological and economic fabric. Wild salmon populations in the Pacific Northwest are already at historically low levels, largely because of dam construction, water withdrawals, habitat loss due to development, poor water quality and habitat degradation due to logging.

The proposed pipeline would cross 400 bodies of water in the Coos, Coquille, Umpqua, Rogue and Klamath watersheds. These crossings would require extensive riparian cutting that would increase water temperatures in streams that already violate temperature standards for salmon and other cold-water fish. However, FERC's evaluation of the project did not include site-specific impacts analysis or crossing plans for any of the sub-watersheds that will be affected. The inadequacy of the energy company's crossing plans for the Rogue River was recognized by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, but the company ignored them, and FERC approved their plans without requiring additional analyses.

How are endangered species impacted?

The project would impact twenty-nine federally endangered or threatened species, including Coho salmon, Marbled Murrelet, and Northern Spotted Owl, as well as marine species like gray whales. Extensive dredging for terminal construction in the Coos Bay estuary would have an enormous impact on sensitive estuarine habitats and marine species: the amount of material that would be dredged out of the estuary would fill the Rose Bowl stadium nearly 14 times.

How are public lands impacted?

Approximately 80 miles of the pipeline would cross public land on the Rogue River/Siskiyou, Umpqua and Winema/Fremont National Forests as well as the Medford and Coos Bay Districts of the BLM. The pipeline would create a linear 95-foot wide clearcut, and in doing so, would degrade and fragment forest habitat for endangered species, increase erosion, cut forests in old-growth reserves and in riparian reserves and open up a highway for invasive species and ORV use. The Forest Plans for all three National Forests and the BLM currently do not allow such harm to our public resources for pipeline construction. As a result, the Forest Service and BLM have begun a process to amend their Forest Plans to allow for pipeline development. Rogue Riverkeeper and other groups are engaged in the process for Forest Service and BLM plan amendments.

How are private landowners impacted?

Approximately 150 miles of the 230-mile pipeline would be on private property. Over 300 private landowners are threatened with the use of eminent domain for the pipeline right-of-way. Landowners would likely receive a small one-time payment for the pipeline running across their property, while they would lose access and endure limitations on that right-of-way such as: an inability to plant crops with deep roots, lack of access with heavy equipment, and a clearing of all brush and trees. A majority of impacted landowners are opposed to the project.

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Conservation Column continued from Page 7

Impacts at Coos Bay

Jordan Cove is a proposal to export up to one billion cubic feet of fracked gas per day from Coos Bay. This would require construction of a massive new 420 megawatt power plant, which would be enough to power 400,000 homes. But it will not power any homes at all: it will be used solely to liquefy the gas for export to Asia on 950-foot long tankers. The power plant would be the second-largest source of carbon emissions in Oregon (behind only PG&E's coal-fired power plant in Boardman). In addition to the power plant, the Jordan Cove project includes an extensive network of gas storage tanks and a massive shipping terminal within the tsunami zone on the north spit of Coos Bay. Especially in light of the nuclear power plant disaster in Japan caused by the earthquake and tsunami, the construction of such a huge and potentially hazardous facility on the Oregon coastal subduction zone is highly questionable.

What Can You Do?

If any (or all) the above concern you, there is an important opportunity to weigh in on this project. March 13 is the deadline to submit comments to the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality. The DEQ must evaluate the project in relation to the Clean Water Act, focusing on the physical impacts to water quality that would or may result from the physical construction of the pipeline and terminal. This specifically relates to fill and removal of streams, rivers, wetlands and Coos Bay. DEQ has the opportunity to issue or deny a certification that this Army Corps action would comply with Oregon's water quality standards.

The Rogue Riverkeeper website has some more specifics and talking points. Check out the LNG page (<http://rogueriverkeeper.org/lng>). Your comments must refer to permit application NWP-2012-441 (the Army Corps permit that is under review by DEQ).

Written letters should be sent to:

401 Public Comments

DEQ Eugene Office

165 E. 7th Ave, Suite 100

Eugene, OR 97401

or by email to: 401publiccomments@deq.state.or.us

For Roxy Ann / Prescott Park Bike Trails update and information on the Proposed SOU Biomass Power Plant, see website.

RVAS BIRDING FIELD TRIPS AND WALKS

Sunday, February 22 - Longtime RVAS member Bob Hunter and Brian Barr, Project Manager for GEOS Institute, will lead a trip to several nearby birding locations including the Kirtland ponds. Wintering waterfowl and sparrows, Northern Mockingbirds, and Ferruginous Hawks are among the species that may be seen during this event. Meet at 8 a.m. at the east end of the Dollar Tree parking lot (southeast corner of Hwy 62 and Hwy 140 intersection). Bring food and water, and plan to be out until approximately 2 p.m. Limited parking space at some destinations means that carpooling is required. Final arrangements for carpooling will be made when we meet at The Dollar Tree. For additional information, contact Bob at bobhunter@embarqmail.com

Saturday, March 14 - Professional biologist Frank Lospalluto and RVAS Board member Anne Goff will lead a RVAS field trip to Cantrall Buckley Park and possibly other nearby birding spots. Locally resident species such as Red-shouldered Hawk and Acorn Woodpecker are likely sightings, and we'll also be looking for early spring migrants such as swallows and warblers. And, this is a great chance to learn from Frank some of the nuances of birding-by-ear. Meet at 8 a.m. at the Ruch Country Store (seven miles out of Jacksonville on Hwy 238 going toward Applegate) to make carpooling arrangements. Jackson County Parks parking permits are required for Cantrall Buckley. Bring food and water and plan to bird until early afternoon. For additional information, contact Anne at anne-goffar@charter.net

FIRST WEDNESDAY BIRD WALKS CONTINUE AT AGATE LAKE

Murray Orr will continue to lead his monthly bird walks on the first Wednesday of each month at Agate Lake. Birders wishing to join Murray should meet him on the far side of the lake across from the boat dock to observe birds on and near Agate Lake. The walk begins at 8:30 and will end before noon. Meet Murray at the gate. We hope you can join us. Contact Murray at 541-857-9050.



MEDFORD CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT RESULTS

Eight Great-tailed Grackles earned "Rarest Species" honors as the forty-sixth Medford Christmas Bird Count was conducted on Saturday, December 20. The large members of the Blackbird family were the first of their kind ever recorded on the annual count. They were spotted by the team led by Tom Phillips (and photographed by George Peterson) and were in Section H near the base of Lower Table Rock.

Also notable was a Grasshopper Sparrow seen by Ron Ketchum's group as they birded the area north of Eagle Point. It was only the second Medford CBC record for this species which is notoriously inconspicuous. Ron's group also had the only Rough-legged Hawk of the day.

Total species recorded on count day was 121 with one additional (Townsend's Warbler) seen during count week. There were 71 participants—highest number since 1979—and most of them braved the steady rain that fell during the afternoon hours.

Historical high numbers were posted for ten different species including Steller's Jay. The total of 175 topped the previous best of 171 from 1986. There were 35 found last year, and fewer than 20 were counted each of the previous seven years. Pepper Trail and Chris Uhtoff reported 59 just from Section L.

Eurasian-collared Doves haven't quite become the "next Starling," but the total of 338 was well above the previous high of 134 from 2012. And the Mourning Dove total of 679 was the fourth highest for that species which seems to be finding a way to thrive despite the incursion of its non-native relative. And, oh, by the way, the total of Mourning and Eurasian-collared Doves was barely less than that of the Feral Rock Pigeons (1046, also a Medford CBC high).

Other species with historical high numbers were Green-winged Teal (451), Ferruginous Hawk (4), Merlin (15), Dunlin (39), Wilson's Snipe (75), Anna's Hummingbird (31), and Northern Flicker (226). The Northern Flicker total was tops since the Red-shafted and Yellow-shafted varieties were lumped together. The Dunlin total beat the previous high of 18, and this year was the first they've been seen on count day since 2004.

Although the Pine Siskin total of 382 was well below the record of 815 established in 1987, it was a welcome return to the count of an irregular species that was completely absent last year. Conversely, the similarly unreliable Cedar Waxwings were a no-show this year while 963 were seen last year. Go figure.

Other significant misses were Lark Sparrow (seen in 58 previous counts) and Red-breasted Nuthatch (49 previous counts). And, for the third straight year, not a single Gull was spotted. Next year we might have to commission a pre-count air drop of french fries.

Top species total by a group was the 85 counted by Stewart Janes and Forrest English as they prowled Section G in the southwest portion of the count circle. They were the only birders to find Greater White-fronted Geese (eight), and they also had count highs for Pine Siskin (143), Dark-eyed Junco (289) and House Sparrow (28).

Medford CBC Results continued on next page

Medford CBC Results *continued*

Second best group species total was found in Section A, traditional stomping grounds for Jim Livaudais, Norm Barrett, Gary Shaffer and Howard Sands. Their nocturnal efforts netted eight Virginia Rails, two Soras, and eight Owls (Barn, Western Screech and Great-horned).

Other groups that were able to hit the 70-mark were those led by Russ Namitz (Section C, 70 species), Harry Fuller (Section D, 72), Vince Zauskey (Section J, 72), and Bob Hunter (Section K, 71). Russ's group had the only Northern Saw-whet Owl.

Harry and co. found an amazing 14 raptor species including White-tailed Kite, Ferruginous Hawk, Prairie Falcon, and Northern Pygmy-owl.

Vince's group had four different shorebird-types (Greater Yellowlegs, Spotted Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper and Dunlin) that didn't make any other lists. Kirtland Ponds strike again.

Bob Hunter and friends had a remarkable 58 Wilson's Snipe as well as the only Long-billed Dowitchers (5) for the day. And, they also got the American Coot crown with 448 of the count total of 991.

Thanks to all of this year's participants.

ASHLAND CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT—January 4, 2015

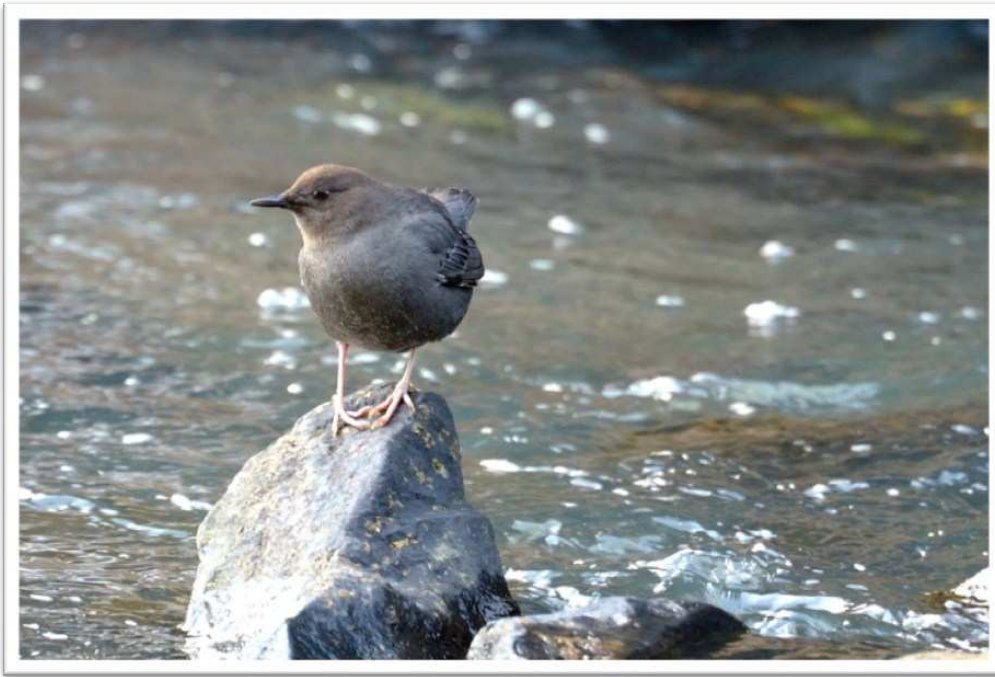
The species total for the count was 113, a few shy of last year's total. Four new species for the count were recorded: Rock and Canyon Wren, Swamp Sparrow and Great Gray Owl. The latter was found by Russ Namitz's team at about 4800' north of Hwy 66 in the Cascades. It is likely that Ashland will be the only CBC in Oregon to report a Great Gray Owl this year. Silverton has one some years but they failed to find one in the 2014 count season.

This year there was not a single gull nor grebe found. Snipe were also missing for the first time. Western Bluebird numbers were high and many of usual mountain species were recorded: Townsend's Solitaire, Mountain Bluebird and Quail, Evening Grosbeak. Only a single Dipper was recorded. Two juvenile White-tailed Kite were seen, indicating they had a successful breeding season in the grasslands north of I-5.

Over forty counters participated and dinner was held at the Black Sheep Pub in Ashland. John Bullock is the compiler.

Coyote Trails update

On Jan. 21st, Jeanine Moy instructed several classrooms at Jackson Elementary, as part of the Finding Home Program run by Coyote Trails, which RVAS generously supported earlier this school year (see President's Column). Coyote Trails has used the donated gear in several Title-I classes in Medford so far to play bird calls and alarms to the students, having them mimic the difference between similar species while seeing a picture of each. The students reported that this was great fun, and were able to vocalize the bird calls 90 minutes after hearing them. Hip-hip-hooray! For more info on the Finding Home program, or programs in general, contact Katie@CoyoteTrails.org.



Lithia Dipper Watch 2015

On January 3 Bob Quaccia led the 15th Annual Dipper Walk through the park. Out of Bob's walks came the monitoring project spearheaded by Barbara Massey.

American Dippers are an important indicator species of water quality. Where there are dippers there are salmon, steelhead and a healthy watershed.

We are starting a new season soon. We monitor the creek for nest sites and breeding pairs. Many of the bridges across the creek have nest boxes installed underneath that we check along with other locations along the creek. In the past in cooperation with John Alexander and the Klamath Bird Observatory we have safely color-banded some of the birds. This has aided our monitoring effort by allowing us to identify and record the sex, age and behavior of each individual and track returning birds.

The use of the nest boxes by American Dippers is one of the more exciting aspects of our project. While there are instances elsewhere of nest box use by American Dippers, it is not a widely used tool. By documenting the use and nesting success we hope to encourage others in the west to place boxes over dipper inhabited streams especially where bridge design eliminates a ledge area where dippers often build their nests.

We have a blog called lithiadipperwatch (<http://lithiadipperwatch.com/>) that has many of the notes and photographs of the past few seasons on the creek. During the breeding season it is updated regularly.

Generally we meet as a group and walk the creek once or twice a month until breeding activity intensifies when we meet more often or observe on our own and report back to the group via email. If anyone is interested in participating in any fashion they can contact me at fdlospalluto@gmail.com.

Field Notes for Josephine County (Nov. 21, 2014 to Jan. 19, 2015) Compiled by Jeff Tufts

Mountain trails don't always produce good birding, but when Russ Namitz and Larry Wright ventured up Grayback Mountain on December 6 their efforts were rewarded with the sighting of six **Pine Grosbeaks**. These large members of the family (Fringillidae) that includes Red Crossbills, Purple Finches and Lesser Goldfinches, are seldom found in southwestern Oregon. They were the most notable Josephine County sightings during a period when most of the good birds were associated with ponds, lakes and rivers.

Gulls are infrequent visitors to Josephine County, but no less than four species were recorded during November and December. All were at the Copeland ponds. Two juvenile **California Gulls** were there on Nov. 23 (RN), and at least one of them was still found on Dec. 23. The same location had at least two juvenile **Herring Gulls** Nov. 23-24 (RN,DV). One **Bonaparte's Gull** was also present on Nov. 23 (RN), and the next day there were two **Glaucous-winged Gulls** (DV).

Most unusual of many interesting waterfowl sightings was the **Ross's Goose** spotted in a field off Lower River Road west of Hunt Lane on Dec. 19 (DV). There was a **Snow Goose** in the same general area Nov. 28 (DV).

Other good waterfowl records included 25 **Greater White-fronted Geese** at the Copeland ponds on Dec. 8 (RN) and 35 of the same species on Dec. 11 west of Grants Pass. Fifty **Cackling Geese** were at the Copeland ponds Dec. 8 (RN), and a flock of 140 of the same species were seen flying over the Roguelea Estates on Dec. 23 (DV).

Of the smaller waterfowl, most notable sightings were six **Canvasbacks** at the Roguelea Estates ponds Jan. 4 (DV), four **Redheads** at Riversedge Park Dec. 15 (RN) and the same number at Roguelea Dec. 23 (RN), two **Greater Scaup** at Roguelea Jan. 4 (DV), and 24 **Hooded Mergansers** at Pacifica Garden Dec. 28 (DV).

Hérons and egrets were conspicuous in the region. There were 22 **Great Blue Herons** Dec. 15 along Lower River Road, and 29 **Great Egrets** were seen at the same spot on the same day. The Roguelea Estates had at least four **Black-crowned Night Herons** throughout the period (RN, DV).

Any **Turkey Vultures** in December are an oddity, and there were sightings of one bird over Lower River Road Dec. 6 (DV) and over the Copeland ponds Dec. 23 (RN).

One of the more remarkable flock sightings during the period was the 850 **American Crows** seen along Lower River Road Jan. 15 (DV).

A single **White-throated Sparrow** was a third all-time sighting at Cave Junction location (RC).

Contributors: Romain Cooper, Russ Namitz and Dennis Vroman.

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