



Audubon Society of Corvallis the **CHAT**

January 2008

VOL. 37

#5

General Meeting

Thursday, January 17, 7:30 – 9:00 pm
First Presbyterian Church

Native Plants in Our Gardens

*A presentation by Joyce Eberhart,
Oregon State University*

Joyce Eberhart is from the Department of Forest Science at OSU. Joyce is formally trained in Mycorrhiza Ecology & Taxonomy; however, her avocation is dealing with native plants. She is an active member of the Corvallis Chapter of the Native Plant Society and has given many talks on gardening with native plants. With the gardening season almost around the corner, you won't want to miss this talk!

A raku lamp will be auctioned at this month's meeting. See page 38 for more information.



*Bleeding Heart photo by
Lisa Millbank*

Directions

The chapter meeting is in the meeting hall of the First Presbyterian Church (upstairs), 114 SW Eighth Street. The meeting is preceded by a social period with refreshments, which begins at 7 pm.

Christmas Bird Count 2007

Note: See page 36 for the complete results of the 2007 Corvallis Christmas Bird Count.

The 2007 Corvallis CBC was held on Tuesday, December 18th, 2007. While it was relatively dry before 10 am and after about 2 pm, rain and wind during the middle part of the day placed a damper on birding. Many teams reported "slow birding" or "not much." Despite this, the

total number of species seen was 125, making it one of the most successful species counts after last year's record high of 127 species.

Kind of new to the count was a Clark's Grebe – a Western/Clark's Grebe was reported in a previous count. Eurasian Collared-Dove was definitely a new species, but shows up only as a count-week bird. I am sure this will be 'remedied' in future counts. Two rarely seen bird species were Northern Mockingbird and Lapland Longspur.

Eight species set new highs. One counter had permission to access a private property where we haven't been able to count in many years. This resulted in record numbers of Pied-billed Grebes and American Coots. The highs set by Great Egrets, Red-Shouldered Hawks, Anna's Hummingbirds and Black Phoebes are in line with general range expansion and increased numbers being shown throughout our area for these species.

There were 10 species seen during count week that did not cooperate for count day, including a Harris's Sparrow that's been coming to a feeder. Even more ornery were some Mountain Quail which showed up at one person's feeder the day before and the day after count week!

I'd like to thank all the people who participated in the count, including those who did feeder counts. You all helped make this a great count! Special thanks go to Kate and Chris Mathews, Ann Brodie, Rana Foster and John Gaylord who helped set up the potluck at the main meeting room of the Corvallis Public Library. I couldn't have done it without you!

Marcia F. Cutler, Compiler, Corvallis CBC

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Tree Planting Success

ASC joined in tree planting efforts in December



Corvallis Audubon members Marcia Cutler, Elizabeth and David Waldorf, and Mary Gerrard plant a tree they named “Elmira” on Adams Street. Photo by John Gaylord

Ten members of the Audubon Society of Corvallis (ASC) joined local Sierra Club members and Sustainability Coalition members for a tree planting on December 15th. The City of Corvallis provided the selected trees and OSU experts briefed the group on planting procedures. Local officials kicked off the activities with speeches and then helped with the planting. ASC had the largest group in attendance and planted a number of trees, primarily on Adams and 8th Street. Carl Mellinger, son of Dave Mellinger, was the youngest participant at age six. Refreshments were enjoyed by the group at the Sunny Side Up Café after the planting.



Dave and Carl Mellinger. Photo by John Gaylord

John Gaylord

The Incident of the Bird in the Night-time

An interview of Andy Van Brocklin, by Mary Derr Van Brocklin

Mary: So Andy, I hear you had quite the wildlife sighting the other night. Set the scene for us.

Andy: Well, I was biking home from work, as usual, about 5:30 or 6 pm. It was dark out by then, so I had my bright Cat’s Eye headlamp turned on. I was biking up the woodland path that leads from the hospital complex up to Wild Rose, when it happened.

M: What did, exactly?

A: Well, I went over a bit of a hump on the trail, making my bike light flash up into the branches of the trees

ahead of me. Suddenly, a huge whitish figure swooped over the trail and dropped a big lump of something, directly on the path in front of me! The only noise was a quiet “thump” as it landed. I almost ran over it with my bike – I had to screech to a halt [ed. note: please forgive the owl pun. We had nothing to do with it.]

M: My, that must have startled you!

A: Yes, though I think the creature I flashed with my light was more startled than I. It must have been a Great Horned Owl – it had that massive body, and was absolutely silent in flight.

M: (I’m doing an interview, honey, just a minute.) What did you do next?

A: I stooped [ed. note: forgive the falcon pun; see previous note] over the lump and examined it. All I can say for sure is that it was a small mammal of some kind. And that it was dead. It looked kind of like a vole, but about three times the size. I didn’t happen to have my Mammals of North America book with me, and I wanted to let the owl get on with its meal, so I got back on my bike and launched myself up the trail [ed. note: forgive albatross pun; as before]. I paused further on and looked back, just in time to see the owl swoop down, grab its dinner, and disappear into the trees.

M: Wow, what a cool sighting. Yes, honey, what is it?

Alex: I want to be an owl, Dad.

Andy: Why is that, son?

Alex: Because owls get to eat snacks at night!

Mary Derr Van Brocklin

Finley NWR Owling Field Trip

February 15th OR 16th

Finley National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Friends of the Valley Refuge Complex, and Audubon Society of Corvallis are teaming up to offer a chance to locate, hear and possibly see owls on the Finley refuge this February 15th or 16th. Don Boucher and Jim Fairchild will help lead this trip, and with likely assistance from refuge staff, we will attempt to locate Great Horned, Barn, Barred, Pygmy, Screech, Short-eared, and Saw-whet owls in their habitats. This will also be a chance to learn owl vocalizations, habitat characteristics, and tips for tracking down these nocturnal raptors.

Finley NWR normally remains closed at night, so the Friends group is arranging this special event to allow a look behind the regular hours. And because weather conditions on any given February date might easily preclude much success, we are leaving both nights open to allow leaders to pick the better forecast—we hope the owls cooperate!

Owling trips can be especially long, cold, and quiet, so do plan to bring appropriate clothing and even another wrap, snacks, and maybe even a hot beverage, flashlight, compass, and even a star chart. You can bring your own portable spotlight and sound broadcasting equipment, but these should be used only as permitted by staff and trip leaders.

Please contact Jim Fairchild to sign up and stay posted on time and location: alderspring@peak.org 929-4049

Jim Fairchild

Tree Planting at Finley NWR Saturday, February 9

Audubon volunteers are needed to help with a tree planting at Finley National Wildlife Refuge on Saturday, February 9th. Everyone who wants to help should meet at 10 am at the refuge headquarters. To find Finley NWR, travel south 10 miles from Corvallis on Highway 99W to mile marker 93 and watch for the refuge entrance sign on the west side of the road. Follow refuge signs for two miles to the refuge headquarters. Wear warm clothing, boots, rain gear, and bring a shovel if possible. Audubon will provide a chili lunch. Contact John Gaylord at 541-745-5088 for more information.

John Gaylord

Hesthavn Work Parties Volunteers needed for blackberry removal January 19 & 26 February 16 & 23

We need volunteers to help with blackberry removal along Oak Creek. The dates are January 19 and 26, and February 16 and 23 (all Saturdays). The work parties start at 9 am at the Audubon Nature Center, 8590 NW Oak Creek Road. Be prepared with boots, gloves, rain gear, warm clothing, and lunch. We will work, rain or shine. If possible, please also bring a shovel and loppers to cut brambles.

Paula Vanderheul

Field Trip Schedule Monthly Year-Round Saturday Field Trips

- Jan 12: Meet at the Avery Park Rose Garden parking area at 7:30 am
- Feb 09: Meet at the Avery Park Rose Garden parking area at 7:30 am
- Mar 08: Meet at the Avery Park Rose Garden parking area at 7:30 am

Our Saturday morning local field trip meets the second Saturday of every month at the Avery Park Rose Garden parking area at 7:30 am. This field trip is especially interesting for beginner birders and birders new to Oregon's mid-valley area. We spend a lot of time identifying local birds by sight and song. We visit the valley national wildlife refuges—Finley, Baskett Slough, and Ankeny, as well as other birding areas throughout the year.

Midvalley birding discussion list

A free subscription email list posts local bird sightings and birding information. I post where the field trip will be going two days before the field trip date on this list. To subscribe, go to www.midvalleybirding.org and follow the instructions.

Spring 2008 Weekend Field Trips

- Mar 21 – 23: Bandon Coast
- Apr 18 – 20: Klamath Basin
- May 2 – 4: Rogue Valley
- May 15 – 18: Malheur National Wildlife Refuge

Fred Ramsey leads all the spring weekend trips. Fred has been leading these field trips for ASC for over 35 years. He is an amazing field trip guide, sharing his knowledge about finding birds in their habitat and pointing out wild flowers, butterflies, mammals, and reptiles. The field trips fill up early in the fall. Sign-up sheets are available at the general meeting or email Paula Vanderheul with your requests. vanderp@peak.org

Please note:

The Rogue Valley and Malheur trips require deposits by February 28, 2008.

The Rogue Valley deposit is \$40 for the play: *The Clay Cart*, by Sudraka. Jewels are stolen. A Brahmin faces execution. A beautiful courtesan is at the mercy of the King's bad-boy brother. Journey through world where gamblers, holy men, political fugitives, and royal scoundrels intersect and good people triumph. Bursting with music, dance, color, action, and romance, this 2,000-year-old Indian classic—utterly Shakespearean in spirit—proves that great storytelling transcends the centuries. The new Artistic Director of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Bill Rauch, directs this play.

The Malheur deposit is \$50. Each deposit must be made payable to Fred Ramsey at 3550 NW Glen Ridge Pl. Corvallis OR 97330.

Paula Vanderheul

Native Tree and Shrub Sale Order your plants by January 11

The Benton Soil & Water Conservation District's annual native plant sale is happening now. The species offered are perfect for everything from replanting large areas to landscaping backyards with low-maintenance wildlife-attracting species.

60 varieties are offered: conifers, broadleaves, shrubs, flowers, and grasses. Prices range from 50 cents to \$4.00, and the plants are sold as individual plants, not bundles.

The Benton Soil & Water Conservation District is a non-profit agency. The money raised from this sale goes to scholarships for people pursuing degrees in natural resources.

Order online or over the phone by January 11. Visit their web site at www.bentonswcd.org to download their order form, or order by email or phone at treesale@bentonswcd.org or 753-7208. The pick-up date is Saturday, Feb 2 (pick-up times will be announced).

*Alice Fairfield, Native Plant Sale Coordinator for the
Benton Soil & Water Conservation District*

Corvallis Christmas Bird Count 2007

Species	1A	1B	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Fdr	Total	Historic High	# Counts seen
Gr. White-fronted Goose															cw	62	26
Snow Goose															cw	39	24
Canada Goose		2	2301	160	3005	1200		37	80	8,000	49	50			14884	38623	3
Cackling Goose	601		12600	2300		50		3087	30	10,000	315	360			29343	23746	3
Can/Cac Goose, sp.		2		300	828		800						1030		2960	78141	46
Trumpeter Swan															cw	5	5
Tundra Swan				3	30			8		9					50	1313	39
Wood Duck			5		10			19	5	6					45	518	44
Gadwall															cw	31	36
Eurasian Wigeon		cw								4					4	5	25
American Wigeon		70	47		20	30		71	3	4150	12	62	8		4473	15630	46
Mallard	6	55	32	2	18	45	17	14	1	12700	80				12970	35342	46
Northern Shoveler		12	131		9			18	4	186	12	160			532	904	44
Northern Pintail								27	18	10900		17	30		10992	25475	46
Green-winged Teal			25		1			15	2	6840	30	320			7233	21309	46
Canvasback		16						3				5			24	41	17
Redhead								1							1	4	4
Ring-necked Duck		4	53					11		175	15	23	20		301	2743	36
Greater Scaup								8							8	5	7
Lesser Scaup		4						9				66			79	488	33
Bufflehead		8	44					14		10	2	30			108	206	36
Common Goldeneye								4							4	11	17
Hooded Merganser		6						3	3	8	2				22	49	34
Common Merganser		10	10		7		4	4							35	196	34
Ruddy Duck			4							1		270			275	282	36
Ring-necked Pheasant															cw	194	46
Sooty Grouse (Blue Grouse)	1														1	6	7
Wild Turkey	11					7						29			47	84	10
California Quail				12	6			4			3	10	14		49	560	46
Pied-billed Grebe		1	3		7		2	53		2	1				69	33	39
Eared Grebe								1							1	6	13
Western Grebe			1					1							2	4	12
Clark's Grebe								1							1		1
D-c Cormorant		3	225	1	33	1	5	44		5					317	565	26
Great Blue Heron	1	1	27	1	12	2	11	4	2	6	1		2		70	70	46
Great Egret		1	9		cw			1	6	1					18	12	18
Green Heron		cw													cw	3	13
White-tailed Kite									1	2	1				4	13	31
Bald Eagle			2	2	5	2	1	3		3		2			20	34	33
Northern Harrier	1		6	2	10	2	2	10	8	10		2	2		55	135	46
Sharp-shinned Hawk	2				2			3	1	1	1				10	18	44
Cooper's Hawk		1	1		2		1	1							6	14	43
Red-shouldered Hawk								2	1	2	1				6	3	4
Red-tailed Hawk	5	5	10	5	14	6	5	13	10	14	16	5	6		114	229	46
Rough-legged Hawk			1	1	1			5	5	4			2		19	47	42
American Kestrel	3	1	9	14	14	2	8	10	7	7	7	5	7		94	167	46
Merlin									1						1	10	26
Peregrine Falcon	1							2			1	1			5	5	16
Prairie Falcon					1				1						2	6	26
Virginia Rail		2													2	5	10
American Coot		16	230		3			1482		26	2	165			1924	771	45
Killdeer	2			322	145		3	171	151	60	1	3			858	10728	46
Spotted Sandpiper			1		4										5	13	24
Least Sandpiper									20						20	80	15
Dunlin									10	30					40	2937	43
Wilson's Snipe	2		8		11			3	39	1					64	829	46
Mew Gull				12											12	471	14
Ring-billed Gull				6				2							8	2145	34
California Gull							3					2			5	136	25
Herring Gull				11											11	71	10
Glaucous-winged Gull		1		14											15	188	21
Gull, sp.		1		12	22										35	167	16
Rock Pigeon	204	300	50		37	3	30				38				662	750	34
Mourning Dove	7	90	3	12	45	15		25	5	8	42	1	23	30	306	496	46
Eurasian Collared Dove															cw		cw
Barn Owl	1								1	2					4	13	38
W. Screech-Owl	2						3								5	6	25
Great Horned Owl	9						2		2	1					14	21	43
Northern Pygmy-Owl	2														2	3	23
Burrowing Owl				1				1							2	2	12
Short-eared Owl	1							3							4	29	33
N. Saw-whet Owl	1														1	6	17
Anna's Hummingbird	3	5				3					1			6	18	11	33
Belted Kingfisher	1	1			7		1	2	2	2	1				17	22	46

Species	1A	1B	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Fdr	Total	Historic High	# Counts seen
Lewis' Woodpecker										1					1	68	24
Acorn Woodpecker	4		3	2	1				7	2	22	3	3		47	110	46
Red-breasted Sapsucker	1				1		1				2		2	1	8	29	46
Downy Woodpecker	3	3	1		5	1	1	1	1		7	2	1	3	29	358	46
Hairy Woodpecker			1		2	1									4	16	41
Northern Flicker, red-s.	16	16	9	10	22	25	14	9	12	11	48	18	11	3	224	427	47
Pileated Woodpecker	2						1								3	9	39
Black Phoebe					3			3							6	3	8
Northern Shrike												1			1	11	41
Hutton's Vireo	5			1	1				1				2		10	19	34
Steller's Jay	36	8				3	2	1	8	7	31	14	21	7	138	379	47
Western Scrub-Jay	23	32	29	12	47	34	10	7	15	7	151	23	19	9	418	602	46
American Crow	268	562	22	15	3	35	185	88	6	17	278	56	56	5	1596	2491	47
Common Raven	2	2	8	13	1	12	7	2	2	5		7	4		65	93	42
Horned Lark								61	2			1			64	300	35
Bl.-capped Chickadee	64	36	55	29	124	27	53	16	34	9	98	31	47	26	649	836	47
Ch.-backed Chickadee	19						1		2			10	3		35	362	46
Bushtit	9				73	10		2				5		24	123	554	46
Red-breasted Nuthatch	8	1	3	1		5		1			22	3	10	5	59	120	46
White-breasted Nuthatch	3	5	1	1	5	1	2	1	4	1	2	3	2	1	32	99	47
Brown Creeper	3				2		4		3	1	1	1	2		17	50	47
Bewick's Wren	10	5	8	2	11	2	5				13	9		4	69	153	46
Winter Wren	4	1		3	1		2	1		2	4	5	4		27	129	47
Marsh Wren										2					2	30	36
Golden-crowned Kinglet	57	8	2	17	8		1	4	4	4	18	73	51		247	908	47
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	25	1	5	2	12	3	9	3	3	3	16	51	10	5	148	346	46
Western Bluebird	4	6		10	11			13	29	43	13	43	32		204	440	43
Hermit Thrush	3					1									4	46	37
American Robin	221	250	435	69	81	320	119	41	56	19	358	38	53	5	2065	9386	47
Varied Thrush	3					1				1	7				12	356	45
Wrentit	1							1	1			8	7		18	30	22
N. Mockingbird			1												1	1	3
European Starling	437	600	580	1600	2095	230	264	1606	933	6008		133	70	12	14568	64774	46
American Pipit				150				9	19	50		230	5		463	1581	46
Cedar Waxwing	3					32	7	42			18		2		104	346	44
Orange-crowned Warbler			1						1						2	7	17
Yellow-rumped Warbler	12	8	2		27	1	2	7	12	40		19	13	12	155	251	45
- Audubon	[1]														[1]	151	23
- Myrtle	[2]	[2]							[6]						[10]	32	22
Townsend's Warbler	1					1	2		2					6	12	28	41
Spotted Towhee	42	11	28	5	38	9	5	11	8	14	89	37	10	9	316	399	47
Chipping Sparrow								1							1	9	10
Savannah Sparrow					1			109	4		8				122	320	41
Fox Sparrow	22	1	11	3	22	4	3	7	1	4	32	25	6		141	422	46
Song Sparrow	33	33	20	20	192	1	20	43	21	10	151	32	8	4	588	1418	47
Lincoln's Sparrow	3	1			4			14	1	1	10	2			36	64	39
Swamp Sparrow															cw	4	9
White-throated Sparrow	2	2			5	1	1	3				1		1	16	30	40
Harris's Sparrow															cw	2	7
White-crowned Sparrow	7		68	28	54		20	144	17	8	10	17		4	377	539	46
Golden-crowned Sparrow	74	32	97	14	109	12	3	74	20	90	151	57	52	10	795	990	46
Dark-eyed Junco	192	127	356	144	157	115	70	33	81	117	420	155	139	79	2185	3518	47
- slate-colored		[1]									[1]				[2]	9	5
Lapland Longspur								1							1		2
Red-winged Blackbird	50	15	10	411	24	4	4	500	3						1021	23111	46
Western Meadowlark						1		1	14	2		3	1		22	892	47
Brewer's Blackbird	200	26	266	615	11			1001	165	3	61		52		2400	8735	47
Brown-headed Cowbird	60							6							66	304	37
Purple Finch	3	2	1		1			11		5	4				27	104	44
House Finch	7	45	56	38	48	6	12	30	4	1	45	70	40	12	414	739	44
Red Crossbill													25		25	99	13
Pine Siskin	50											75	45	7	177	2699	36
Lesser Goldfinch	18	6	1			4					1			22	52	110	31
American Goldfinch	3	50	12	1	5			5	3		26		1	13	119	367	46
Evening Grosbeak															cw	155	25
House Sparrow	3		2	30	20			9			8	40		1	113	614	46
Total birds	2883	2513	17934	6442	7540	2275	1734	9129	1926	59672	2763	2909	1963	326	119932		
Total Species	68	55	58	48	66	44	47	84	63	65	58	61	45	29	125		

CBC Area Key	4: Peoria	9: Finley, Eureka Rd.
1A: Oak Creek; NW Corvallis	5: SW Corvallis, Neabeck Hill	10: N. Philomath, West Hills
1B: NE Corvallis	6: S. Corvallis, Kiger Is.	11: S. Philomath, Evergreen
2: Orleans (Tangent Dr. to Riverside Dr.)	7: Airport	12: Beaver Cr.
3: Oakville	8: Greenberry	fdr: counted at bird feeders

cw: species seen in count week

Raku Lamp Auction At January General Meeting

Dawn Jones has donated this lovely raku ceramic table lamp she created for ASC as a fundraiser for the Hesthavn Nature Center. Inspired by the plants and birds she enjoyed with her late husband, Franz Dolp, on their Shotpouch Creek property in Burnt Woods, the multicolored design features leaves, ferns and Ruffed Grouse tracks weaving across the lamp. The Shotpouch Creek property is currently the home of OSU's Spring Creek Project Writers in Residency program.



Raku ceramic lamp, to be auctioned at the January ASC meeting. Photo by Paula Vanderheul

Paula Vanderheul

Field Notes

25 November to 22 December 2007

One of the strongest wind storms to strike Oregon in the last 50 years arrived 1-4 Dec. Gusts reached 88 mph at Newport, exceeded 100 mph along the North Coast, and brought heavy rain. Corvallis was relatively spared; winds peaked at less than 40 mph and rain totaled about 3 inches. Amazingly, the winds brought no surprising birds inland from the Coast, probably for two reasons: first, winds were mostly from the south rather than the west; and second, migration was largely over by early December so fewer birds were present. Overall, Corvallis experienced slightly below normal rainfall and about average temperatures through the entire period. Temperatures dipped enough to bring flurries to the Valley floor 9 Dec, and to freeze shallow water in grass fields. The period received extra attention from birdwatchers because of the Corvallis CBC on 18 Dec.

Abbreviations and Locations: m.ob. = many observers. Observer names are noted in parentheses after their reports. Observations without a name (or with WDR) are the editor's. ASC indicates observations made by Audubon Society field trips. EEW = E. E. Wilson Wildlife Area north of Corvallis. ANWR = Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge in Marion County. FNWR = Finley National Wildlife Refuge, and includes Cabell, Cheadle, and McFadden marshes. STP = sewage treatment ponds; Philomath STP are off of Bellfountain Drive south of Philomath. Knoll Terrace STP is on the east side of Knoll Terrace mobile home community off of Elliot Circle in Corvallis; Philomath STP are off of Bellfountain Drive south of Philomath. Toketie Marsh is the remedial wetland for Coffin Butte landfill north of Corvallis, just off of Highway 99W. Willamette Park is in s. Corvallis. Vanderpool Tract is the southern section of the Luckiamute State Natural Area in northeast Benton County off of Buena Vista Rd.

Five species of geese were found at FNWR. Up to 5 **Snow Geese**, 3 **Greater White-fronted Geese**, and thousands of **Cackling and Canada Geese** were seen regularly throughout the period (m.ob.). Most winters 1 or 2 **Brant** can also be found at FNWR. This winter's individual was seen along Bruce Road, 1-6 Dec. (J. Fontaine, m.ob.).

The group of **Trumpeter Swans** that winter each year in southern Polk County seemed to arrive late this year. 21 were near Helmick State Park, 9 Dec (J. Geier). A juvenile was at Cabell Marsh, 7 & 15 Dec, for an unusual FNWR record. **Tundra Swans** peaked at 250 at FNWR in early Dec; by the end of the period only a few were still present.

Eurasian Wigeon were present at FNWR, but in numbers lower

than expected; the maximum count was 4, 18 Dec (F. Ramsey). Two **Cinnamon Teal** were at Toketie Marsh, 25 Nov (WDR, J. Geier) and up to 9 were still at ANWR, 29 Nov-14 Dec (M. Monroe, E. Knight); only a few stay so late into the fall and winter. **Northern Shovelers** were numerous at Philomath STP (415 on 15 Dec) and in flooded fields around FNWR (406 on 9 Dec). One or two **Canvasbacks** were at McFadden Marsh, 7-12 Dec. Canvasback numbers at Stewart Lake reached 16 on 12 Dec (J. Simmons). Six to 10 were at Philomath STP the whole period (R. Armstrong, m.ob.). A **Redhead** was a nice find on the Corvallis CBC, 18 Dec, on private property east of Corvallis airport. A real rarity in winter, a first-winter male **Surf Scoter** was at McFadden Marsh, 6 Dec. Also rare in the region, a **Common Goldeneye** was at Philomath STP, 15 Dec, and four were near Corvallis airport, 18 Dec. Nine **Common Mergansers** were at Stewart Lake, 12 Dec, a nice count away from the Willamette River (J. Simmons). A **Red-breasted Merganser** joined a small group of Common Mergansers on private property near Corvallis airport, 16 Dec, to provide only the third recent record of the species in Benton County.

Loons are rare visitors in the Willamette Valley. Given the abundance of lakes, ponds, and rivers and the huge number of loons that migrate along the Oregon Coast, their rarity here is somewhat mysterious. Dan Battaglia may have discovered why. On a walk through EEW, 12 Dec, he stumbled across a **Common Loon** in the grass, over 1000 yards from the nearest water. Obviously, we have all been looking for loons in the wrong habitat! Who knew they hang out with towhees and sparrows? After discovering the loon, Dan took it over to the angling pond, but, alas, the loon was found dead there the next morning. That loon was apparently first observed on the EEW angling pond, 8 Dec (Tom and Jeanne Griffith). Perhaps the same individual, a Common Loon drifted down the Willamette River at Peoria, 7 Dec (R. Campbell).

Two days earlier, a **Western Grebe** was on the river at Peoria (R. Campbell). A **Clark's Grebe** was at Cabell Marsh, FNWR, 15 Dec, for the second winter record there in as many years. Another was on private property near Corvallis airport, 16-18 Dec, and became the first Corvallis CBC record of that species.

An all-time CBC high count of 18 **Great Egrets** was indicative of the upward trend in numbers of egrets wintering at and around FNWR (J. Gibson, m.ob.). Rare but regular in winter was a **Green Heron** flying along the Willamette River in Corvallis, 20 Dec (J. Geier).

Red-shouldered Hawk numbers continue to increase. Individuals were seen along Brownsville Road, Linn Co., 26 Nov (T. Snetsinger) and even along busy Philomath Boulevard, 29-30 Nov (J. Fairchild). Six were detected during the Corvallis CBC, an all-time high count. 63 **Red-tailed Hawks** along a raptor route in Linn Co., 9 Dec, was a good count, as were 10 **Rough-legged Hawks** along that same route (C. Whelchel). A first-year **Golden Eagle** was at FNWR, 5 Dec.

One or two **Virginia Rails** were at Jackson-Frazier wetland in Corvallis, 18 Dec (J. Geier); the species is rather secretive during winter and probably easily overlooked. Two **Sandhill Cranes** continued at ANWR through at least 29 Nov (M. Monroe). Carolyn Paynter reported a Sandhill Crane from FNWR, 10 Dec, for a rare winter record there.

Shorebird numbers seemed rather low during the period, but gulls did not disappoint. A flock of gulls was at Coffin Butte, 25 Nov, intermittently foraging on discarded food and resting in a new wetland near the dump. More than 75 birds of 8 eight species, including **Mew**, **Ring-billed**, **California**, **Thayer's**, **Herring**, **Glaucous-winged**, **Western**, and Glaucous-winged x Western Gull hybrids. The surprise of the flock was an adult **Slaty-backed Gull**, a vagrant from the Bering Sea, which was apparently a one-day wonder and represents the first local record of the species. On 27 Nov, the total number of gulls reached 119 (R. Armstrong), but fewer species were present. On 9 Dec, amidst snow flurries, a flock of 300 Ring-billed Gulls and about 50 Mew Gulls were resting in a clover field near Greenberry Road and Highway 99W.

With the exception of an occasional flock of gulls, the vast grass fields south of Corvallis airport often seem devoid of birds, but occasionally a real rarity shows up there, such as Crested Caracara or Gyrfalcon.

This winter a **Burrowing Owl** was spotted roosting at the northwest corner of the airstrip along Llewellyn Road, 18-22 Dec (F. Ramsey, M. Cutler, P. Vanderheul); one was apparently there briefly last winter as well. The high count for **Mourning Doves** was 90 at Jackson-Frazier wetlands, 18 Dec (M. Garrard, J. Geier). No Band-tailed Pigeons were reported from feeders so far this winter. **Anna's Hummingbirds** continue to visit Corvallis feeders in good numbers (P. Vanderheul, T. Daniels, m.ob.). Some males even displayed occasionally in Dec.

Numbers of woodpeckers seemed rather low, but a count of 30 **Northern Flickers** at EEW, 4 Dec, was respectable (J. Geier). **Black Phoebes** continue to increase in numbers with reports from ANWR, 29 Nov (M. Monroe), Luckiamute State Natural Area (J. Geier), and several along the Willamette River (m.ob.); 6 were found during the Corvallis CBC. **Northern Shrikes**, in contrast, were scarce; one was at EEW, 15 Dec (B. Proebsting). Swallows were even less numerous; there were none!

Two **Mountain Chickadees** were still on Marys Peak, 9 Dec (J. and K. Fairchild). Surprisingly tardy, a **House Wren** was along E. Ingram Island Road, Benton Co., 9 Dec. **Varied Thrushes** have been scarce on the Valley floor so far this winter, in stark contrast to last year when many gorged on abundant fruit. One of the best discoveries of the Corvallis CBC was a **Northern Mockingbird** off of Meadowlark Drive just east of Peoria Road, 18-22 Dec (P. Vanderheul, photo below).

An **Orange-crowned Warbler** was foraging in hollies along E. Ingram Island Road, 9 Dec. Another was at EEW, 12 Dec (J. Geier), and two were found on the Corvallis CBC. **Townsend's Warblers** began appearing regularly at feeders in town during Dec (P. Vanderheul, R. Armstrong, m.ob.), but are decidedly less common than last winter.

One hundred fifteen **Spotted Towhees** at EEW, 4 Dec, gives testimony to how many songbirds winter there, perhaps especially this winter with the dozens of acres of sunflowers that were planted (J. Geier). Also counted that same day were 55 **Fox Sparrows**, 180 **Golden-crowned Sparrows**, and 7 **White-throated Sparrows** (J. Geier). Despite intensive searching, no Swamp Sparrow was found at the usual wintering sites at EEW (J. Geier), but one was at McFadden Marsh, 16 Dec. A nice surprise was an **American Tree Sparrow** along the dike at Philomath STP, 8 Dec, for one of very few Benton County records. Amidst a skittish mass of roadside-foraging sparrows, was a **Chipping Sparrow** at the Corvallis airport, 18 Dec (R. Moore). The **Clay-colored Sparrow** originally found in November along Old River Road in southeastern Benton County was still there, 9 Dec. The **Harris' Sparrow** at Becky Schwiebert's yard in Corvallis was present at least through 15 Dec.

Very late was a ragged female **Black-headed Grosbeak** lingering at Dawn Grafe's feeder in Toledo, 21 Nov-1 Dec. A second Corvallis CBC record was a **Lapland Longspur** accompanying **Horned Larks** at the Corvallis airport, 18 Dec (R. Moore). Rare any time of year, but especially during winter, two **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** flew over Philomath STP, 8 Dec. A few minutes later, a **Cassin's Finch** stopped along the dike there for one of few local Valley floor records.

A few **Red Crossbills** were on Marys Peak, 9 Dec. (J. and K. Fairchild); they have been decidedly scarce the last few months. **Pine Siskins** were detected, but not in very impressive numbers; a flock of 30 was around EEW most of the period (J. Geier) and a few visited feeders in Corvallis (P. Vanderheul, m.ob.). Although rather uncommon in Corvallis, **Evening Grosbeaks** were present on Marys Peak in good numbers with 135 there, 9 Dec (J. and K. Fairchild).

Next issue

Please send your reports for the next issue by 26 January.

Douglas Robinson
Dept. of Fisheries and Wildlife
Oregon State University
Corvallis, OR 97331
(541) 737-9501

Douglas.robinson@oregonstate.edu



This Northern Mockingbird was first found east of White Oak Drive in Linn County, 18 Dec, during the Corvallis CBC (P. Vanderheul). Cheryl Whelchel took this photo on 22 Dec

Great Backyard Birdcount February 15-18

The Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are across the continent. Anyone can participate, from beginning bird watchers to experts. It takes as little as 15 minutes. It's free, fun, and easy—and it helps the birds.

Participants count birds anywhere for as little or as long as they wish during the four-day period. They tally the highest number of birds of each species seen together at any one time. To report their counts, they fill out an online checklist at the Great Backyard Bird Count web site (www.birdsource.org/gbbc).

As the count progresses, anyone with Internet access can explore what is being reported from their own towns or anywhere in the United States and Canada. They can also see how this year's numbers compare with those from previous years. Participants may also send in photographs of the birds they see. A selection of images is posted in the online photo gallery.

In 2007, participants reported a record-breaking 11 million birds of 616 species. They submitted more than 80,000 checklists, an all-time record for the ten years of the count.

Contributors to the Chat

Marcia Cutler, Chris Mathews, Paula Vanderheul, John Gaylord, Douglas Robinson, Mary Derr Van Brocklin, Jim Fairchild, and Alice Fairfield.

Audubon Society of Corvallis
www.audubon.corvallis.or.us

President: Chris Mathews, mathewsc2@comcast.net, 754-1172
Vice President/Program Chair: Susan Haig,
haig_susan@yahoo.com, 753-5068
Secretary: Diana Brin, dbrin13@yahoo.com, 541-908-6166
Treasurer: Judy Hays, haysj@comcast.net, 745-5692

Board Members-at-large

John Gaylord, GaylordJohng@aol.com, 745-5088
Linda Campbell, lcampbell@peak.org, 929-9420
Hesthavn Programs: Elise, Elliott-Smith,
eelliottsmith@yahoo.com, 754-3906
Education: Will Wright, Will_Wright@Monroe.k12.or.us, 753-4395
Jerry Paul: jlpaul2006@msn.com, 541-745-3934
Karl Hartzell: karlerun@yahoo.com, 541-758-2275

Committees and Coordinators

Birdathon Chair: Mary Van Brocklin,
mary_vanbrocklin@yahoo.com, 745-7170
Bluebird Trail: Elsie Eltzroth, eltzroth@peak.org, 745-7806
Conservation Chair: Dave Mellinger,
DavidKMellinger@yahoo.com, 757-7953
Education Chair: Kate Mathews, kate.mathews@comcast.net,
754-1172
Field Notes Compiler: Douglas Robinson,
douglas.robinson@oregonstate.edu, 541-737-9501
Hesthavn Sanctuary Chair & Field Trip Coordinator:
Paula Vanderheul, vanderp@peak.org, 752-0470
Historian: Marcia Cutler, marciacutler@comcast.net, 752-4313
Public Relations: Don Boucher, bouchdon@peak.org, 753-7689
Refreshment Chair: Claudia Regier, 753-0879
Sales: Bob Smythe, smythe@stat.orst.edu, 757-6357
Chat Editors: Joan/Neil Newhouse/Lidstrom,
chateditors@gmail.com, 754-3120
Fund-raising and Board At-large Alternate: Karan Fairchild,
alderspr@peak.org, 929-4049
Webmaster: Tom Haig, tomhaig@hotmail.com



Sharp-shinned Hawk photo by Matt Lee

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Audubon Society of Corvallis
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the **CHAT**

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Calendar

Jan 10	Board meeting
Jan 11	Deadline for Benton SWCD plant orders*
Jan 12	2 nd Saturday local birding*
Jan 17	General meeting (and auction of raku lamp)**
Jan 19	Hesthavn work party*
Jan 26	Hesthavn work party*
Jan 26	Deadline for field notes submissions
Jan 31	Deadline for Chat submissions
Feb 9	2 nd Saturday local birding*
Feb 9	Tree planting at Finley NWR*
Feb 15/16	Owling field trip at Finley NWR*
Feb 15-18	Great Backyard Bird Count***
Feb 16	Hesthavn work party*
Feb 23	Hesthavn work party*

*see pg 35

**see pg 38

***see pg 39

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