



Audubon Society of Corvallis *the CHAT*

Summer 2008

VOL. 37

#10

Board Election Results

The new ASC board was elected during the May general meeting. The 2008 -- 09 officers are as follows:

President: Will Wright

Vice President/Program Chair: Diana Brin

Secretary: Karan Fairchild

Treasurer: Judy Hays

Board Members-at-Large: John Gaylord, Linda Campbell, Rebecca Schwiebert, Gail Andrews, Jerry Paul, and Carroll DeKock

Check the ASC website for contact information for all officers and committee chairs.

Welcome new and returning board members!

HCP Part II

What is at Risk in the Benton County Prairie Habitat Conservation Plan?

You may recall from the May CHAT that “HCP” (Habitat Conservation Plan) is really a euphemism for an Endangered Species Act take permit, issued for an extended period of time—often 50 years. Benton County is now getting in line to apply for an HCP, so that small scale development in prairie species habitat will not be limited by Endangered Species Act (ESA) restrictions for these species, and so that it, and other land managers acting under the HCP rubric, will be immune from liability of harming these species on their lands.

The Biological Risks

Unlike old-growth forests, prairies are very dynamic and unstable communities, with shifting species assemblages that respond to the timing, type and season of the latest disturbances and how long ago those occurred. Fluctuations in yearly rainfall patterns, grazing pressures, and interspecies relationships increase complexity, creating the beautiful prairie mosaics we most often recognize only by the current dominant plants. There are many more prairie relationships we don't understand, like the presence, stability and abun-

dance of obligate or mutualistic pollinators, pathogens or predators for just the species we hope to benefit.

Planning a preserve system to set aside these species for safe keeping first assumes that all of the above mentioned factors can be successfully manipulated to the benefit of one or more of these species for an extended period of time. It then assumes that invasive species can be kept in check, that rare plant propagation techniques are free of genetic mis-selection, and that preserve site selection is appropriate for the full range of habitats where these species will no longer be protected in Benton County.

This is a tall order, and adding in the uncertain effects of climate changes, there is small assurance that these already imperiled species can even persist, yet alone recover in the face of sustained human population growth and encroachment on native species habitats.

The Political Climate and Risks

There is a stated intent by the parties developing this HCP that they mean to conserve these species and will do what it takes to protect them in preserves. Aside from any potential hidden agendas of these “stakeholders,” the two limiting human factors of preserving species in created reserves are funding and accountability. Budgets ebb and flow, and

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HCP *continued from front page*

public support through taxes or fees (or private support through grants) are ephemeral and subject to the whims of fashion. Our current economy may well improve, but funding rare plants over roads is hard for many to swallow. Funding for just maintaining species under current laws has proven inadequate, so species decline instead of increase due to lack of funding alone.

Oregon citizens have no right of redress when state ESA statutes and rules are ignored, and agencies are loath to impune each other for violations when they are all guilty. In tracking one species in my neighborhood, peacock larkspur, I have witnessed Corvallis, Benton County, and Or. Dept. of Transportation each repeatedly make the same mistake, allowing badly timed roadside mowing or spraying to directly harm this state endangered species. In response to my inquiries, they respond that they won't allow that mistake again, they will post the roadsides, they will talk to the folks in charge and see what can be done. Yet they don't remediate for the harm done, they don't improve their signage, they don't enforce appropriate restrictions, they don't plan how they will protect and recover the species, and they don't have the funds to do any better work than they are doing right now.

A Solution

A prairie species HCP for Benton County will not replace agency disregard for current laws with an abiding interest to do the right thing, when accountability and liability will be lessened. Demonstrating full compliance with current laws, funding the required planning, and implementing recovery efforts should be a necessary first step to prove this current situation is unworkable. We can learn how to recover these species, but our government needs to take on, rather than shirk, its responsibilities. We could then actually recover these species—before resorting to an “HCP.”

Jim Fairchild

Final Thoughts as ASC President

This is the last issue of the Chat to have my name on the masthead as President of the Audubon Society of Corvallis. I am honored to have served in this capacity for the past three years. As you know, the ASC constitution limits each officer to three one-year terms of service. I am delighted that we induced Will Wright to be put forth as a candidate to succeed me, and that he was elected. I look forward to working with Will and our new Board.

I leave the presidency with Corvallis Audubon in wonderful shape, although I can claim little credit for that. During the past year the Homer Campbell Trail has come to fruition, with the wildlife blind at Cabell Marsh about

to be erected. Linda Campbell, of course, deserves the most credit for this, along with staff at the Finley Wildlife Refuge. Hesthavn has moved forward by leaps and bounds and really is the centerpiece of Corvallis Audubon, that, more than anything else, gives our chapter its identity and its distinctiveness. Thanks to Ray Drapek, who shepherded the Hesthavn development through its early years, to Paula Vanderheul, who has made Hesthavn a major part of her life since taking over for Ray, and to construction experts Jerry Paul and Karl Hartzell. Our field trip program continues as perhaps the most active of any mid-sized Audubon chapter, thanks in particular to Fred Ramsey, Paula Vanderheul, and Don Boucher. Education and Outreach have expanded well beyond their early boundaries in the schools, thanks to Marcia Cutler, Kate Mathews, and Elise Elliott-Smith. John Gaylord organized a tree-planting extravaganza at Finley that involved more than 160 people. Thanks to Sue Haig for a varied and interesting group of program speakers and to Joan Newhouse and Neil Lidstrom, who have maintained the high standards set by the Chat. Thanks in particular to Doug Robinson, who took over on short notice the job of writing and editing the monthly Field Notes for the Chat. I'm leaving a lot of people out, but our chapter has dozens of dedicated volunteers, and I appreciate you all.

People ask what I will do with the time released from my responsibilities. I hope to go on more work parties and more field trips, and I will stay fully engaged with Audubon. I have some terrific examples set by former chapter presidents—Fred Ramsey, who leads four or five multi-day field trips every year; Ray Drapek, whose persistence and energy made Hesthavn a functioning environment/education center; Jim Fairchild, who continues to be the watchdog of the chapter on many environmental issues; and many others. So I also look forward to serving Audubon in new ways.

Chris Mathews

Spring Migratory Bird Count Results from Benton County

Cool, overcast weather didn't stop 18 observers from tallying a record-high total of 137 species during the Spring Migratory Bird Count on Saturday, May 10, 2008. Good finds were:

Dusky Flycatchers (Willamette Park and a Corvallis backyard) – new to this count

Grasshopper Sparrows at the Finley Prairie – new to this count

Black-necked Stilt – McFadden Marsh (Finley)

Red-necked Phalarope – Finley/Bruce Rd

Gray Jay – McDonald Forest

A total of five Nashville Warblers were seen by four different parties so they were quite well-spread throughout the county. I also was surprised to see eight Lazuli Bunting together on two adjacent small trees. Seven of them were

males and they made a very colorful display.

An unseasonably cold, wet spring left lots of snow in the mountains. This may have influenced the record high number of several species, including the Nashville Warbler (5), Townsend's Warbler (21), Wilson's Warbler (127) and Western Tanager (46).

Relatively few ducks or shorebirds were seen. However, one feeder watcher was surprised to see three Surf Scoters (a new species for the count) headed towards the Willamette River late in the day. The only real miss was Hooded Merganser, which have been seen on nine of the last eleven spring counts.

A few birds were missed that were seen just a few days earlier: Black Phoebe and Yellow-headed Blackbirds.

For complete results, please check ASC's website under Bird Counts.

Marcia F. Cutler, Compiler

Field Trip Schedule

Monthly Year-Round Saturday Field Trips

Aug 9: Meet at the Avery Park Rose Garden parking area at 7:30 am

Sept 13: 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 (1210 SW Avery Park Dr, Corvallis) 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.

Field Trip Leaders Needed

Field trip leaders are needed to lead the monthly second Saturday and full-day trips that are scheduled a few times a year. I regret that I am unable to continue as field trip leader for these trips. It has been recommended that we start a committee of willing field trip leaders that could take turns leading the monthly and full-day trips. If you are interested in helping with field trips, please contact one of the board members or me to let us know that you can help. I'll be happy to discuss the position.

Contact Paula Vanderheul (541-752-0470, vanderp@peak.org) with questions.

Paula Vanderheul

Bicycle Birding

July 27: 9 am – noon

Aug 24: 9 am – noon

Sept 28: 9 am – noon

Meet at Avery Park Rose Garden: 1210 SW Avery Drive in Corvallis.

Free. Bring a bicycle helmet, water and binoculars. We ride slowly, listen for birds and stop frequently. Trip lengths are usually less than 10 miles. For more information, contact Don Boucher at 753-7689 or bouchdon@peak.org.

Don Boucher

Trail Maintenance

Opportunity for ASC Members

From time to time Corvallis Audubon receives requests for assistance from other environmental organizations. Usually the requests are for financial help, but here is something different. The Pacific Crest Trail Association is inviting Audubon Society members to participate in maintenance activities on the Pacific Crest Trail. Volunteers would work from one to ten days in conjunction with Americorps workers and Pacific Crest Trail association members who are working on the trail full-time.

If any ASC member would like to learn more, feel free to contact me (mathewsc2@comcast.net), and I can forward the e-mail that I received the other day. Alternatively, you can contact the PCT Association directly: Emily Beck, Volunteer Program Assistant, Pacific Crest Trail Association, phone 916-349-2109, Ext. 22, or e-mail at ebeck@pcta.org.

Chris Mathews

Summer Hesthavn Program

Art and Nature

August 10, 1-3 pm, Ages 6-11

Come join this afternoon workshop led by local ceramic artist Leslie Green. The unique creativity of each child will be encouraged and supported as we have fun using clay and paints to express our passion for nature through the pleasures of art. Please pre-register by calling Paula (541-752-0470).

Elise Elliott-Smith

Summer Board Meeting

The annual Summer potluck Board meeting will be Wednesday, July 23, 2008 at Hesthavn Nature Center at 6 pm. The potluck picnic is open to all ASC members and their families. The Board meeting will start at 7 pm. Members are welcome to remain for the meeting. Everyone attending is asked to bring one of the following to share: a main dish, salad, vegetables, fruits, bread, or chips and dip. Coffee, tea, and lemonade will be provided by ASC. Please bring your own plates, silverware, and drinking cups. If you have questions, please contact Paula Vanderheul.

Hesthavn Summer News

Work parties July 26 and August 23

Work parties will be from 9 am to 1 pm. Join us for any of the time you may have available on these dates. We have invasive teasel and thistle to remove from the property. Bring gloves, water, and lunch.

Open house visitation will be on the same dates listed for the work parties. We could use a couple of volunteers to greet the public during the hours of 10 am to 2 pm. If you have questions, please contact Paula Vanderheul.

Hesthavn Nature Center is located at 8590 NW Oak Creek Drive. For map directions, visit the ASC website at www.audubon.corvallis.or.us. The nature trail is open to the public every day of the week for visiting.

Also on the website is a volunteer email bulletin board that publishes work party dates and other events as they happen at Hesthavn Nature Center. The website has information on how to subscribe to the Hesthavn-news bulletin board.

Paula Vanderheul

Field Notes

27 April to 8 July 2008

Spring was cool and wet. Many trees were leafing out about two weeks behind normal. The cool weather seemed to dampen the migration, too, with only a few impressive days of numbers of migrants. The biggest show was probably from Western Tanagers, which seemed to be everywhere in early May. A few surprises showed up, including a Forster's Tern, Black Terns, higher-than-average-numbers of Nashville Warblers, at least 10 Grasshopper Sparrows, and a male Rose-breasted Grosbeak. As June arrived, the rains dissipated and temperatures rose to usher in summer. But it was still cool in the mountains; snow was still visible on Marys Peak as late as the fourth of July.

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 of Corvallis 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 are off of Elliot Circle in Corvallis. Stewart Lake is at Hewlett-Packard in Corvallis. Toketie Marsh is the remedial wetland for Coffin Butte landfill north of Corvallis, just off of Highway 99W. The Bellfountain Wetland along Bellfountain Drive south of Philomath is also sometimes called the Evergreen Mitigation Bank. The Diamond Hill Road wetland is in Linn County.

A late push of **Tundra Swans** was unusual; 36 were at Philomath STP, 9 May, and one lingered at FNWR until 25 May (m.ob.). Most ducks are long gone by this late in the year, but a few lingered: two **Gadwall** at McFadden Marsh, 23 May; a **Eurasian Wigeon** at Philomath STP, 2 May; an **American Wigeon** at Philomath STP, 26 May; six **Northern Shovelers** at Philomath STP, 26 May; a female **Canvasback** at Philomath STP, 28 May; two **Lesser Scaup** at Philomath STP, 26 May; and a **Common Goldeneye** at the Diamond Hill wetland, 29 May (R. Moore).

A few non-breeding ducks also appeared locally during June and July: a pair of **Blue-winged Teal** were at Philomath STP, 22-30 Jun, and at Cabell Marsh, 5 Jul; a pair of **Northern Pintail** and a male **Greater Scaup** were at Philomath STP, 5 Jul. A male **Bufflehead** visited the small pool of shallow water remaining at McFadden Marsh, 21-22 Jun, for

a rare summer record (P. Sullivan, C. Karlen). Aside from ubiquitous Mallards and Wood Ducks, few reports of other breeding ducks came in. A brood of 3 **Cinnamon Teal** were at Philomath STP, 5-9 Jul, but the pair of **Ruddy Ducks** there all summer seem not to have bred yet. **Hooded Mergansers** bred at FNWR; 4 ducklings were with mom on 27 May (J. Gibson).

Clark's Grebes made an appearance at Cabell Marsh again this year. One was there 16-29 June; it was joined by a second 24-26 Jun. The last **Double-crested Cormorants** were 7 at FNWR, 9 May. Up to 5 **Great Egrets** foraged at FNWR until about 17 May (R. Armstrong, m.ob.), then were absent until one returned there 1 Jul. A nice spring surprise was a flock of 27 **White-faced Ibis** at Diamond Hill Rd, 16 May (J. Jebousek) and at least one was still there 4 Jun (R. Moore).

White-tailed Kites may have bred locally this year. Sightings came from the Airlie area (J. Geier) and two juveniles were at FNWR in early Jul. The FNWR **Bald Eagles** nested again this year and had at least two nestlings in Jun (M. Monroe). Very rare locally, a dark morph **Swainson's Hawk** was at Peterson Butte, Linn Co., 13 May (S. Seibel) and an adult light morph was at the intersection of Highway 99W and Stapleton Rd in Polk Co., 22 Jun (M. Lippsmeyer). Rare during summer, a **Peregrine Falcon** cruised over the FNWR prairie, 29 Jun.

Water conditions at McFadden Marsh were excellent for rails. High counts of 16 **Virginia Rails** and 9 **Soras**, 22 Jun, were quite good for the area. A couple pairs of **American Coots** bred at FNWR.

The time span of this report includes both the latest spring departures and the first fall, or southbound, shorebirds of the year. A **Pacific Golden-Plover** flew by Cabell Marsh, 29 Jun, on its way south; there are only a couple of previous Benton County records. The last **Semipalmated Plover** was at McFadden Marsh, 14 May. A female **Black-necked Stilt** visited McFadden, 10-14 May. It was a good spring for **Solitary Sandpipers**; the high count was 4 at Sunset Park in Corvallis, 5 May (N. Strycker). The last Greater Yellowlegs of spring was 28 May and the first fall bird was 1 Jul, both at Philomath STP.

Very rare away from the ocean, a **Whimbrel** was at Corvallis airport, 12 May, and one was at Diamond Hill wetland, 5 Jul (R. Moore). Also rare in the Willamette Valley, a **Long-billed Curlew** visited Diamond Hill wetland, 29 May (R. Moore). A **Semipalmated Sandpiper** in with Westerns, 30 Apr, at Bellfountain Wetland. Numbers of peeps peaked in late Apr but most had departed by 15 May. Fall birds returned right on time. **Western Sandpipers** arrived at FNWR, 29 June, and a **Least Sandpiper** appeared at Philomath STP, 1 Jul.

It was a good spring for phalaropes. The first **Red-necked Phalaropes** were 16 at Philomath STP, 8 May (N. Strycker); 36 were there 21 May and the last one appeared 26 May. **Wilson's Phalaropes** nested at McFadden Marsh this year, with at least one brood being produced. The first **Long-billed Dowitcher** of the fall returned to Diamond Hill wetland, 1 Jul (R. Moore) and the first **Wilson's Snipe** was at Philomath STP, 5 Jul.

Gulls are usually quite uncommon, even rare, in spring. The most unusual sighting was three **Bonaparte's Gull** at Cabell Marsh, 15 May. A sure sign we are in summer is the appearance of **California Gulls** stopping by on their way from the Great Basin to the ocean. The first one of the season was 29 Jun at Cabell Marsh.

Terns stirred up some interest. A **Forster's Tern** at Cabell, 15 May, may have been a first Benton County record. Two **Black Terns** made a brief foray over Philomath STP, 19 May (D. Irons, R & N Armstrong). A **Caspian Tern** at Philomath STP circled for a few minutes the morning of 25 Jun.

Eurasian Collared-Doves are increasing slowly but steadily around Corvallis. More reports occurred this period than in any previous one. A pair was regularly along Airport Rd all spring (R. Moore); one was in south Corvallis, 29 Apr (M. Dossett); one was in Albany, early May (C. Argo); one was along Mt. Tom Rd, Linn Co. 2 Jun (D. Irons); and one was in Monroe, 5 Jun (W. Wright).

Very rare during summer, a **Short-eared Owl** was along Glaser

Drive, Linn Co., 26 Jun (J. Geier).

Barred Owls continue to increase in numbers, even invading town; one was calling in NW Corvallis the evening of 9 May (P. Vanderheul) and also on 19 Jun (B. Dewater). Two **Long-eared Owl** fledglings were at Snag Boat Bend, 8 Jul, confirming local breeding (m.ob.).

An **Anna's Hummingbird** at a camas patch at FNWR, 5 May, was a nice find (N. Strycker); the species is very difficult to locate outside of towns. A few **Calliope Hummingbirds** appeared at feeders in the first week of May, including one in Sodaville (K. Heineck) and one along Bruce Rd (R. Moore).

The **Lewis' Woodpecker** that wintered near Woodpecker Loop, FNWR, was last seen 3 May (B. Proebsting). Flycatchers tend to arrive later than most other Neotropical migrants. This year was no exception. The first **Olive-sided Flycatchers** arrived by 3 May at FNWR (B. Proebsting). Stewart Lake hosted the first **Western Wood-Pewee**, 29 Apr (J. Simmons). A nice showing of **Dusky Flycatchers**, which pass through in a narrow time window in early May, included one in NW Corvallis (M. Hunter) and one at Luckiamute Landing, 11 May (J. Geier). A rarity in the Willamette Valley, an **Ash-throated Flycatcher** was along Tub Run Rd in Linn Co., 1 Jun (B. Altman) through at least 13 Jun (D. Irons).

Benton and Linn Counties are the world's strongholds for breeding **Streaked Horned Larks**. More than 100 nests have been found this summer so far by R. Moore and his research assistants. Using video cameras to monitor behavior and document predation events, they were surprised to see that two sets of eggs were consumed by Northern Harriers! Who knew harriers eat eggs?

A **Purple Martin** was inspecting snags at Cabell Marsh, 5 May (N. Strycker), but none bred there. Two **Bank Swallows** at McFadden Marsh, 22 Jun, suggest the possibility of local breeding. The last Ruby-crowned Kinglet of the spring was 5 May at FNWR (N. Strycker).

Nashville Warblers made a great showing this spring and a couple lingered into the summer, suggesting possible nesting. One was heard singing, 9-11 Jun, near Bald Hill Park (R. and P. Comeleo). Another was along the road to Marys Peak, 27 June. A late **Townsend's Warbler** in Bellfountain, 21 May (R. Hoyer).

Seventy **Wilson's Warblers** at Luckiamute SNA, 11 May, must have been a sight to see (J. Geier). **Yellow-breasted Chats** by 5 May at FNWR (N. Strycker), a few days behind schedule.

It was a great spring for **Western Tanagers**. The first ones arrived 29 Apr at Oak Creek Drive in Corvallis (B. Proebsting). Many calls from excited observers describing the bright yellow birds with red heads in their yards came in during early and mid-May. The high count was 30 Western Tanagers on Coffin Butte, 23 May (J. Geier).

A nice count of 112 **Savannah Sparrows** was made southeast of Tangent, 31 May (J. Geier). Responding positively to the prairie restoration efforts at FNWR, ten **Grasshopper Sparrows** were on territories throughout May and Jun (R. Moore, WDR). A **Brewer's Sparrow** was along Belts Road, Linn Co, 1 Jun (B. Altman). For the second summer in a row, a Brewer's Sparrow was along Guerber Road in Benton Co near FNWR; one was singing there 24 Jun. A well-flighted juvenile Brewer's Sparrow was at McFadden Marsh, 9 Jul. A late **White-throated Sparrow** lingered at Luckiamute Landing, 14 May (H. Bruner).

A beautiful male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** visited Jan Bateman and Joyce Rosenwald's feeder in north Corvallis for a few days in mid-June (see photo);



This male Rose-breasted Grosbeak was photographed 17 Jun in NW Corvallis by J. Batemen and J. Rosenwald.

this is apparently only the second Benton County record, the first was in Dec, 2006. The first **Black-headed Grosbeak** of the spring was 29 Apr, along Oak Creek Drive (B. Proebsting). A great surprise, too, was an **Indigo Bunting** a few miles east of Lebanon, Linn Co., establishing a likely first Linn County record, 20-25 Jun (R. Krabbe).

Yellow-headed Blackbirds appeared briefly at FNWR, 2 May (M. Cutler) and 17 May (R. Armstrong), but did not stay to breed this year.

Next issue

Please send your reports for the next issue by 31 August.

Douglas Robinson

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Birdathon 2008

Audubon Society of Corvallis' 8th annual Birdathon was held on the weekend of May 3 and 4 and was the biggest success to date. We raised over \$8,395!! Some details:

- 13 teams and 33 people participated.
- Combining team tally totals, an impressive 1,196 species were counted. Three sponsors supported all teams with a per-species contribution based on this total. Elsie Eltzroth continued this tradition her late husband Elzy began. Ken Hilton of Wild Birds Unlimited and Jeff Katz of Peak Sports also supported all teams. Many thanks to these contributors!
- Paula Vanderheul, of the Tule Trotters, brought in the most money (over \$3200) AND the highest number of species--162. Congratulations to Paula and her team!
- ASC's intrepid motorless team, Don Boucher and Lisa Millbank, the Roadrunners, saw 102 species this year. They didn't beat their previous motorless record, but with the iffy weather this spring and slow migration, still a great number!
- Karl Fairchild and Noah Strycker, the Gung-ho Grebos, made a Big Day record attempt for Lincoln County and found 141 species, this year's biggest Birdathon one-day total. For them the weather could have been better, although they missed the all-time Lincoln Co. record by just 1!
- Other participating teams this year were the Tippling Twitchers, the Bold Birders, Team Pura Vida, and the Gadabout Gadwalls. Team names are certainly optional, next year we look forward to even more team names and more participants!

Many thanks to all who participated, either by birding or by sponsoring a team! It's very much appreciated and will go directly for the Hesthavn water system this year.

Karan Fairchild

Volunteer Recognition

Honoring Chris Mathews

Chris Mathews has been the President of ASC for the past 3 years and has shown himself to be a magical wizard ready to lead board and general meetings, put together agendas, speak for the society on a variety of issues and advocate on behalf of Hesthavn Nature Center (HNC). He writes about issues in the Chat newsletter, participates in work parties for tree planting at Finley NWR and HNC. Chris has readily been available to assist with all the workings of the society and his positive, thoughtful comments have enhanced the operation of the board. Chris's actions and deeds will be missed. The board thanks Chris for his excellent leadership.

Paula Vanderheul

Thanks To Kate Mathews

In May's Chat, Kate Mathews explained that she is stepping down as Education Chair for ASC after serving for 10 ½ years. At this time, I would like to extend our thanks to Kate for all her efforts during this period. Without her, it's fair to say, the educational mission of ASC would have disappeared for several years prior to the establishment of programs at Hesthavn. Kate worked hard to bring our programs to the attention of teachers and has worked with the SMILE program offered after school in the Corvallis district. She has also annually brought programs to Blodgett Elementary School, thus truly extending our presence to the far reaches of Benton County.

Marcia F. Cutler

Atop the Nestbox

A few years ago Elsie Eltzroth introduced me to the Bluebird Trail. It all started at an Audubon meeting when Elsie announced that she needed volunteers for the trail. I had no idea what I was getting into when I said, "what do you need help with?" Committing to the trail was one of the most wonderful commitments I have ever made. I am so glad I did. Now, my partner Nan (an exceptional photographer) is just as enthusiastic about bluebirds as I am—we love it!

Last year, after helping with bluebirds everywhere else for years, we had a pair nest in OUR yard and the saga continues. We have that same pair now starting a third brood this year! We love sharing our bluebirds with anyone who will take the time. We start each day with those beautiful birds. Here is what Elsie wrote this past week about one of our banding experiences.



Photo by Nan Moore

"Keeps me going, like this morning when I took Deb my sub bander, and her house mate Nan, to band at a new site for bluebirds. The retired couple, new to me this year, had been feeding a male BB with 6 six-day-old chicks that lost his mate a few days earlier. I had immediately fostered two of them into another nest box. It just so happens that this male (we knew the male from his color band) was raised nearby and fed mealworms in 2007 at the home of Deb, my sub-bander! He was used to having people up close and personal and immediately recognized mealworms as food! He had promptly made friends with Ted and Donna.

When Deb, Nan (who takes beautiful pictures of our BBs and other wildlife) and I arrived, Donna had set a lovely decorated table on her patio within a stones throw of the nest box.

She waited for us to arrive before feeding the male they called, "Willy." She offered us coffee and then put mealworms in the little white dish on the table for Willy. It was "a sight for sore 'old' eyes," as the saying goes. We four were sitting there talking over coffee while this tiny blue busy bundle of feathers came and went with worms for his chicks in the nest box. Nan took shot after shot of the coming and going of this determined dad to feed the nestlings we were going to band. He'd sit on the dish and "eye" us as though he knew us! Amazing trust, complete confidence, and if I could anthropomorphize, I'd say he joined in our conversation.

I still can't get over this episode!! We can't help but wonder if he recognized Deb and Nan from the year before."

Nan & I were thrilled to see our "Young Man Blue" as a successful dad. Last time we saw him he was a spotted blue begging little fluffball!

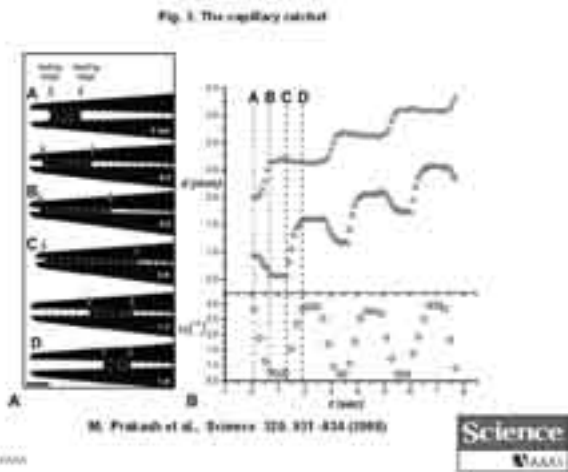
Deb Savageau & Nan Moore

The Capillary Ratchet

How the Phalarope Drinks

Have you ever wondered how a bird with a long, narrow bill, like the phalarope, moves water from a pond to its mouth, when it drinks? The bill is not a straw, after all. Well, a group of scientists at MIT and in France did wonder, and their exploration of the process is reported in the May 16, 2008, issue of Science, the weekly journal of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. A key is that the surface tension of water causes it to adhere to the inner side of the bill. Now, when the bird opens its bill the trailing edge of a water droplet is drawn toward the mouth, as shown in the illustration, and when the bill is closed, this causes the leading edge of the droplet to move toward the mouth. So a series of bill openings and closings draws the water inexorably toward the mouth, in what the authors call a capillary ratchet. The graph below shows the progress of the leading edge with respect to time (upper series of dots) and the trailing edge (lower

series of dots). So next time you see a Wilson's phalarope at Malheur (or elsewhere), note the repeated bill openings and closings while the bird is drinking, and know that the capillary ratchet is working.



Of what significance is this finding, you may ask. Well first, it explains why phalaropes have trouble drinking polluted water; if a detergent or similar substance causes surface tension to drop sufficiently, then the capillary ratchet will not work. Second, MIT is an engineering school, and the institution has already filed a patent application based upon this work, "on the use of contact-angle hysteresis for the directed transport of fluid droplets, relevant to microfluidic technologies." So the next time you notice unusual behavior in a bird you are watching, pay close attention. Your observations may lead to a patentable invention.

Chris Mathews

Kids Day For Conservation

Sept. 20, 2008

It's not too early to mark your calendars on Saturday, September 20th for Kids Day for Conservation. I am looking for volunteers, either to help out at the booth or to help design booth activities for kids to enjoy. Last year the theme was Owls. This year, I'd like to feature our diurnal raptors. One activity I'm thinking of is to highlight falcons' and certain hawks' ability to see ultraviolet light. If anyone has, or knows a source of film strips enabling people to see ultraviolet light (or any other type of device), please let me know. To volunteer or help, please contact me at: marciafcutler@comcast.net or at 541-752-4313.

Marcia F. Cutler

Have a Green Summer

With gas prices skyrocketing, it is more important than ever to save fuel. Be sure to check tire pressure frequently and keep tires on the "high" side of what is recommended. For my car, I use 33 psi. This way, rolling resistance is cut down, less heat is built up, and tires last longer. They may

transmit a little more road feel and noise, but it is well worth it. This is particularly true when driving at freeway speeds. US NEWS reports possible savings by higher inflation of 133.9 gallons per year or \$542.

In my mind, the next most important thing to check is the air filter. This is easily done on most cars. Gas is half the combustion equation. Air is the other half. A clogged air filter can rob 10% of your engine's efficiency. A new airfilter can get that 10% back – often for under \$15. This can save 60.9 gallons of fuel per year (\$247).

On your travels, take your ASC cloth tote bag with you. Worldwide, plastic bags have become a horror story for seabirds and wildlife. A study in the South Pacific has shown that only 20% of the rubbish and plastic comes from ships at sea. The remaining 80% of the problem comes from lands far away and are found washing down streams and rivers. Many seabirds, particularly the Albatross, feed the plastic to young ones often with fatal consequences. Travel well, travel safely, and we'll see you in the fall.

John Gaylord

Birding Tours in Belize

As I have mentioned previously, Corvallis Audubon receives numerous promotional messages advertising birding tours and festivals. Recently I received an interesting e-mail about birding in Belize. Part of that message is copied below.

"The Lodge at Big Falls in southern Belize offers Audubon Society Members and chapters a unique opportunity to pursue their passion for birds and benefit the Audubon Society at the same time. For each booking made directly through our web site we will refund 10% of the package costs for groups of 6 guests or more to your local Audubon Society Chapter funds. For example, our packages include:

Fall Migration Specials 8 days/7 nights at \$1,550 per person

For a group of 6 Audubon receives \$155 x 6 = \$930"

\$1550 for an eight-day birding trip seems quite reasonable, and, as you can see, it would permit a significant return to ASC. The lodge has an attractive and informative website (<http://www.thelodgeatbigfalls.com/lodge.php>). As many of you know, I organized a trip of this type for thirteen birders to Brazil a few years ago. Doing it with six would be much easier. If any ASC member would like to organize a trip of this type, please notify me or one of the continuing ASC officers.

Chris Mathews

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Jim Fairchild, Chris Mathews, Paula Vanderheul, John Gaylord, Douglas Robinson, Marcia Cutler, Elise Elliott-Smith, Don Boucher, Karan Fairchild, Deb Savageau and Nan Moore.

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Audubon Society of Corvallis

the **CHAT**

Renew your membership before the date on the mailing label to avoid missing issues of the Chat.

Calendar

July 23: Summer board meeting at Hesthavn*
July 26: Hesthavn work party*
July 27: Bicycle birding, 9 am*
Aug 9: Second Saturday field trip, 7:30 am*
Aug 10: Art & Nature at Hesthavn, 1 – 3 pm*
Aug 23: Hesthavn work party, 9 am*
Aug 24: Bicycle birding, 9 am*
Aug 28: Article submission deadline for Sept Chat
Aug 31: Field notes submission deadline for Sept Chat
Sept 13: Second Saturday field trip, 7:30 am*
Sept 20: Kids' Day for Conservation**

*see pg 73

**see pg 77

The Chat is published 10 times a year by the Audubon Society of Corvallis, PO Box 148, Corvallis OR 97339. Annual ASC memberships are \$25 for an individual, \$30 for a family, \$15 for a student. Chat-only subscriptions are \$15.

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