



Audubon Society of Corvallis the **CHAT**

September 2010

VOL. 40

#1

General Meeting

Thursday, September 16, 7:00 – 8:30 pm

First Presbyterian Church

Seabirds: From Wing Propelled Divers to Long Distance Gliders

A presentation by Rob Suryan



Our speaker this month will be Rob Suryan. Rob, a seabird expert from OSU's Hatfield Marine Science Center, will discuss studies of seabirds throughout the North Pacific, including field sites in Oregon, Hawaii, Japan, and Alaska. His will first present his local study of Common Murres at Yaquina Head in Newport and the factors affecting productivity and population dynamics, from changing ocean

conditions to the impact of Bald Eagle predation. Yaquina Head is unique in being the only murre colony producing significant numbers of chicks on the northern Oregon coast, and it appears to be reaching maximum colony size. Rob will also describe studies of the at-sea distribution of tuna-associated vs. solitary-feeding seabird species on Lehua, a remote island off Kauai that is undergoing restoration, including removal of introduced mammals. Rob gave a presentation to Corvallis Audubon on North Pacific albatrosses a couple of years ago and he will provide an update on new studies and developments in recent years.

Doors open at 6:30 pm for refreshments and visiting. The chapter meeting commences at 7:00 pm, followed by the guest lecture at 7:30 pm. Questions about the series can be directed to Dave Mellinger at David.Mellinger@oregonstate.edu 757-7953.

Directions

The chapter meeting is in the meeting hall of the First Presbyterian Church (upstairs), 114 SW Eighth Street.

Dave Mellinger



In this issue:

New National Audubon President	2
Field Trip Schedule	2
Let's Go Outside!	2
Hesthavn News	2
Field Notes	3
Who's Being Seen	4
Atop the Nestbox	4
NWRC Events	4
eBird Takes Data to Supercomputers	4-5
New BirdsEye "Lite" App	5
Wanted: American birding couples	5
Calendar	6

New National Audubon President

I am pleased to announce that our search committee has identified and our Board of Directors has appointed a highly experienced, accomplished and committed conservation leader to serve as Audubon's new President and CEO.

David Yarnold is currently the Executive Director of the Environmental Defense Fund and President of its Environmental Defense Action Fund. Prior to that, he was a Pulitzer Prize-winning editor at the San Jose Mercury News.

David possesses an extraordinary array of skills and expertise that, with your ongoing assistance, will enable him to lead the Audubon network to new levels of conservation success.

This is an exciting moment for Audubon and for our cause. We have found the right person to build Audubon's legacy of conservation results well into the future and to educate and empower the next generation of conservationists who will protect and restore the health of birds, other wildlife and the resources on which we all depend.

I look forward to opportunities for you to meet and work with David and, especially, to the great conservation results we will achieve together.

*Holt Thrasher
Audubon Board Chair*

Field Trip Schedule

Monthly Year-Round Saturday Field Trips

September 11: Meet at the Benton Center at 7:30 am

October 9: Meet at the Benton Center at 7:30 am

Our Saturday morning local field trip meets the second Saturday of every month at the Benton Center parking area, 757 Polk Ave, 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. Contact Rich Armstrong at richarmstrong@comcast.net or 541-753-1978 with questions.

Full Day Field Trip

Saturday, Sept. 18: To Fern Ridge. meet at Benton Center at 7:30 am, return at 5 pm.

Rich Armstrong

Let's Go Outside!

Finley National Wildlife Refuge will host local middle school students during their Outdoor School program, four days of education in the field. The Refuge will need birders, naturalists, and outdoor enthusiasts to lead activities. All volunteers will receive training and materials needed

for the day's activities. Volunteers are needed September 17th to October 1st. If you are available any of these days from 8-2 (or for a half day) please contact Katie Folts, at katie_folts@fws.gov or 541-757-7236.

Katie Folts

Hesthavn News

It is with sadness that we note the passing this August of Helen Berg, long-time Corvallis mayor, Audubon member, and Hesthavn benefactor. In 1993, she donated 5 ¾ acre along Oak Creek to Audubon Society of Corvallis. This special place is where she and her late husband, Alan Berg, spent time with their horses while appreciating the natural surroundings. Alan passed away in 1989. Their shared vision was to turn the land over to an organization that would maintain it for wildlife habitat. Since 1997, ASC volunteers have converted the horse barn into a nature center and spent countless hours restoring natural vegetation, adding a rainwater catchments system for drip irrigation, building a nature trail and hosting classes and special events. In recent years Helen visited Hesthavn Nature Center checking on the restoration progress. She was so pleased to say that Alan's visions have come true. Alan and Helen's gift of this property will live on and honor them as the true friends of nature and the community that so many of us knew them to be.

The public is welcome to visit Audubon's Hesthavn Nature Center daily from sunrise to sunset and to walk the nature trail viewing native habitat and wildlife. It's a great place to picnic while looking for birds, butterflies, and especially streamside critters, with young children wearing their boots and play clothes. The nature center building has a museum, with a display case about birds and other wildlife that is open to the public on set monthly dates, which are posted on the website.

Special educational programs are given throughout the year for children and adults.

We have many volunteer opportunities to help with special maintenance projects, restoration projects, educational presentations, administration duties, public relations and advertising programs with the community.

The next work party and open house are scheduled for September 25, 2010. Work party will be from 9 am to 1 pm and the open house will be from 10 am to 1 pm. Bring gloves, water bottles, sturdy shoes and work clothes to tackle invasive weeds and other restoration projects.

Contact Paula Vanderheul for information about joining the Nature Center volunteer team.

You can find map directions to Hesthavn Nature Center, which is located at 8590 NW Oak Creek Drive, on the ASC website at www.audubon.corvallis.or.us

*Paula Vanderheul
vanderp@peak.org*

Field Notes

18 JUNE 2010 – 19 AUGUST 2010

This is undoubtedly the worst birding period of the year. However, there were some good sightings including Williamson's Sapsucker, Mountain Bluebird, Lark Sparrow, Cassin's Finch, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, and Northern Goshawk.

Abbreviations and Locations: m.ob. = many observers. Observer names are noted in parentheses after their reports. EEW = E. E. Wilson Wildlife Area north of Corvallis. Cabell is the lake on Finley.

White Pelicans were at Cabell various times from 7/15 (mob) and also at Ankeny much of the period. A **Clark's Grebe** was at Cabell 7/15 (D Robinson), still there 7/17. A **Mute Swan** (surely an escaped bird) was at Cabell 7/20. A **Redhead** was at Ankeny 8/16 (S Finnegan). **Gadwall** nested and bred in Benton County for the 1st time and a brood was still at Philomath 8/19 (D Robinson). **Mountain Quail** were found on Steere Creek Rd 8/15 (J Geier).

There were 2-3-4 **Baird's Sandpipers** at Philomath Ponds 8/18-19 (D Robinson, mob). Thankfully these birds stayed more than 5 minutes and were seen by a few people. There were 4 **Greater Yellowlegs** at Cabell 7/20 (B Proebsting). 7 **Least Sandpipers** were at Sunset Park 8/4 (L Millbank). A **Solitary Sandpiper** and **Semipalmated Plover** and both **Yellowlegs** were at Ankeny 8/13, and both a **Pectoral** and a **Baird's Sandpiper** were there along with 9 **Red-necked Phalaropes** 8/15 (S Finnegan). There were 2 **Wilson's** and 1 **Red-necked Phalaropes** at Philomath 8/18 (N Armstrong). **Herring Gull and Ring-billed Gull** and 4 **California Gulls** were at Cabell 7/20 (B Proebsting) and 4 **California Gulls** were at Philomath 8/18 (N Armstrong).



Least Sandpiper photo by Lisa Millbank

A **Northern Goshawk** has been seen a couple times since 7/29 5 miles west of Philomath toward Marys Peak (J&K Fairchild). A **Peregrine Falcon** was in North Albany 8/12 (Tristen). **Common Nighthawks** were in Corvallis



Baird's Sandpiper photo by Douglas Robinson

6/22 (D Boucher) and on Road 110 in Dunn Forest 6/22 (R&P Comeleo). **Purple Martins** were gone from Tampico, but returned to Road 110 6/23 (R&P Comeleo) and 8/1 (G Andrews).

Pileated Woodpeckers seemed somewhat regular at Peavy Arboretum (A Foster, mob). The 1st Benton record of **Williamson's Sapsucker** (as far as I know) was in McDonald Forest on 8/2 (D Robinson).

A **Black Phoebe** was at Ankeny 8/1 (M Stephens), still there 8/16. A **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** was in Peoria 7/15 (R Campbell), but not refound.

A male **Mountain Bluebird** was on Rd 100 in Dunn Forest 8/2 (G Andrews). A **Hermit Thrush** was in McDonald Forest 6/22 (B Proebsting). A **Red-eyed Vireo** was heard at Luckiamute State Natural Area 6/29 (J Geier).

A **Lark Sparrow** was seen near old Finley HQ on 6/19 (R&P Comeleo), but was not refound. **Vesper Sparrows** were finally found on Fitton Green 6/20 (L Millbank). A **Fox Sparrow**, rare in summer, was at EEW 7/1 (M Cutler). **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** were still on Bruce Rd 8/18 despite very little water (W Wright). A male **Cassin's Finch** was on Marys Peak 7/16 (D Robinson). 2 **Red Crossbills** flew over North Corvallis 8/18 (J Geier)

Not local, but close: there has been a male **Indigo Bunting** in Eugene since 7/17 and a **Magnolia Warbler** at Detroit Flats since 7/24. And there was a **Costa's Hummingbird** in Newport 8/7.

Next issue

Please send your reports for the next issue by 16 September.

Rich Armstrong

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Who's Being Seen

Fair weather migrants

September is the finest weather we have in the Northwest. We can enjoy blue skies, warm days and misty cool nights. In this latter part of the dry season, there's a prelude to the upcoming autumn and an increase of activity compared to the lazy days of mid-summer.

Shorebirds who bred in the far north began to migrate in late summer and continue to pass through our area until early autumn. It's a good time of year to observe migrating shorebirds, because the few wetlands that are still around late in the dry season concentrate the bird activity. Popular local spots to check on are the Philomath sewage ponds (with permission from Philomath Public Works), Finley National Wildlife Refuge, E.E. Wilson Wildlife Area and the Sunset Park wetland in Corvallis.

As mentioned in the summer issue, Swainson's Thrush migration peaks in September. Like many songbirds, their migration flights take place at night. Swainson Thrushes are particularly vocal, and are so numerous that it's quite easy to hear them calling to one another in the night sky. The best time to listen is during twilight in the morning or evening. From my observations, I've found that an hour before sunrise is best for two reasons. First, it's more quiet with human activity at a minimum. Second, it seems the descent of migrating thrushes is more punctuated in the morning. During the evening, individuals seem to vary more in the time they take flight, making the event more sparse. You can hear them in the middle of night too, but observations will be limited since the birds are scattered and flying at hundreds of feet or more. The best locations are riparian (river) forests and forested hillsides that are shielded from city noise. It's worth trying even if you can't wake up early since the evening event is still pretty good. Better yet, sleep in your backyard (if suitable habitat exists in your neighborhood), or stay at a forested campground. From the comfort of your cozy sleeping bag, you can listen to the thrushes "rain" out of the sky in the morning.

Next month we'll be observing the return of some wintering birds.

Don Boucher

Atop the Nestbox

As the 2010 nesting season draws to an end, we look back on it with gratitude for the bluebirds we fledged but concern for the next year or two. In June, at the peak of nesting activity, we received record rainfall and the temperatures were substantially colder than usual for a long stretch. This led to the demise of many nestlings and even adults. Our similarly affected friends in Salem and Portland have commiserated with us. In August, three orphaned nestlings from Salem were fostered in a nest box near Lebanon where they were cared for and fledged by a barren pair and a helper fledgling, itself an orphan fostered there.

Our data have yet to be fully compiled and analyzed, but we are hoping to come out even with last year's num-

bers. If we do, it will be thanks to conservationists like Molly Monroe and Jim Rivers, who created new nesting places and shared their bluebirds with us. We know that some of the fledglings from early this year did not survive more than a day or two. Also, as many adults have died and their survivors re-paired, it is unknown what next season will look like. There is some concern over poor berry crops, which means winter food may be scarce. Let's hope for a mild winter!

There will soon be a drawing from this year's sightings reports to determine the winner of a raccoon-resistant nest box. There were very few reports, but we know that not many color-banded bluebirds were present this year. Next year there should be several hundred color-banded birds, so please plan to help us on our longevity project by reporting banded bluebirds between March and July.

Raylene Gordin

NWRC Events

September 25: Willamette Valley NWRC is hosting an ivy pull with SOLV at Ankeny from 10-1. This is part of SOLV's larger beach cleanup which they have now expanded to rivers and waterways. The website for more information is: http://www.solv.org/programs/fall_beach_cleanup.asp

October 10: The Big Sit, sponsored by Birdwatchers Digest. This is the beginning of Refuge Week and I'm hoping to get a bigger turnout this year. We bird from one location and see how many species can be spotted throughout the day. More details to come...

Molly Monroe

eBird Takes Data to Supercomputers

The leading science journal *Nature* has an article about eBird working with satellites and supercomputers. It's a nice explanation of a new development that the eBird team (a joint project of the Cornell Lab and Audubon) is really excited about: they've been awarded 100,000 hours of computing time on the National Science Foundation's supercomputers.

What would we possibly need so much supercomputing time for, you might wonder. It's not just that eBird, now in its ninth year, gets upwards of a million entries per month—our own servers do a pretty good job of storing those data and serving it back to the public (so that users like you can generate your own lists or view global range maps). More than that, as director Steve Kelling told *Nature*, his group is taking up the challenge to turn this bonanza of birding observations into something meaningful to science.

To do that, the eBird team is working with a group of collaborators to match bird observations with data about land cover and vegetation from satellites. Those relationships can be used to model where and when individual species move across the country.

These maps are deceptively simple. They represent the

combined knowledge of thousands of birdwatchers—the kind of information that used to be stowed away in thousands of notebooks, or as checkmarks on checklists—now brought together, analyzed, and used to estimate a real, living range map for the species that changes with each week of the year. And Kelling’s plans include yet another step—using these relationships to explore likely scenarios about how climate change will affect bird distribution. And that’s where the supercomputers come in—those initial models took five days to run on our “normal” computers. Read the *Nature* story for more details.

This work accesses the full eBird database, consisting of almost 50 million bird observations from more than 500,000 locations across North America. The work is being done through collaborations with the Institute of Computational Sustainability, the Cornell University Department of Computer Science, DataONE at the University of New Mexico, and the Oak Ridge National Laboratory. The work is being funded by the National Science Foundation, the Leon Levy Foundation, and the Wolf Creek Foundation.

Cornell Lab eNews

New BirdsEye “Lite” App

BirdsEye is the revolutionary iPhone app that harnesses the power of eBird to help users find the birds they want to see. It’s not a traditional field guide for identification. It does what a traditional field guide cannot do: guide users to the places where birders are seeing birds, using fresh eBird data that are frequently updated.

BirdsEye has information about 857 species in North America, including eBird sightings, sounds from the Macaulay Library, photographs from VIREO, and birding-finding tips from Kenn Kaufman.

And now BirdsEye has a little brother: BirdsEye Lite. Designed for beginning birders, BirdsEye Lite features information about 135 species that are easy to find in North America north of Mexico.

Designed for use on the Apple iPhone® and iPod touch®, BirdsEye and BirdsEye Lite are available on the App Store. BirdsEye Lite sells for \$1.99 and BirdsEye sells for \$19.99.

The BirdsEye Lite and BirdsEye apps were developed by Birds in the Hand, LLC, of Virginia, and bring together content from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the Academy of Natural Sciences, and author Kenn Kaufman.

Portions of BirdsEye and BirdsEye Lite sales go to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology to help support its research, education, and citizen-science projects focused on birds, and to the Academy of Natural Sciences to support VIREO, the world’s largest collection of bird photographs.

*Todd Koym
tkoym@birdsinthehand.com*

Wanted: American birding couples for PhD study

For the last eighteen months I have been researching the characteristics of American couples that travel internationally to watch birds. My desire to carry out this research was driven by my 27 years experience as a guide in the Top End of Australia. Few local tour operators had the skills or interest to be able to fulfil the desires of serious birders, while international bird tours appeared to be the domain of serious birders. Yet couples I met, often had different interests, and wanted an experience that would suit them both. One, for example, might be a lister, while his/her spouse might wish to photograph birds, or even just enjoy being in a natural setting. Serious birders, according to the research, are mainly men, while women are, reportedly, mostly casual and novice birders (although there is evidence that women are becoming more serious). Given these gender-based differences it seemed likely that couples would demonstrate different levels of participation and commitment to birding, one spouse or partner being more dedicated to the activity than the other. I wanted to find out whether this was a common feature of birding couples, but soon discovered there was no research, most published literature focussing on individuals, particularly on serious birders. My research, so far, has found that couples do often differ. It also appears that birders of both genders prefer to watch birds and travel internationally with their spouse or partner even when their level of dedication to birding, their skills, or even interests, differ. To carry out in-depth analysis, I need more respondents. I am not trying to change the world, but with this research I hope to be able to influence some in avitourism to cater better to a group of travellers that have been largely ignored. If you are willing to help by filling out my questionnaire, the URL is http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=h3NCqTwur3H_2bPlbFtk_2bSpw_3d_3d. I would particularly love to hear from couples who have travelled to other countries.

*Denise Lawungkurr Goodfellow
1/7 Songlark Street, Bakewell,
NT 0832, AUSTRALIA*

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Dave Mellinger, Holt Thrasher, Rich Armstrong, Katie Folts, Paula Vanderheul, Don Boucher, Raylene Gordin, Molly Monroe, Cornell Lab eNews, Todd Koym, Denise Lawungkurr Goodfellow

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

Calendar

Sept. 9	Board meeting
Sept. 11	Second Saturday field trip, 7:30 am
Sept. 16	General meeting
Sept. 16	Article submission deadline for October Chat
Sept. 18	Field notes submission deadline for October Chat
Sept. 18	Saturday field trip tp Fern Ridge
Sept. 25	Hesthavn work party
Oct. 9	Second Saturday field trip, 7:30 am



Western Sandpiper photo by Sue Powell

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