



# Audubon Society of Corvallis the **CHAT**

November 2010

VOL. 40

#3

## General Meeting

Thursday, November 18, 7:00 – 8:30 pm  
First Presbyterian Church



### Wolves in Western Wildlands

*A presentation  
by Bill Ripple*

Following the extirpation of large predators in the American West, increased herbivory by deer and

other ungulates appears to have profound effects (trophic cascades) on both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. Bill Ripple, our speaker in November, will summarize the 20th century effects in five western national parks. In these parks, the loss of large predators allowed large herbivores to heavily impact riparian plant communities, thus leading to a loss of biodiversity.

Only in Yellowstone National Park, where wolves (*Canis lupus*) have been reintroduced, it appears that impacts to plant communities are being reversed. The reintroduction of wolves in other areas of the west could initiate trophic cascades and ecosystem restoration. Wolves are now living in Northeastern Oregon, and there are some recent reports of wolves possibly in the Cascade mountains of Oregon. Dr. Ripple, a professor of forest resources in OSU's College of Forestry, is the director of the Trophic Cascades Program. He specializes in wildlife habitat analysis and landscape ecology. He is an originator of the "Landscape of Fear"



idea — the principle that landscapes and ecosystems can be structured by top predators and the behavior of their prey.

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 or 757-7953.

### Directions

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

*Dave Mellinger*

## NWR News

### Local NWR Winter Sanctuary Season

Public access into major portions of the Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuges will be limited during the winter sanctuary season in order to provide undisturbed habitat for Canada Geese and other wildlife. By resting in undisturbed areas on the Refuge, often referred to as sanctuary, wintering geese replenish their energy reserves required for nesting and migrating. This sanctuary also reduces crop damage on neighboring agricultural lands.

The winter sanctuary for **Baskett Slough National Wildlife Refuge** will go into effect on October 1 and will remain in effect until March 31. Visiting hours are sunrise

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## NWR News *continued from front page*

to sunset. To locate Baskett Slough National Wildlife Refuge, visitors should travel west on State Highway 22 from Salem and watch for the wildlife viewing area signs, which are located on the north side of the highway at milepost 14.

The majority of **Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge** also enters its sanctuary season on October 1. Visitors may access open areas on the Refuge from sunrise to sunset. Access may be found by traveling 10 miles north from Albany or 12 miles south from Salem on Interstate 5. Take exit 243, Ankeny Hill Road, and drive 1/4 mile west to an intersection. Refuge trails and overlooks may be found along Buena Vista Road, Ankeny Hill Road, and Wintel Road. Watch for the brown Wildlife Viewing Area signs.

On November 1, **William L. Finley National Wildlife Refuge** will enter into its winter sanctuary season. Visiting hours are from sunrise to sunset. This 5,325 acre refuge is located approximately 9 miles south of Corvallis off State Highway 99W. Brown Refuge signs are visible prior to the turn onto Finley Refuge Road.

The **Snag Boat Bend Unit**, located off Peoria Road, will enter sanctuary season on November 1 and re-open February 1. A short boardwalk provides opportunities for visitors to enjoy nature through the winter season. Song-birds, raptors and waterfowl may be heard or seen along the trail.

*Sallie Gentry*

## Field Trip Schedule

### Monthly Year-Round Saturday Field Trips

Nov 13: Meet at the Benton Center at 7:30 am

Dec 11: 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.

*Rich Armstrong*

## Benton Prairie Species HCP

### ASC Board Requests Extension on Comments

Starting October 1<sup>st</sup>, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service released their Environmental Assessment (EA) of Benton County's application for an "incidental take permit" of federally listed prairie species, through a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). USFWS opened a 30-day public comment period through an announcement in the Federal Register October 1<sup>st</sup>, although the Corvallis *Gazette-Times* published this notice first on October 8<sup>th</sup>, one week later.

Benton County has promoted this application both as a conservation strategy for imperiled prairie species and

as a mechanism to streamline private land development permitting, holding a number of presentations to various interest groups. If attendee responses at these presentations are a gauge, there is more confusion and concern now than when these presentations began several years ago.

Without taking a position on the merits of the HCP application or the EA in the short timeframe given, the ASC Board has requested the USFWS extend the public comment period for an additional 60 days. This is to allow affected landowners and interest groups to review and comment on the large amount of material amassed in the multiple documents involved. The ASC Board additionally requested the USFWS develop a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to 1) more fully address the significant impacts this 50 year take permit and Plan will have on the human environment, and 2) to develop a full range of alternatives to this proposed action.

The Board made these requests in furtherance of the mission of National Audubon Society and our Chapter "to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity."

*Editorial note: This submission came with the following personal note from its author:*

"I try not to be cynical, but this whole thing has been one very ugly tar baby—the more I and others look into it, the larger appear the gaps in scientific rigor, in safeguards and oversight, in funding, and in intellectual honesty. We are now selling our imperiled prairie plants down the river, to a company taking genetic patents out on the results of their captive breeding, and in a position to assure "mitigations" with these crosses succeed, even if the plants lose their biological connections to their native environs. If there was any element towards recovery in the millions of dollars spent on this, I'd be happy."

*Jim Fairchild*

## Hesthavn News

### New Hesthavn Management Structure Formed

Nine members of the Hesthavn Committee met recently to discuss a new approach to managing Audubon's Nature Sanctuary. It was decided that involving a greater number of people with the day to day management would avoid having just one person saddled with all the responsibilities.

**Five leaders with specific duties were suggested for the management team:**

1. Chair-Insures that team members are covering their tasks; facilitates coordination among team members; represents Hesthavn at ASC Board Meetings (unless another team member is substituting); represents Hesthavn within community.
2. Administrator-develops annual plan of work and budget, with input from the rest of the team; is familiar with regulatory obligations; monitors financial situation; writes reports and articles; explores fund-

- ing; assists with public relations efforts.
3. Infrastructure (Center) Manager-responsible for regular maintenance, repair, and improvements related to buildings, water system, parking lot & driveway and other built structures. Develops, updates, and follows short- and long-term plans.
  4. Landscape Manager-responsible for all activities related to the land, such as planting, mowing, weeding, etc. Develops, updates, and follows short- and long-term plans
  5. Volunteer Coordinator-recruits and places volunteers (within and external to ASC). Coordinates with appropriate team members for volunteer projects. Insures adequate supervision for volunteers. Maintains volunteer records. Follows up with acknowledgement.

Ideally, each leader would have multiple people assisting with responsibilities so that no one person is doing all the work in each position. Hopefully, there would be discrete tasks that are adopted by ASC members (or other community volunteers or groups). The leader would be responsible for organizing the tasks, recruiting and training the assistants, and insuring that all tasks are done. Management leaders could mentor assistants to rotate into their management position.

The new management team is recruiting interested members of the society that might like to consider volunteering time with one or more of the above specific positions. To discuss the details of responsibilities for each position, please contact Paula Vanderheul or Gail Andrews.

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

The November 20 work party from 9 am to 1 pm will burn two brush piles. Four volunteers are needed to help with the burn. Please contact Paula Vanderheul if you are able to help assist with this project.

The last Open House for the year is scheduled on November 20 from 10 to 1 pm. The nature trail is open every day from dawn to dusk.

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](http://www.audubon.corvallis.or.us)

*Paula Vanderheul  
vanderp@peak.org*

## Kids Day for Conservation

### KDC Volunteer Appreciation

At this year's Kid's Day for Conservation event, held at the Benton Co. fairgrounds on Saturday, October 9th, ASC teamed with the Avery House Nature Center for activities centering around creating suitable wildlife habitat in one's backyard. A model backyard was set up with trees, bushes, leaves and sticks of various sizes. Also a lot of trash was strewn around the area. Children were invited to pick up the trash and put it in recycling containers and to pile up the sticks and branches to make areas where wildlife can

find shelter. A bowl was placed in the dirt and kids could add water and rocks to make a water feature. Kids could also decorate small bird feeders made from small milk cartons and they were given a bit of bird seed to put in the feeders. Both these activities were labor intensive and I'd like to extend my appreciation to volunteers Bill & Lena Proebsting, Ann Brodie, Kate Mathews and Lori McGovern for helping out.

*Marcia Cutler*

## Field Notes

23 SEPTEMBER– 28 OCTOBER 2010

Winter birds are showing up. A storm blew **Red Phalarope**, **Red-breasted Merganser**, and **Surf Scoters** inland. Other highlights of the month were **Parasitic Jaeger**, **Say's Phoebe**, **Common Poorwill**, and **White-headed Woodpecker**.

*Abbreviations and Locations:* mob = many observers. Observer names are noted in parentheses after their reports. Philomath means the Philomath Sewage Treatment Ponds. EEW = E. E. Wilson Wildlife Area north of Corvallis. Cabell is the lake on Finley. ASC = Audubon Society field trip.

A **Black-crowned Night Heron** flew over Finley 8/20 (N Richardson). A **Green Heron** was still at Thornton Lake 10/25 (Tristen). **Western Grebes** were at Philomath a few times from 10/2 (M Cutler, G Andrews) to 10/24 (W Wright) and at Thornton Lake in Albany 10/24 (Tristen). A **Horned Grebe** was at Philomath 10/28 (D Robinson). An **Eared Grebe** was at Thornton Lake 10/24 (Tristen) for a rare report away from Philomath where they are regular, and as many as 9 were there during the month. A **Snow Goose** was at Philomath 10/13 (W Wright, J Fairchild, G Andrews) and 5 were at Ankeny 10/17 (E Knight). **Greater Scaup** were seen at Philomath a few times during the period (D Robinson, mob). 5 **Surf Scoters** were at Finley 10/24 (D Robinson), but gone the next day. 2 **Red-breasted Mergansers** were at Thornton Lake 10/25 (Tristen), but gone 2 hours later. Another **Red-breasted Merganser** was at Philomath 10/28 (D Robinson) and stayed a few hours.

2 **Baird's Sandpipers** flew past Philomath 9/29 (D Robinson). A **Black-bellied Plover** was with Killdeer at Finley 10/11 (W Wright). 2 **Red Phalaropes** were blown in by the storm to Philomath ponds 10/25 and another 10/27 with a **Red-necked Phalarope** (K Heineck), and another 10/28 (D Robinson). An adult **Parasitic Jaeger** flew by Philomath for the ASC 10/9 but didn't stop at all, and an immature **Parasitic** flew by without stopping 10/27 (D Robinson). A **Bonaparte's Gull** was at Philomath 10/13 (G Andrews, W Parrot, J Landau) and 2 were there 10/28 (D Robinson). A **Glaucous-winged Gull** was in Corvallis 9/25 (J Geier). 8 **California Gulls** were at Philomath Ponds 8/20 (A Contreras, Tristen) and the 1<sup>st</sup> showed up at the dump 10/7 (J Geier).



*Bonaparte's Gull photo by Douglas Robinson*

*Field Notes continued on next page*

## Field Notes *continued*



*Red Phalarope photo  
by Rich Armstrong*



*Red Phalarope photo by  
Paula Vanderheul*

5 **Mountain Quail** were seen on NAMC (F Ramsey) and 2-4 were seen intermittently the rest of the period. Also 2 were near Forest Dell Park 10/9 (J Paul).

4 **Northern Pygmy Owls** were at Finley 9/29 (D Robinson). A **Barred Owl** posed for many in Corvallis 10/17 (A&S Liston, mob). 2 **Peregrine Falcons** were at Philomath 9/29 and 1 got a teal (D Robinson). 2 **Merlin** were near the Finley old HQ 10/2 (M Cutler, G Andrews) and 1 flew across the river 10/18 (D Boucher). A **Golden Eagle** was at Finley 10/17 (S Hatlevig).

A **Common Poorwill** was on Finley Rd 10/23, but did not stay (D Robinson). A **Rufous Hummingbird** was still here 10/21 (S Hatlevig). A credible but unconfirmed report of **White-headed Woodpecker** on Oak Creek 10/17 would be 1<sup>st</sup> Benton record. The bird was clearly seen, thought briefly, and description unmistakable. A **Say's Phoebe** came to Finley HQ 10/20 and stayed through at least 10/26, enjoyed by many (M Monroe, mob). **Black Phoebes** were all over - at EEW 9/7 (B Proebsting), at Finley on NAMC (D Robinson), on Bruce Rd 9/30, Kiger Island 10/16 (D Boucher, L Millbank), at Finley HQ various times and other places on Finley (M Monroe), and at Ankeny various times (mob).



*Say's Phoebe photo by Doulgas Robinson*



*Say's Phoebe photo by  
Rich Armstrong*

A **Mountain Bluebird** was with Western Bluebirds at Finley 9/29 (D Robinson), but was not refound. A **Northern Mockingbird** was just South of Benton County 10/25 (M Monroe). There was an extremely rare **Gray-headed Junco** near Lebanon 10/11 (B Thackaberry) and **Slate-colored Juncos** at feeders in Albany (Tristen) and Corvallis (P Vanderheul). **Swamp Sparrows** showed at Cabell 10/12 (D Robinson) and the normal place at EEW 10/25 (J Geier).

## Next issue

Please send your reports for the next issue by 18 November.

Rich Armstrong  
(541) 753-1978

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## Who's Being Seen November Birding Opportunities

Get out the rain gear and waterproof shoes! You don't want to miss out on the diversity of newly arrived migrants. From the back yard to the wildlife refuges, there are many birding opportunities in November.

Get your seed feeders ready, your flock of finches will be expanding. Pine Siskins are more numerous in the rainy season. These little, friendly finches are basically a kind of goldfinch. They act and sound similar to goldfinches, but often make a distinctive buzzing call that rises in tone, "zzzzzrrreeee!" Purple Finches will show up in higher numbers in low-altitude locations. Purple Finches look quite similar to House Finches, especially the males and a challenge for beginners to distinguish. I recommend that you pay close attention to the females. Purple Finch females have obvious stripes on the head, where female House Finch heads are uniformly covered in fine streaks.



*White-crowned Sparrow photo  
by Lisa Millbank*



*White-throated Sparrow photo  
by Lisa Millbank*



*Golden-crowned Sparrow photo  
by Matt Lee*

Be on the lookout for winter sparrows. Winter-migrant Golden-crowned Sparrow flocks will be scratching the ground under your feeders. The resident White-crowned Sparrows are found in flocks too, and often accompany Golden-crown flocks. Amongst these flocks look for the occasional White-throated Sparrow. White-throated Sparrows look like White-crowned Sparrows but have white below the bill and, more reliably, a yellow spot in front of the eye. Juvenile White-crowned and White-throated Sparrows have rusty head stripes contrasted with ivory, not white like in adults. The uncommon, tan-striped form of adult White-throated looks similar to the juvenile with subdued head stripes. These flocking sparrows are common in the countryside, or in town near open spaces and parks. Flocks of Dark-eyed Juncos are ubiquitous this time of year. After participating in many years of Christmas Bird Counts in our area, I've come to appreciate the incredible numbers of juncos we get. Juncos are always in the top four species, equaling, and sometimes surpassing, European Starlings, Canada and Cackling Geese in some count areas.

Look for solitary sparrows like Fox Sparrows and Lincoln's Sparrows. Fox Sparrows are pretty common and have habitat preferences similar to Song Sparrows. Lincoln Sparrows are more common, and usually found in wet or swampy brushland.

Doves like your ground feeders as much as sparrows. In addition to Mourning Doves, Eurasian Collared-Doves have become more common in the last few years.

Get your suet feeders ready. Resident birds will be more eager for suet than they have been in summer and early fall. Look for woodpeckers, chickadees, Bushtits, creepers and anybody else who's hungry enough. Keep starlings, jays and squirrels from gobbling your suet up too quickly by placing a quarter-inch steel mesh around the suet. Also expect wintering birds like, Townsend's and Yellow-rumped Warblers as well as Ruby- and Golden-crowned Kinglets.

The subject of Wild Turkeys has come up in the local news lately. In some neighborhoods, mostly areas with oak forest, they have become a nuisance to some homeowners. Feeding turkeys will only make tensions worse. Avoid unintentionally feeding turkeys by keeping the feeder areas in your yard clean. They've got plenty of wild foods to eat in the nearby forest. You can also hang platform feeders which will satisfy sparrows, quail and doves while limiting access to turkeys.

In November the wintering waterfowl numbers reach their full glory. Scan flocks of Cackling Geese and you might find the occasional Snow or Ross's Goose. Swans will be arriving in the valley sometime this month. Most are Tundra Swans but a few are Trumpeter Swans. They can be distinguished by sight if you get a good look and are savvy with the subtle differences. They're more easily discerned by voice. Tundra Swans make a clear honk in pitch between a larger Canada Goose and the small Cackling Goose. Trumpeter Swans make a silly sound like a

Canada Goose honking through a kazoo. To find swans, look at Finley National Wildlife Refuge, Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge and north of E.E. Wilson Wildlife Area in flooded fields off Airlie and Suver Roads.

Now is a productive time to roam the countryside looking for wintering raptors, shorebirds and gulls. Travel country roads east of the Willamette River in Linn County. Cruise areas roughly between Peoria Road, east to Lebanon, and then Hwy. 34 south to Harrisburg. Also look south of Corvallis from Herbert Avenue south to Finley National Wildlife Refuge and then Bellfountain Road east to Hwy. 99W. North of Corvallis search roads from E.E. Wilson Wildlife Area north to Monmouth, framed by the Coast Range to the west and the Willamette River to the east.

While so many people in our area cope with SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder) during the gray dreary months, we birders will be suffering from SMBSLT (So Many Birds, So Little Time)!

*Don Boucher*

## The Envelope, Please

You saw the envelope in this newsletter. You know it is end-of-year donation time. We know that these are difficult economic times and that many of you have given generously already this year. If you are considering additional charitable donations for tax purposes or as holiday gifts, please think about the Audubon Society of Corvallis. The bottom line is that, like most non-profits, membership dues help with basic operations such as mailing the newsletter and room rent for meetings, as well as some of our activities. There are additional opportunities for outreach and habitat restoration that are in need of funding. Consider what your donation could support:

- \$10—Scholarship for one child to attend a class at Hesthavn
- \$50—Printing 100 Birding Corvallis brochures
- \$100—One portable environmental education activity kit
- \$250—Bird Bands and equipment for Bluebird Trail
- \$500—Quality sound system for use at meetings and events

With the talented and dedicated volunteer force working for ASC, your financial contribution goes a long way. If you would like to fund a specific project or item, please contact any board member. Thanks to all of you for donating so freely of your time and money in the past. It is your involvement that makes ASC such a vibrant organization. Be assured that when you mail a check in the enclosed envelope, that money will be used to further enhance the outstanding conservation restoration and education programs coordinated so ably by our membership.

*The Board of ASC*

## Conservation Report

### Benton County's riparian areas and wetlands getting support

Intact riparian and wetland areas provide numerous wildlife and property values. Healthy streams stabilize banks, provide shade for aquatic organisms, filter water, enhance fish habitat and protect properties from flood damage.

Audubon Society of Corvallis' conservation committee is on Benton County's Riparian and Wetlands Advisory Group, which has the goal of creating a plan to support and improve natural functions of streams, riparian areas and wetlands. Using new LiDAR maps, the group is coming up with a wetland inventory to be able to better assess the health of streams followed by suggestions for future protection. This is a 2-year project funded by the EPA and led by Benton County Community Development Department. The main components of the project include: 1). mapping and updating inventory, 2). riparian/wetland program development, 3). outreach and education.

**The public is invited to join meetings. All Riparian and Wetland Advisory Group meetings take place on the last Tuesday of each month from 4:30 pm to 6:00 pm** in the Benton County Public Works Large Conference Room. Contact Adam Stebbins for details at 541-766-6085 or [adam.stebbins@co.benton.or.us](mailto:adam.stebbins@co.benton.or.us)

### Working to protect our ocean and coastal ecosystems

Audubon Society of Corvallis is working with others to preserve Oregon's ocean and coastal ecosystems. Oregon's marine and coastal systems are critical to numerous bird, whale and fish species. Today these fragile region face a myriad of assaults including pollution, over-exploitation by recreational and commercial users, habitat destruction and climate change.

ASC's conservation committee is joining scientists, Our Ocean Coalition, Corvallis Sierra Club and other interested parties to work towards establishing a network of marine reserves and protected areas in Oregon. Studies have shown that marine reserves help increase the abundance and size of fish and allow ecosystems to recover from over-exploitation. The Ocean Policy Advisory Council recommends setting up a network of marine reserves and marine protected areas which are proven to provide more protection than individual, unconnected sites.

John Gaylord, conservation committee member, has seen first-hand the benefits of marine reserves through his many visits to New Zealand. "Fishermen in New Zealand who were once opposed to marine reserves are now the strongest supporters of these protected areas because they have seen an increase in fish abundance as the number of fish in marine reserves spill over to outside areas." John and others from local conservation groups met with Benton County Commissioners and the Benton County Democrats

to garner support from inland communities. "We were happy to get strong support and endorsements from both these groups," said John.

"Local citizens understand that protecting our ocean's resources is good for all of Oregon." It is planned that in November the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife will make recommendations of proposed areas to the Oregon State Legislature and the Governor's Office.

### Bald Hill Farm: A Local Historic, Scenic, Educational and Economic Resource

Bald Hill Farm is a 587-acre property adjacent to Bald Hill Nature Area, in west Corvallis. The Greenbelt Land Trust is working to raise two million dollars to preserve this area permanently, as a historic urban farm that will provide local food products, protect habitat for endangered plants and wildlife, preserve native American artifacts, and enlarge the "green network" of parks and open space that surround the Corvallis urban area. The Farm will provide a critical trail connector from Philomath to Corvallis, and from Bald Hill to Fitton Green. The Farm will be sustainable biologically, and financially, through the sale of farm products. It will also serve as a demonstration area for agricultural education, from local FFA clubs to students working in Oregon State University agriculture programs. This project deserves our support and donations.

*John Gaylord, Stacy Moore, and Glenn Akens*

## GreenTip

### OF THE MONTH

Spring cleaning is great, but how about fall? Yes, a number of things should be done when cold weather and Jack Frost comes around. Probably your furnace uses an air filter, which is pivotal to good operation. Its time to replace or clean your blower filter for maximum efficiency. Many filters are washable, but if not, your local Bi-Mart or Home Depot has a nice variety on sale at modest cost. Filters are easy to change.

While in the vicinity of your furnace you might drain a bit of water from your water heater. Sediment accumulates in the bottom of the heater tank and will slowly cause corrosion. Simply attach a garden hose to the faucet at the bottom of the tank and allow the other end to remain outside and open the faucet until clear water comes out. This will extend the life of your heater and save heating money too.

Outside air temperatures will be coming down soon and this will cause your car tires to lose pressure. It will be necessary to add a few pounds to keep them at their optimum pressure.

If you are headed to the mountains this winter, be sure to check your antifreeze level. You should have protection to about -20°F. Many shops will do this service free. Check windshield wiper blades and washer fluid levels now as the rainy season is just around the corner.

*John Gaylord*

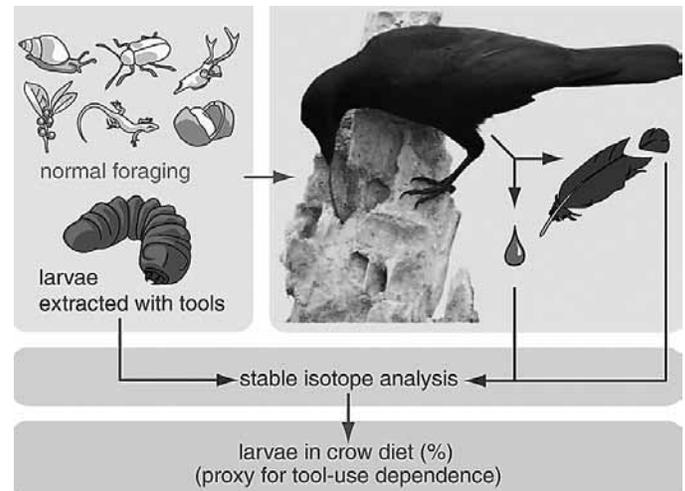
## Two Recent Studies on Amazing Bird Behavior

An article in *Current Biology* (Volume 20, page 1679, September 28, 2010 issue) describes sexual attraction behavior of the great bowerbird in Australia. The male of this species constructs an elaborate tunnel through which the female observes the male as he conducts courtship displays. The photograph below shows such a bower. Note the terrace leading up to the tunnel, which the male constructs with gray and white objects (stones, bits of bone, etc.). The investigators noted that the size of the white objects increases with increasing distance from the tunnel, and they speculated that this provides a forced perspective for the female viewing the male, which makes him appear larger than he might otherwise. The investigators tested whether the placement of objects was deliberate, by moving the white objects and placing them in random order. Upon returning to the bower, the male carefully replaced the objects in the original pattern. Whether or not the intent was actually to make him appear larger, the investigators concluded that "...the maintenance of forced visual perspective is important to great bowerbirds and suggests the possibility of a previously unknown dimension of bird cognition."



*A typical bower found remote from sources of man-made objects.*

The other article, found in *Science* (Volume 329, page 1523, September 17, 2010 issue) involves the use of tools by New Caledonian Crows. As shown in Figure 2, this bird can use a stick, to dig out and eat larvae of the wood-boring beetle. The crow also has above-ground food sources, including carrion, lizards, and snails. The use of tools by animals is quite rare, leading investigators to wonder whether this behavior by the crows is an evolutionary adaptation allowing them access to a superior diet. Observational studies were problematical, so the authors resorted to chemistry. They compared above-ground food sources to larvae, with respect to relative content of  $^{13}\text{C}$  and  $^{15}\text{N}$ , the heavy isotopes of carbon and nitrogen, in their tissues. The two food sources differed considerably. They then carried out the same analysis with blood and feathers from crows. The heavy-to-light isotope ratio in the crows' proteins and fats resembled that of larvae more closely than the above-ground food sources, indicating that larvae were the major food source. The caloric value of larvae was such that just a few per day would adequately feed a crow, leading the authors to conclude that tool-using behavior is indeed an evolutionary adaptation, giving crows access to a better food source than available otherwise.



*Left, food sources available to New Caledonian crows. Right, a crow digging with a stick. Bottom, outline of the experimental analysis described in the paper.*

*Chris Mathews*

## Contributors to the Chat

Dave Mellinger, Sallie Gentry, Rich Armstrong, Jim Fairchild, Vanderheul, Marcia Cutler, Don Boucher, John Gaylord, Stacy Moore, and Glenn Akens, Chris Mathews

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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**

Nov. 11	Board meeting
Nov. 13	Second Saturday field trip, 7:30 am
Nov. 18	November General meeting
Nov. 20	Hesthavn work party
Nov. 25	Article submission deadline for December Chat
Nov. 27	Field notes submission deadline for December Chat
Dec. 11	Second Saturday field trip, 7:30 am



*Killdeer photo by Matt Lee*

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