



THE CHAT

AUDUBON SOCIETY OF CORVALLIS

JANUARY 2016

VOL. 45 #5

JANUARY PROGRAM:

BIRDING MACHU PICCHU & THE MANU ROAD IN PERU

Bill Proebsting will recap a three week trip, birding the Andean Highlands to the Amazon Basin along the Manu Road and beyond, skirting the edge of the fabled Manu National Park. Peru has records of almost 1900 bird species, and this trip produced over 600 species for Bill.

Extremely complex terrain produces a variety of habitats and biodiversity reaches an extreme in the Amazon section of Peru and Ecuador which is described as containing mega-biodiversity. Bill has captured some of the flavor of this diversity with striking photos of the spectacular bird life in this part of Peru.

Bill lives in Corvallis where he retired from a career with OSU's Department of Horticulture. Besides spending time birding locally, serving as program chair and local field trip coordinator for Audubon Society of Corvallis and various gardening projects, Bill and his wife, Lena, enjoy traveling to see birds and their habitat. They have particularly enjoyed birding in Latin America.

Social hour begins at 6:30, with the chapter meeting starting at 7:00 and the program starting at about 7:30. Questions can be directed to Bill at proebstw@gmail.com.



Golden-headed Quetzal



Golden-collared Tanager

Bill Proebsting, Vice Pres. & Program Chair

JANUARY BONUS PROGRAM NOTE:

Larry Schwitters of the Pilchuk Audubon chapter will briefly update ASC on local plans to help migrating Vaux's swifts. His detailed article is in the Community Notes section of this newsletter.

NEXT MONTH'S PROGRAM:

Feb. 18. Matt Lee will show his stunning photos of the 'Birds of Belize.'

FIELD TRIP SCHEDULE

SECOND SATURDAY FIELD TRIP

Our Saturday morning local field trip meets the second Saturday of each month from September through June at the Benton Center parking area, behind the Cannery Mall, 777 NW 9th St., Corvallis at 7:30 am. This field trip is free and geared towards beginning birders, birders new to Oregon's mid-valley area and persons looking for a pleasant outing. Contact Bill Proebsting at proebstw@gmail.com or 541-752-0108 with questions. Check the Midvalley ListServ at www.midvalleybirding.org/pipermail/birding/, a couple of days before the field trip for updates. Weather may alter plans. Watch the weather forecast and dress appropriately. Return to Benton Center by noon.

ASC GENERAL MEETING

Thursday, Jan 21
7:00-8:30 pm

Thank you to everyone who helps us set up chairs at 6:15 and take them down afterwards, and to Becky Garrett for coordinating our beverages and treats.

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NEXT HALF DAY FIELD TRIP: JAN. 9, CHEADLE LAKE, LEBANON.

This is an easy walk next to an old logging pond, formerly a side-channel of the Santiam River, now a city park. We will see a variety of ducks, water birds, raptors and passerines in an urban-edge setting.

Bill Proebsting

WEEKEND FIELD TRIPS FOR 2016

As we wrap up the 2015 field trip season with the Christmas Bird Count, our year tallies come to 250 bird species, 25 mammals, 8 reptiles & amphibians, 30 butterflies, 10 dragonflies, and spectacular wildflowers and scenery - all in Oregon. And now we look to 2016.

One change to notice in the schedule is that the Rogue and Malheur trips - which have been Friday to Sunday and Thursday to Sunday in past years - are now Saturday to Monday and Friday to Monday. The Rogue trip includes a play at Ashland's Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and this will be the first time we will see a play that was actually written by Shakespeare - the delightful comedy Twelfth Night.

Klamath Basin is back on the schedule. But the July Willowa trip is gone. There is a possibility that a January or February trip to the Wallows might be organized on short notice.

April 8-10 Bandon
April 22-24 Klamath Basin
May 6-8 Rogue Valley
May 20-23 Malheur NWR
June 10-12 Summer Lake
August 11-14 Steens
September 9-11 South Coast

These are group affairs, where we travel in rental vans from Enterprise, lodge at interesting facilities, and share expenses. Signup sheets will be available beginning at the January ASC general meeting. You can also sign up by email to framsey5@comcast.net.

If there are parts of Oregon you want to add to the schedule, please consider organizing a tour. Assistance in the planning and execution is available.

Fred Ramsey

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

SUPPORT THE WILLAMETTE VALLEY BIRD SYMPOSIUM, JANUARY 30, 2016

ASC members should be excited about the upcoming Willamette Valley Bird Symposium, at the CH2M Hill Alumni Center on the OSU campus. The first symposium was held last January and was a great success. The symposium is presented by OSU and the American Ornithologists' Union, but with ASC as an active participant and supporter.) Once again the WVBS will be a day-long event (9am to 5 pm) bringing together professionals, students, and amateurs to celebrate birds, with scientific presentations, demonstrations of avian research techniques, networking opportunities, and a live raptor exhibit from Chintimini Wildlife Center. For further information and advance

registration (which includes lunch and refreshments) visit www.WillametteValleyBirds.org.

I hope to see many of you at the Symposium.

Chris Mathews, ASC President

CONSERVATION CORNER

PRIORITY CONSERVATION HABITATS

Oregon Audubon Chapters continue to impact priority issues around the state. Continuing to top our focus are the Klamath Basin and Malheur National Wildlife Refuge management. It may be unfortunate that the Klamath Basin agreement, pushed by Senator Ron Wyden, has recently collapsed. But this does allow another chance at the table for fish, wildlife, and refuge interests to negotiate for water deliveries which basin irrigators had only guaranteed for themselves.

Despite difficult and unprecedented ocean conditions this summer, the movement towards improving and expanding our coastal Oregon marine reserves continues to gain steam and credibility. A huge step has been made towards recognizing the ecological importance of forage fish—anchovies, smelt, herring, sand lance, sardines, and the like. These are vital to Marbled Murrelets, and near-shore ocean surveys indicate that central coastal Oregon supports the largest U.S. populations south of Alaska.

Another fish-eating bird, the Double-crested Cormorant, has become vilified nationwide. On East Sand Island in the Columbia River, where roughly one-quarter of its western population breeds, these cormorants have become the latest scapegoat for salmon protection efforts. Science shows that most items ingested by the cormorants are not salmon smolt, but other forage fish also found at the mouth of the Columbia River. Portland Audubon has led the effort to try to stop cormorant slaughter, which is slated to continue in 2016.

Existential threats to native forests of western Oregon will ramp up in 2016, with non-conservation management precipitating the sale of the Elliot State Forest. BLM lands are threatened by both politically weighted plan revisions and Congressional efforts to extract revenue for human services (which county residents refuse to fund themselves). Although federal forests have been managed with the best science available twenty years ago, incorporating new scientific findings in plan revisions reopens the planning process to conflicting political, social and economic interests. Humans also depend upon these ecological communities that are now at risk from conflicting practices and policies.

This year Oregon Chapters also identified prairie habitats as critical, particularly for Streaked Horned Lark, Oregon Vesper Sparrow, and Western Meadowlark species. The mid-Willamette Valley hosts many plant restoration experts, whose efforts, if focused solely on plants, can and do threaten native bird species. Willamette Valley Chapters need to collect and compile data on our native prairie bird species use, and work with plant restoration efforts to protect and enhance prairie bird species as well.

Corvallis Audubon is excited to be working with Pilchuck (Everett, WA) Audubon on a swift project in the city of Albany



that you'll be hearing more about soon.

But looming over all our conservation efforts will be our response to climate change. Earth is the collective habitat of humanity, and it was heartening to see how important the 2015 United Nations Climate Conference in Paris was seen internationally.

Our greatest local conservation challenge for 2016 will be electing representatives with that same commitment to our planet.

Jim Fairchild, Conservation Chair

HOMER CAMPBELL AWARD NOMINATIONS REQUESTED

The Homer Campbell ASC Environmental Award, established in 2005, recognizes a local (Linn, Benton, Lincoln and Polk counties) individual or organization that has made significant contributions in the areas of environmental stewardship, awareness, and outreach.

CONTRIBUTIONS WORTHY OF RECOGNITION MIGHT INCLUDE, BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO:

- promotion of environmentally sustainable practices.
- leadership on local environmental issues.
- classroom education of environmental stewardship.
- habitat restoration or preservation.

Both long-standing and short-term but significant contributions will be considered for this award.

Past award winners include: the OSU Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, Rana Foster, Joel Geier, Don Boucher and Lisa Millbank, Steve Northway, Jeff Mitchell and Elsie Eltzroth.

A committee from ASC will recommend one of the nominees for approval by the entire Board. The selected awardee will then be recognized at the April ASC General Meeting and presented with an engraved plaque. The awardee's name will also be engraved on a permanent plaque that hangs at Hesthavn Nature Center.

Nominations should consist of a letter that describes how the actions or activities of the nominee fit the above-described (or related) criteria. Nominations should include contact information for both the nominee and the nominator and will be accepted until January 31st.

Email submissions may be sent to Linda Campbell, lcampbell@peak.org; Karan Fairchild, alderspr@peak.org; or Dave Mellinger, mellinger@oregonstate.edu

Snail mail submissions should be sent to: ASC, PO Box 148, Corvallis, OR, 97339

ATTN: HC Award Committee

Linda Campbell

ASC EDUCATION NEWS

Planning is well underway for the second annual Winter Wildlife Field Day (WWFD) on March 12 at Finley National Wildlife Refuge from 10 am to 2 pm. Volunteers are still needed to help with guided hikes, and interactive stations. We are also hoping for a couple of monetary sponsors to help purchase items from patches and flyers to art and craft supplies.

Corvallis Audubon, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Friends of Finley, Starker Forests, Inc., and Chintimini Wildlife Rescue Center have already stepped up to help.

Besides staffing the 12 activity stations, we'll also need help with outreach and marketing for the event. Potential volunteers are asked to contact WWFD Volunteer Coordinator and CHAT newsletter editor, Teri Engbring at chateditors@gmail.com.

ASC's education team is also recruiting volunteers to help teach their popular hands on Aquatic Ecology program this spring. Classes will run for 4 hours each Thursday from April 7 to June 9 at the Hesthavn Nature Center. Please email Education Team leader Jessica Brothers at educationaudubon@gmail.com if you can help with some or all of these classes.

Teri Engbring

HESTHAVN NEWS

NEW VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Our Hesthavn Nature Center functions with the help of dedicated volunteers. And as the saying goes ... "many hands make light work". There are a couple of specific tasks that we are looking for someone to take on periodically.

First there is an outdoor bulletin board that we use to post announcements, site information, conservation messages, natural history information.... or whatever the keeper of the board wants to do. It gets a fair amount of sunshine and pictures tend to fade. It probably needs a minimum of one update per season. Someone with an artistic touch might enjoy this job, but anyone is welcome to take this one on.

A second task you might consider is helping with the planning and maintenance of the gardens around the barn. These are native plantings, and are meant to be aesthetically pleasing. Someone with a green thumb and especially someone with knowledge of local native plants would be most welcome to take this on. Due to the generous donations of our Audubon members (and others), there are some funds available for you to work with on these projects. Come drop me a note if either of these openings sounds interesting to you.

Ray Drapek (raydrapek@gmail.com).

NOTE TO FIELD NOTES READERS:

Our current format for the monthly CHAT Field Notes section is extremely time-consuming for the volunteers who have compiled the information each month over the years. It is also increasingly covered by other services and programs, many of which are now electronic and in real time. We need to simplify our effort and would appreciate our readers' brief response to the following questions:

- 1) What is the most valued information you get from the CHAT Field Notes?

2) What sort of information would you like to see in this section in future?

Please put "Field Notes Survey" in the subject line of any response to these questions and send to chateditors@gmail.com by Jan. 13, 2016. Thanks

FIELD NOTES

10/28/15-11/24/15

After months of mostly dry weather, the main theme for this month was rain. A 3-foot high trash can in my yard near EEW filled up with rain by the end of the period. By 7 Dec smaller creeks including Berry Cr. were flooding. The Luckiamute River crested at 30 ft on 8 Dec. The Canal Pond at EEW spilled over a recently rebuilt dike by 9 Dec. Flooding was also widespread along the Marys River. By 11 Dec the Willamette was still rising even as most of its local tributaries were falling. Heavy rains from two more storm systems in the succeeding weeks brought more cycles of flooding in low areas, before the period ended in a cold snap with temperatures mostly below freezing.

Locations: ANWR = Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), BHF: Bald Hill Farm, BSNWR = Baskett Slough NWR, DF = Dunn Forest, EEW = E.E. Wilson Wildlife Area, FNWR = William L. Finley NWR, JFW = Jackson-Frazier Wetlands in Corvallis, LSNA = Luckiamute State Natural Area, MDF = McDonald Forest, PSTP = Philomath sewage treatment ponds, TCP = Teloh-Calapooia Park in Albany, TWG = Talking Water Gardens in Albany. Cabell Marsh, McFadden Marsh, and North Prairie are locations at FNWR.

Observers: AFo: Andrea Foster, AHa: Anne Harlan, BBr: Bill Bradford, BPh: Ben Phalan, BPr: Bill Proebsting, BTi: Bill Tice, CHI: Carol Hiler, CSm: Cody Smith, DBo: Don Boucher, DBu: Dave Budeau, DI: Dave Irons, DRo: Doug Robinson, DSB: Dale Simon-Brown, EKn: Erik Knight, EsE: Elsie Elzroth, FrK: Frank Kolwicz, GW: Gary Whitehouse, HB: Howard Bruner, HH: Hendrik Herlyn, IDz: Isaac Denzer, JDS: Jim Smith, JF: Jeff Fleischer, JGe: Joel Geier, JGi: Julie Gibson, JHa: Jim Harlan, JLy: Jesse Laney, JPh: Jim Philipson, JLe: Jim Leonard, JRo: Jessica Rondema, JRu: Josée Rousseau, JSw: Jenny Swanson, KFr: Kai Frueh, KLi: Karen Lippsmeyer, KMa: Kerry Mammone, LM: Lisa Millbank, LMi: Lora Minty, LMo: Linda Mo, LPN: Lars Norgren, MAu: Mahogany Aulenbach, MB: Mark Baldwin, MC: Marcia F. Cutler, MG: Mary Garrard, MGe: Martha Geier, MLI: Mike Lippsmeyer, MMc: Monica McRady, MMo: Molly Monroe, OA: Olin Allen, OH: Oscar Harper, NPo: Nancy Polikoff, PGa: Patrick Gallagher, PGr: Peter Greenberg, PKa: Peter Kappes, PO: Pam Otley, RG: Roy gerig, RHo: Richard F. Hoyer, RJm: Ron Jameson, RMo: Randy Moore, RNi: Rory Nichols, RTe: Ray Temple, ShF: Shawneen Finnegan, SHg: Susan Hatlevig, SHz: Stephanie Hazen, TMO: Tori Morgan, TyH: Tyler Hallman, VSB: Viviane Simon-Brown, WW: Will Wright.

Other abbreviations: (e) = reports found in eBird database; e.o.p. = end of period; juv. = juvenile, imm. = immature, m. obs. = many observers, R. = river, sp. = species.

Twelve **Greater White-fronted Geese** were at Finley NWR 25 Nov (MMo); two were still there 27 Dec (EKn). Two **Snow Geese** and a **Ross's Goose** were with a flock of 15,000 **Cackling Geese** at FNWR 25 Nov (HH, OH), with a second **Ross's Goose** also in the area (Molly Monroe), and one still there 5 Dec (JLy). An adult **Brant** was in a flock of 18,000 **Cackling Geese** s.e. of Halsey 26 Dec (ShF, DI). Four adult **Trumpeter Swan** and one juv. were with 25 **Tundra Swans** s. of Airlie 2 Dec, and 25 **Trumpeters** were on a flooded field pond near Sarah Helmick State Park 11 Dec (JGe). More than 500 **Tundra**

Swans were at FNWR 25 Nov (MMo). At least 250 were along American Dr near Halsey 7 Dec (JF); 600 or more were there 20 Dec and 27 Dec (RHo, PO). Two **Gadwall** were at PSTP 12 Dec (PO). A male **Eurasian Wigeon** was at PSTP 8 Dec (HH, OH); on 21 Dec one was on a nearby flooded field. Another was with 700 **American Wigeons** at FNWR 28 Dec (EKn). Most **Cinnamon Teal** migrate south for winter, but a few were still at TWG 10 Dec (BPr). A flock of more than 10,000 **Northern Pintails** flew south high over FNWR 13 Dec (CSm). 3000 were on marshes at FNWR 28 Dec (EKn). A "**Eurasian**" **Green-winged Teal** (also called **Common Teal**) was at BSNWR 28 Dec (PGa). 37 **Canvasbacks** were still at PSTP 8 Dec (HH, OH); two were at FNWR 28 Dec along with 750 **Ring-necked Ducks** (EKn). A female **Surf Scoter** that turned up on Cabell Marsh 19 Dec (IDz) may have been pushed inland by storms. **Hooded Mergansers** males displayed and gave calls while tipping their heads back at FNWR 10 Dec (JLe). Pairs were also seen on a tiny pond near Adair Village 24 Dec (OA) and on a private pond near Lewisburg 26-27 Dec (NPO fide JGi).

A big flock of **Wild Turkeys** near Lacombe 26 Nov seemed to have survived the Thanksgiving holiday (Chi).

A **Pacific Loon** was on an oxbow off of the Santiam River 14 Dec (TyH, BPh, PKa, JRu). A **Common Loon** stopped by PSTP 11 Dec (MB); another one flew around the ponds 12 Dec but did not land (PO).

Eight **Eared Grebes** were still at PSTP 12 Dec (PO). A **Western Grebe** turned up on PSTP on 8 Dec following stormy weather (HH, OH); another was on a small pond s. of Independence 11-18 Dec (KLi, MLI).

An **American Bittern** and a **Green Heron** lingered at at TWG 10 Dec (BPr). **Great Egret** sightings included one in a field near McFadden Marsh 29 Nov (MC). On 29 Nov MGe was surprised to see a smaller, all-white bird flying northward, low over the west side of EEW; binocular views as it circled to gain altitude on thermals revealed that it was a **Cattle Egret** (MGe, JGe). The bird was not relocated but another one has been wintering in Tillamook Co. (m. obs.)

An **Osprey** hovering over small ponds n. of Coburg 18 Dec may have wandered north from Cottage Grove Res. where one was wintering before runoff from heavy rains muddied the water (DBu; TMO). Twelve **Bald Eagles** were using the regular winter roosting site SW of Tangent by 25 Nov (LPN). 22 were there on 29 Nov (VSB, DSB) and more than 64 on 28 Dec (PGr). Nine fed on a single sheep nearby 27 Nov (RMO). An adult soared over NW Corvallis 13 Dec (RHo). An imm. **Golden Eagle** fed on dead sheep alongside **Bald Eagles** at PSTP 25 Nov (IDz). A **White-tailed Kite** continued at the North Prairie overlook 9 Dec (HH, OH). A female **Northern Harrier** patrolled JFW 20 Dec (DBo). Two **Sharp-shinned Hawks** appeared to be hunting in tandem near TCP 3 Dec as an imm. hawk had a **Downy Woodpecker** "pinned" in a tree when an adult flew in from behind, though the woodpecker managed to evade both hawks (JDS). A **Cooper's Hawk** flew over Kings Blvd at Mulkey Ave 9 Dec, just minutes before a small **Sharp-shinned Hawk** flew over Kings a block north of there (RHo). An adult **Red-shouldered Hawk** continued in the s. end of EEW thru 13 Dec (JGe). One perched along Riverside Dr. ne of Corvallis 20 Dec (GW). An imm. was along Ogle Rd. w. of Brownsville 24 Dec (RHo). One was along Peoria Rd. 26 Dec (MMc). **Red-tailed Hawk** numbers in SW Linn Co. 7 Dec were lower than usual, perhaps due to conversion of fields to annual rather than perennial grasses, so fewer voles (JF). Concentrations of **Rough-legged Hawks** included several along Bruce Rd w. of McFadden 29 Nov (MC), seven near Brownsville 8 Dec (JF), and five at FNWR 28 Dec (EKn). Dark-phase individuals were spotted hover-hunting at Bald Hill Farm 25 Nov (RJm) and on the south side of FNWR 20 Dec (RHo).

A **Virginia Rail** called at JFW 20 Dec (DBo); others along with **Sora** were reported from TWG thru the period (m.obs.). A lone **Sandhill Crane** called as it flew south high over fields s. of FNWR 13 Dec (CSm).

60 **Black-bellied Plovers** were with about 300 **Dunlin** in a field



along Lake Cr. Rd. 27 Dec (PO). **Killdeer** flocks returned to flooded meadows in TCP by 16 Dec (JDS). 20 **Long-billed Dowitchers** were at BSNWR 18 Dec (FrK). A **Red Phalarope** was reported from PSTP 10 Dec (DRo). A **Wilson's Snipe** showed up again in Stoneybrook Village 2 Dec, probing the ground under a tree for food, then settled down for a nap (EsE). A dozen flushed from a flooded field s. of JFW 20 Dec (DBo, LM).

An adult **Bonaparte's Gull** stopped by PSTP 12 Dec (PO; HH; WW). 44 **Mew Gulls** were sw. of Tangent 28 Nov (HH, OH). 39 were with one **Ring-billed Gull** and 2 **California Gulls** in a field near PSTP 21 Dec (HH). About 250 **Ring-billed Gulls** were e. of Tangent 23 Dec (LPN). A possible **Lesser Black-backed Gull** was w. of Tangent 7 Dec (LPN) but could not be relocated for diagnostic views. A well-described **Glaucous Gull** was e. of Tangent 22 Dec (IDz, KFr).

More than 100 **Mourning Doves** were in s. end of EEW 26 Nov and at least 75 were in the n. half of EEW 9 Dec (JGe).

A **Western Screech-Owl** present for three days in a row near Alpine was photographed 11 Dec (MAu). One called 14 Dec on Witham Hill (JGi). A **Barred Owl** napped in a tree in SE Corvallis 27 Nov (JPh). One flew across 9th St and landed in a tree near the old Elmer's Restaurant 23 Dec (RNi). A **Northern Saw-whet Owl** sang in Witham Hill Natural Area just after midnight on 15 Dec (HH, OH). Four **Short-eared Owls** were sw Tangent 26 & 29 Nov (BBr, LMi; VSB); a remarkable concentration of 22 were reported in nearby fields 28 Dec (LMo). Three flew over the North Prairie at Finley 29 Nov (MC); one along Bruce Rd. was harried by a Northern Harrier 9 Dec (HH, OH).

Several **Anna's Hummingbirds** continued in AFo's Timberhill neighborhood thru late Nov. A feeder rigged with a small electric bulb in a closed container, below the sugar water, helped keep a feeder open during freezing weather for a pair at Stoneybrook Village (EsE).

A juv. **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** photographed on the ne. side of Cheadle Lake 14 Dec (TyH, BPh, PKa, JRu) was still in the same area 29 Dec (BPh). Three **Red-breasted Sapsuckers** sipped sap from a big-leaf maple in Lyons City Park 29 Nov (SHz, RTE). Another visited a Timberhill yard along with a **Downy Woodpecker** thru late Nov (AFo). A female "**Yellow-shafted**" **Northern Flicker** was n. of EEW headquarters 9 Dec (JGe).

American Kestrels have been extraordinarily abundant in the mid-Willamette Valley this winter (RHo; JF; m.obs.). 35 were counted on raptor survey in Scio/Crabtree area 5 Dec (JH), and 101 in sw. Linn Co. 7 Dec (JF). One even turned up in a Corvallis residential neighborhood 25 Dec to dine on a small bird (MC). A pale "prairie" **Merlin** continued to hunt near TCP thru 30 Nov (JDS). A **Merlin** hunted in strong winds at PSTP 8 Dec (HB); one flew over Valley Library on the OSU campus 9 Dec (DBo). A large falcon was standing in a field n. of Halsey 9 Dec was very likely a **Gyr Falcon** (RHo). Three **Peregrine Falcons** w. of Lebanon 10 Dec included two that squabbled over a **Dunlin** kill before a very aggressive **Bald Eagle** chased both of them out of the area (JF). **Prairie Falcon** sightings included one along Livermore Rd. 4 Dec (Bill Tice), one was along Oupor Dr. n. of Lacomb 5 Dec (JH), one se. of Halsey and another near Peoria 7 Dec (JF), one near Brownsville 8 Dec (JF), one was along Plainview Rd 10 Dec (JF) where one (an adult female) was also seen 24 Dec (RHo).

Black Phoebes continued thru mid-Dec both in the s. end of EEW and near the EEW angling pond (JGe). One was reported regularly from PSTP (HH; m.obs.). One foraged from cottonwoods in a flooded swale in the north unit of LSNA 15 Dec (JGe). One turned up on a farm s. of Monmouth 21 Dec (MLi). A **Say's Phoebe** along Pugh Dr. w. of Davis Rd. 27 Nov (RG) was seen nearby 29 Nov (PO; MB).

A **Northern Shrike** was along Livermore Rd. 4 Dec and 28 Dec (BTi, JRo). Another was near the Tangent STP 15 Dec (LPN).

A **Steller's Jay** sang its soft subsong from a willow near EEW 24 Dec. At least 700 **American Crows** feasted among the wrack lines of

debris left by receding flood waters, in field n. of Airlie 11 Dec (JGe).

A flock of 25 **Horned Larks** were along Green Valley Rd. in Linn c. 25 Nov (LPN). A flock estimated at 320 was se. of Seward and Country Rds. 27 Nov (RMO); at least 200 there 28 Nov (HH).

Two **Tree Swallows** flew by the Bruce Rd. overlook at FNWR 25 Nov (MMo). An unidentified swallow (most likely also a Tree Swallow) was over NW Corvallis 10 Dec (HB).

A **Mountain Chickadee** visited a feeder in the Lewisburg area 28 Nov thru 16 Dec (KMa). One visited a feeder near the Camp Adair rifle range daily 23 Nov thru 6 Dec, last seen 25 Dec (AHa, JHa). One was at a feeder in Philomath 15-16 Dec (fide MC, IDz). One visited a feeder s. of Crabtree 25 Dec (JH). On 9 Dec two **Chestnut-backed Chickadees** fed alongside **Bushtits** on poison-oak bushes at EEW where this species is uncommon (AHa). Feeder watchers in valley-floor towns continued to report more **Red-breasted Nuthatches** than usual this winter (m. obs.).

A winter "traveling circus" visiting HB's Corvallis yard 11 Dec included a **Brown Creeper**, **Downy Woodpecker** and others. Mixed feeding flocks such as this, often with chickadees, kinglets and nuthatches in the mix, are one of the fun events to watch for in this season.

Several **Marsh Wrens** were noted during a Naturalist Adventure field trip to JFW 20 Dec (DBo). A **Wrentit** posed for photos near Alpine 27 Dec (MAu).

Two **White-breasted Nuthatches** fed in and around mistletoe clumps alongside **Western Bluebirds** at LSNA's south unit 20 Dec (JGe). Three **Western Bluebirds** returned to a feeder in Stoneybrook Village 2 Dec (Elsie Eltzroth). Seven took turns at a feeder in the Cheldelin neighborhood thru 19 Dec, occasionally excreting **Oak Mistletoe** seeds in gooey strings of "poop" caused by a substance called viscin from the mistletoe berries, that would stick to whatever surface the birds were on (LM).

A **Varied Thrush** visited a NW Corvallis yard during late Nov (AFo). 10 were in a N. Albany yard 5 Dec (CHi).

A very large **American Pipit** flock continued in the Davis/Green Valley Rd. area 25 Nov (LPN). 22 **Cedar Waxwings** were in the Witham Hill area 15 Dec (HH, OH).

Yellow-rumped Warblers were noted to be sparse in much of the area, but many dozens, likely 200 to 300 have been wintering in EEW. Two **Townsend's Warblers** visited a Witham Hill feeder 30 Nov (HH, OH) and one turned up in a NW Corvallis yard 1 Dec (AFo). These bright, hardy warblers, always a highlight of winter birdwatching, were first noticed in the Cheldelin neighborhood 20 Dec (DBo).

Good numbers of **Fox Sparrows** were reported this month by many observers. **Lincoln's Sparrows** were among the highlights of an ASC field trip to TWG 12 Dec (BPr) and the Naturalist Adventure to JFW 20 Dec (DBo). A **Swamp Sparrow** called repeatedly from a blackberry sump in the ne. corner of EEW 9 Dec (JGe); another was in a small wetland along Harrison Blvd 15 Dec (HH, OH). Three **White-throated Sparrows** visited a Witham Hill feeder 30 Nov and five were in the same area 15 Dec (HH, OH). A noticeable size difference between leaner imm. vs. more robust adults was noted in a **Golden-crowned Sparrow** flock at TCP in late Dec (JDS). Numbers of **Dark-eyed Juncos** increased noticeably in yards with feeders after cold weather started in lat Nov (m. obs.). "**Slate-colored**" individuals were noted at LSNA 27 Nov and on Witham Hill 30 Nov (JGe; HH).

Three **Lapland Longspurs**, and a **Chestnut-collared Longspur** found with a lark flock sw. of Tangent 27 Nov were reported thru 5 Dec (RMO; m.obs.). A **Snow Bunting** was in the same area 28 Nov thru 5 Dec (HH; m.obs.). Two were at Corvallis airport 15-29 Dec (PKa; RMO).

Two **Western Meadowlarks** sang at the North Prairie overlook 9 Dec (HH, OH). Three **Brown-headed Cowbirds** were at the OSU dairy barn 15 Dec (HH, OH).

Many local feeder watchers commented on the high numbers of

MEMBERSHIP CORNER

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Isaac Denzer
Kim and Karen Jones
David Patte

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

To renew your membership online go to: www.audubon.corvallis.or.us/join.shtml & renew via Paypal, or you can mail a check to: ASC, PO Box 148, Corvallis, OR 97339.

EMAIL NOTIFICATIONS:

Please note that you need to opt into the ASC listserve. After you sign up, you'll receive up-to-date email notifications about ASC events, fieldtrip locations, volunteer work parties and weather-related cancellations. Send an email to our listserve administrator, Karan Fairchild, and request to be added to the [listserve: alderspr@peak.org](mailto:alderspr@peak.org)

HAVE YOU CHANGED YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION?

If you have moved or changed your email address, send your new contact information to Suzanne Ortiz at ortizsv@gmail.com.

*Suzanne Ortiz,
ASC Membership Chair*

Pine Siskins . A flock of 50 or more visiting a feeder w. of Corvallis Airport thru 12 Dec drew the attention of a **Merlin** (J5w). Several hundred **Pine Siskins** in in Corvallis thru 12 Dec perplexed the resident **Anna's Hummingbirds** as they crowded around the feeders (SHg).

With fields now fully saturated going into the New Year this could be a good month to watch flocks of swans, geese and ducks as they spread out, attended by falcons and other raptors. Please post your observations to the Mid-Valley birding list at midvalleybirding.org, e-mail them to me at joel.geier@peak.org, or call (541) 745-5821 by 26 Jan.

COMMUNITY NOTES

MIGRATING SWIFT ROOST CRISIS

Vaux's Swift Project Coordinator Larry Schwitters will also address the swift roost crisis at the January, 2016 General Meeting

Swifts and swallows may share the open sky, but they are significantly different creatures. Swallows, as perching birds, are good at doing just that. Swifts are unable to perch and when not flying cling to a rough vertical surface using their tail as a kick stand.



Vaux's Swift roost in chimney. Courtesy of Vaux's Happing live stream.

Apparently swifts, unlike most birds, are unable to fluff up their feathers to trap body heat. Our Audubon project, using an inside the chimney security camera and deploying temperature recorders has convinced our Audubon project how Vaux's Swifts compensate for their lack of feather fluffing. Their first response is to share body heat. We no longer watch five thousand swifts circling a potential roost site for thirty minutes and think they are calling out, "Here's a safe place to spend the night". We now believe the message is "Come share your body warmth with us". They can, and will, come a long ways to huddle together as demonstrated by 6,500 in Monroe Wagner on a cold wet Third of July.

The swifts have another trick. Our inside chimney temperature logger data shows the swifts get a huge thermal advantage from masonry structures which soak up the heat of the day and slowly release it to the little birds all night long. A clear chilly night after a warm sunny day may be 25 degrees F, warmer inside, not only more comfortable, but perhaps crucial for the bird's survival. Add 5000 hot little bodies and it could be 40 degrees warmer.

But the "good" sites were all built before the 1940's building codes which required an insulated, smooth liner. These old chimneys, some attracting huge numbers of Vaux's Swifts during their southbound migration along the Pacific coast are just one large earthquake away from destruction, and only a dozen or so of these brittle tubes shelter 80-90 percent of the migrating birds. Ownership can also be an issue. Birds are messy and "It's my property and I can do what I want with it" is a common mindset. It's easy to cover the opening with a screen or sheet of aluminum



like was done in 2013, despite Audubon's serious and involved negotiations, at the huge downtown Los Angeles roost site. The swifts were bouncing off the cover as the sun set and most grabbed the closest shaft they could find.

Ellensburg's old hospital was a historic and reliable stop for the swifts in both migrations until it was torn down. Both the swifts and our Kittitas County Audubon observers showed up at the demolition site the following May. The birds substituted the closest residential chimney, but only for that month, and have not been seen since.

Could a chain of dedicated masonry swift migration shelter towers be constructed along the length of the Pacific Flyway? There is little doubt that with enough money and resolve it could be done. But if Audubon builds it, will they (the swifts) come? Perhaps the answer waits in Albany. For more information, contact us at: vauxshappening.org

*Larry Schwitters, Project coordinator,
Audubon Vaux's Happening*

ANNUAL SWCD NATIVE PLANT SALE

It's time to place your Native Plant Sale order with Benton Soil and Water Conservation District. Support local pollinators when you purchase low-cost native trees, shrubs, groundcovers, grasses, flowers, and seeds. Books and other supplies are also available. Visit www.bentonswcd.org to view free landscape designs and place your order by January 31st.

For more information visit www.bentonswcd.org or call 541-753-7208.

*Teresa Matteson,
Benton Soil & Water Conservation District*

CORVALLIS CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT RESULTS FOR 2015

The 54th edition of the Corvallis CBC was held on Dec. 15, 2015, with 47 field participants and about a dozen feeder watchers enjoying a rare dry spell this month. That did allow fog to form, which impeded some birding in the morning, but did not appear to affect species totals, since the count set a new record of 132 species!

Heavy rains earlier in the month led to saturated fields and some minor flooding in low-lying areas. The fields near the Corvallis airport were filled with a large number of Common Ravens gobbling down worms, which helped set a new species count record of 184.

A similar situation existed in Linn County where a large gull flock yielded record numbers of Herring (280) and Thayer's Gulls (80).

A feeder watcher in Philomath saw a Mountain Chickadee (5th count record), which was part of a notable irruption of this species into western Oregon this past fall. And Eurasian Collared-Doves continued their rapid colonization of the area. From being a count week species in 2007 and debuting at 3 in 2008, they've set new record highs nearly every year - 3, 8, 6, 47, 58, 120, 158 - and this year 241.

Other species setting or tying record highs (previous high) were: Hooded Merganser 65 (51), Horned Grebe 2 (2), Eared Grebe 16 (6), Bald Eagle 122 (119), Least Sandpiper 100 (60) and Snow Bunting 2(1). Count week birds were Snow Goose, Common Loon, Western Grebe, Bonaparte's Gull and Lapland Longspur.

I really appreciate the efforts of all the participants, both those in the field and those who participated in a feeder count. In addition, I'd like to specially thank all those who helped out with the countdown potluck, including Marie Martin, Gail Nickerson, Sally Shaw, and Teri Engbring.

Marcia F. Cutler, Compiler

BOARD MEETING SUMMARY

DECEMBER 10, 2015 ASC BOARD MEETING

Plans for the Winter Wildlife Field Day on March 12 are well underway with a large team of enthusiastic volunteers. The board decided that the Hesthavn Open House should be in June, so that it wouldn't conflict with other events. The next board meeting will be Jan 14th at 7 pm at Jim Philipson's home, 305 SE Summerfield.

Gail Nickerson

OPEN BOARD MEETINGS

ASC Board of Directors meetings are open to all ASC members, and the board encourages you to come and see what we do. Our monthly board meeting is on Thursday one week before the General Meeting. See the calendar on the last page of The Chat for meeting location.

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS CHAT

Bill Proebsting, Chris Mathews, Joel Geier, Jim Fairchild, Ray Drapek, Teresa Matteson, Larry Schwitters, Teri Engbring, Marcia Cutler, Gail Nickerson, Suzanne Ortiz, Linda Campbell

CHAT ARTICLES

The Chat editors welcome monthly articles from all members of the Audubon Society of Corvallis. Please submit articles to the Chat editor by the final Thursday of the month. Please submit text using Microsoft Word to:

chateditors@gmail.com

**AUDUBON SOCIETY OF
CORVALLIS**

CALENDAR

Jan 9	Half Day Field Trip to Cheadle Lake
Jan 14	ASC Board Meeting, 7 pm at Jim Philipson house
Jan 21	ASC General Meeting at Chintimini Senior Center, 2601 NW Tyler Ave, Corvallis
Jan 26	Field Notes submissions due
Jan 28	Feb Issue CHAT submissions due
Jan 30	Willamette Valley Bird Symposium at OSU Alumni Center

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; \$35 for a family; \$15 for student; \$15 for Chat only subscriptions (email delivery only); \$50 for Supporting Level; \$100 for Patron Level; and \$200 for Benefactor Level.

Audubon Society of Corvallis
P.O. Box 148
Corvallis, OR 97339

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Audubon Society of Corvallis

www.audubon.corvallis.or.us

President.....	Chris Matthews.....	mathewsc2@comcast.net	541-754-1172
Vice President	Bill Proebsting.....	proebstw@gmail.com	541-752-0108
Secretary.....	Gail Nickerson.....	gbnickerson@comcast.net	541-754-0406
Treasurer.....	Fred Ramsey.....	flramsey5@comcast.net	541-753-3677

BOARD MEMBERS

.....	Teri Enbring.....	engbring@hotmail.com	541-829-2601
.....	Linda Campbell.....	lcampbell@peak.org	541-929-9420
.....	Marie Martin.....	martinm2468@icloud.com	
.....	Spencer Mair.....	smwolfus@yahoo.com	
.....	Mark Baldwin.....	mark.baldwin2@comcast.net	
.....	Jim Philipson.....	parrphil@comcast.net	
Alternate.....	Will Wright.....	willwright26@q.com	541-753-4395

COMMITTEE AND COORDINATORS

Membership Chair	Suzanne Ortiz.....	ortizsv@gmail.com	917-273-4917
Conservation Chair	Jim Fairchild.....	alderspring@peak.org	541-929-4049
Christmas Bird Count	Marcia Cutler.....	marciacutler@comcast.net	541-752-4313
Birdathon Coordinator	Karan Fairchild.....	alderspr@peak.org	541-929-4049
Historian	Marcia Cutler.....	marciacutler@comcast.net	541-752-4313
Hesthavn Chair	Ray Drapek.....	raydrapek@gmail.com	541-754-7364
Publicity Chair.....	Juliana Masseloux.....	masseloj@onid.orst.edu	415-847-0738
Sales Table Chair	Sally Shaw.....	shaws@peak.org	541-757-2749
Refreshment Chair	Becky Garrett.....	becky.bittern@yahoo.com	541-757-7474
Bluebird Trail Chair.....	Raylene Gordin.....	gordin@centurytel.net	541-258-6625
Webmaster.....	Tom Haig.....	tomhaig@hotmail.com	541-231-6583
Chat Newsletter Editor	Teri Engbring.....	chateditors@gmail.com	541-829-2601
Field Notes Compiler.....	Joel Geier.....	joel.geier@peak.org	541-745-5821

EDUCATION TEAM:

Volunteer Support	Teri Engbring.....	engbring@hotmail.com	541-829-2601
Communication, Outreach, Grants.....	Jessica Brothers.....	educationaudubon@gmail.com	

Interested in volunteering? Please let us know: volunteerasc@gmail.com

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

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