



Audubon Society of Corvallis the **CHAT**

February 2006

VOL. 35

#6

General Meeting

Thursday, February 16, 7:30 – 9:00 PM
First Presbyterian Church

Pygmy Rabbits in Eastern Oregon

A presentation by Dr. Joan Hagar,
USGS-GRESC, Corvallis

Dr. Joan Hagar will present this month's lecture on Pygmy Rabbits. Dr. Hagar is a wildlife ecologist at the USGS Forest and Rangeland Ecosystem Science Center here in Corvallis and a faculty member in the Department of Forest Science at OSU. She will talk about her ongoing research on Pygmy Rabbits in Eastern Oregon. The Pygmy Rabbit is a sage-associated species that is patchily distributed throughout the Great Basin. It is classified by the federal government as a species of concern because of its specialized habitat requirements and evidence of declining populations. Washington populations have already been listed as Endangered. Fragmentation of their high desert habitat and introduction of non-native plants have put them on the radar screen of conservationists in the Pacific Northwest. Dr. Hagar will discuss their life history, habitat use, and conservation needs.

Directions

The chapter meeting is at the meeting hall of the First Presbyterian Church (upstairs), 114 SW Eighth Street. As usual, the meeting will be preceded by a social period, with refreshments, beginning at 7:00.



Illustration by Don Boucher

Programs for Upcoming General Meetings

- Mar 16 *Endangered Species Recovery Efforts in Brazil*, by Carlos Bianchi, Dept. of Fisheries and Wildlife, OSU.
- April 20 *Distribution and Status of Black Oystercatchers*, by Elise Elliott-Smith (USGS FRESC), Liz Kelly (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), and Caleb Spiegel (Dept. of Fisheries and Wildlife, OSU).
- May 18 *Iceland: Land of Fire and Ice*, by Dr. Barry Wulff, Mary's Peak Chapter / Sierra Club.

Susan Haig

Drilling in Alaska

Plan to Drill Bird Habitat Denounced by Audubon

Washington, DC, January 20, 2006 - Ignoring vocal opposition from Alaska Natives, scientists and sportsmen, the Bush Administration opened for leasing 100 percent of the internationally significant Teshekpuk Lake Special Area in the Northeast Planning Area of the National Petroleum Reserve—Alaska (NPRO). The decision eliminates long-established wildlife and environmental protections first put in place by Reagan Administration Interior Secretary James Watt.

The Teshekpuk Lake area was targeted for drilling by the industry-dominated Energy Task Force headed by Vice President Dick Cheney in 2001. The 4.6 million-acre area

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Alaska

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of the NPRA is immediately west of the massive Prudhoe Bay oil field in far northern Alaska bordering the Beaufort Sea, and provides vital habitat for migratory waterfowl, caribou and other wildlife, and is an important subsistence hunting and fishing area. Congress last month decisively rejected a proposal to drill in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, 110 miles further to the east.

The Teshekpuk Lake Special Area encompasses one of the most important wetland complexes in the circumpolar Arctic. The 45,000-head Teshekpuk Lake Caribou Herd bears its calves and seeks relief from insects near Teshekpuk Lake, and it is a key summer molting or nesting location for many of North America's migratory ducks, geese, swans, loons and other birds. It is heavily used by Alaska Natives for subsistence fishing and hunting, especially caribou hunts. Brant and other waterfowl that migrate here are harvested for both subsistence and sport in Alaska and in many of the Lower 48 states.

"This plan is utterly unbalanced: even the Reagan Administration protected the waterfowl habitat around Teshekpuk Lake because of its world-class ecological and cultural value," said Stan Senner, executive director, Audubon Alaska. "No one should be fooled by the window dressing in this document: this plan makes every last acre available for oil development. The administration has decided that there isn't one acre of this magnificent region that should be protected."

For more information, go to <http://www.audubonalaska.org/m3item5.html>.

Red Knot Emergency Listing

Petition Denied

Bush Administration Says No to Protecting Bird Forecasted to go Extinct in 5 Years

The Bush administration has declined an emergency request from Defenders of Wildlife and others to provide Endangered Species Act protections for the red knot. This despite the fact that the bird has seen a 90% drop in its population over the last ten years and is forecasted by scientists to go extinct as soon as 2010.

"The Bush administration has ignored the clear and compelling science showing that emergency listing is desperately needed to protect the red knot," said Jamie Rappaport Clark, Executive Vice President and Former Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service. "If the bird is not awarded protection under the Endangered Species Act, it will likely disappear from New Jersey's shores in a matter of years."

Defenders slammed the reasoning behind the Service's denial of the petition, which included the assertion that an

emergency listing was not needed since the bird "seemed to have a relatively good year" and that steps were already being taken or pending that will help the bird's numbers.

"No biologist worth their degree would suggest a species is on the path to recovery based on one year's population count," said Clark. "The number of red knots on the Delaware Bay has declined consistently for the last seven years and they are at their lowest point in the 20-year period of the survey. The population is now so small that something as simple as bad weather conditions on its breeding grounds could significantly impact the remaining birds

"It is monumentally irresponsible to use data from one field season to suggest the bird is secure. Their decision is a political one, pure and simple," added Clark.

The red knot, a shorebird, makes a remarkable migratory journey each spring, with some of the population flying from as far away as the tip of South America to the Arctic, making just a few stops along the way. The last stop on their migration is the Delaware Bay. This final stopover is thought to be the most important staging area and the last major refueling spot before completing a nonstop journey to their Arctic breeding grounds. While at the Bay, the famished birds feast on horseshoe crab eggs to fuel up to complete the remainder of their journey and successfully breed. But, in recent years, this primary food source has rapidly disappeared due to the greatly increased harvest of horseshoe crabs beginning in the 1990s.

"Many of the measures the Fish and Wildlife Service says are helping the bird have actually not had any real positive impact on the bird's continuing decline and future actions are unlikely to preclude the need for listing," added Caroline Kennedy, Director of field Conservation Programs for Defenders. "There is no guarantee that a moratorium on horseshoe crab egg harvests will be passed, which means every season the Red Knot goes without federal protection is another season closer to extinction."

"The Bush administration's actions make one wonder just how close to extinction an animal must be before it will act," said Clark. "This species is literally disappearing before our eyes and still the Bush administration refuses to take any steps to save it."

Clark pointed to a statement about the red knot Secretary Norton made to the Washington Post last June where she said that, "We have, on occasion when a species is in a very serious situation, taken some emergency action." (WP, June 10, 2005)

"If they won't save the red knot, which literally stands at the brink, what will they save?" asked Clark.

Defenders continue to work to bring the red knot under the protections of the Endangered Species Act.

Corvallis Christmas Bird Count Results

120 (or 121) species were seen during the Corvallis CBC held on Tuesday, Dec. 20th. The weather was dry in the morning, showery starting around noon and heavier rain by 3 p.m. Temperatures stayed above freezing, though shallower ponds were still frozen after the recent cold spell. All-in-all a fairly decent day for birding by Western OR standards!

Highlights include: Cinnamon Teal and Common Goldeneye seen along the Willamette, 2 Black Phoebes (in Peoria and Snagboat Bend), White-tailed Kites, 2 Prairie Falcons, Thayer's Gull, Burrowing Owl (in ditch along Llewellyn, nr. private landing strip for Venell's Farm), Barred Owl, N. Saw-whet Owl, Tree Swallow (Philomath Sewage Pond), and a Townsend's Solitaire - Linn Co. nr. White Oak Dr. An out-of-season Pacific-slope Flycatcher that was heard only is included in our list but will most likely be rejected by the compiler for the official CBC results.

Count week birds include Least Sandpipers, an immature Trumpeter Swan, Eurasian Wigeon, Red Phalarope (blown in after the storm which occurred right after the CBC) and a Say's Phoebe (Midge Cramer Trail by west end of fairground parking lot). Also there was a report of another Black Phoebe in Corvallis near the Taylor Water Treatment Plant and the apartments along Midvale. Worst misses were Short-eared Owl and Horned/Eared Grebes.

Thanks go to everyone who participated in the count! And special thanks to Rana Foster and Claudia Regier for putting on the chili potluck after the count.

*Marcia Cutler
Compiler, Corvallis CBC*

Great Backyard Bird Count

The National Audubon Society and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology are sponsoring the ninth annual Great Backyard Bird Count this February 17- 20. This event is easy to participate in. You can count as an individual or as part of a group. You can count in your backyard, a park, a refuge, or anywhere. You can count on one, two, three, or all four days. There are no fees and no need to preregister.

Check the GBBC website for complete instructions and downloadable checklists.

According to the (downloadable) GBBC brochure, the 2005 count revealed some interesting observations, including (a) the first GBBC report for Bohemian waxwings in Oregon, (b) northwestward movement of Eurasian collared doves from Florida, with the 59 birds in Idaho being a GBBC first, (c) common redpolls moving south in large numbers for the second straight year, (d) continued north-

eastward expansion of red-bellied woodpeckers toward Nova Scotia.

Corvallis Audubon encourages its members and friends to participate in this year's Great Backyard Bird Count.

Chris Mathews

Field Trip Schedule

Feb 11	Saturday local morning birding 7:30 AM
Feb 18	Full day Fern Hill Wetlands and Jackson Bottom — Forest Grove/Hillsboro
Mar 11	Saturday local morning birding 7:30 AM
April 8	Saturday local morning birding 7:30 AM

Second Saturdays: (Year round)

Our second Saturday morning local field trip meets at the Avery Park Rose Garden parking area at 7:30 AM. This field trip is especially interesting for beginner birders and new birders 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. Field trip leader is Paula Vanderheul, 541-752-0470, vanderp@peak.org

Full day birding

On the full day trips we car pool sharing gas cost with the drivers. Everyone is to bring a large lunch, drinks, binoculars, spotting scope, warm clothing, sturdy shoes, and rain gear. We meet at 7:30 AM at the Benton Center parking lot at 757 NW Polk which can be reached by turning east on Polk at the corner of Polk and 9th street where Border's Books is located.

On Feb 18, 2006 Marcia Cutler will lead a birding trip to Fern Hill Wetlands and Jackson Bottom Wetlands. It will be a day of walking diked ponds hopefully full of waterfowl. Be ready for rainy weather. Bring lunch, warm clothing, and your boots. We meet at the Benton Center parking lot at 7:30 AM to car pool. We should return by 6:00 PM. Contact Paula Vanderheul for questions. vanderp@peak.org 541-752-0470

Spring weekend birding

Mar 17-19	Bandon Coast (Trip full - waiting list open)
Apr 21-23	Klamath Basin (Two openings available)
May 5-7	Rogue Valley with Shakespeare play "UP" (four openings)
May 18-21	Malheur NWR (trip full — waiting list open)

Sign-up sheets and trip information will be available at the general meetings, or contact Fred Ramsey 541-753-3677 or flramsey5@earthlink.net

Paula Vanderheul

Field Notes

December 28, 2005 through January 23, 2006

The weather this month can be summed up by two words: very wet. There was only one day without measurable rainfall in the period. Creeks and rivers were constantly swollen by over a foot of rain in the period, with repeated flooding of low-lying farmland, and the Marys, Luckiamute, and Willamette Rivers all exceeding official flood stage at times.

The last few CBCs took place in soggy conditions at Dallas (28 Dec, results compiled by Roy Gerig), Airlie-Albany (31 Jan, compiled by Paul Adamus), and Yaquina Bay (1 Jan, compiled by Rebecca Cheek), with some areas inaccessible except by boat due to flood waters. Flood waters of a sort were even a problem at Santiam Pass (1 Jan, compiled by Stephen Shunk), as counters had to ski or snowshoe around deep puddles in places.

Waterfowl, of course, did not seem to mind the rains. Raptors made the best of it by feasting on voles which were forced out of their burrows, while smaller birds feasted on earthworms. At Marys River Natural Area 2 Jan, Don Boucher noted thousands of "flood refugee" spiderlings and other arthropods swarming on the boardwalk.

As a reminder that this wet winter can't go on forever, the first few wildflowers began to bloom. By 12 Jan Karan Fairchild noted blossoms opening on both spring queen (*Synthris reniformis*) and hazels sw. of Philomath, and Wayne Hoffman saw a skunk cabbage bud opening along Beaver Creek in Lincoln Co. (Wayne Hoffman).

Abbreviations & Locations: CBC = Christmas Bird Count; NWR = National Wildlife Refuge; m. obs. = multiple observers; p. obs. = personal observation. Baskett Slough (NWR) is near Dallas in Polk Co. Coffin Butte and E.E. Wilson (Wildlife Area) are north of Corvallis along Hwy 99W. Luckiamute Landing greenway is along the Willamette in se. Polk Co. McFadden Marsh is at Finley (NWR) south of Corvallis. Vanderpool Tract is just s. of Luckiamute Landing in ne. Benton Co.

Inland Reports

A **Greater White-fronted Goose** was seen daily with the Western Canada Geese at Toketie Marsh, 10 Jan onward (Chris & Mike Miller, Ray Fiori). One was with **Dusky Canada Geese** and **Cackling Geese** at Crescent Valley H.S. 16 Jan (Nanette & Rich Armstrong). 12 were along Hungry Hill Rd. in Linn Co. 16 Jan (Jeff Fleischer). A **Snow Goose** was along Griggs Dr. 16 Jan (J Fleischer). A **Brant** was near Blueberry Rd. e. of Peoria 29 Dec (Randy Campbell).

The flock of **Trumpeter Swans** continued at Suver Junction (Airlie Rd. x Hwy 99W n. of Corvallis) and vicinity through the period, with a peak count of 60 on 9 Jan. Two **Whooper Swans** sometimes seen with them are believed to be escaped birds from a nearby residence, where Mike Lippsmeyer reported them escaped last summer.

During the Airlie CBC, Paula Vanderheul and Marcia Cutler saw a few swans with red collars in a flock of 400 swans along Simpson Rd. According to the Trumpeter Swan Society this method is being used to track **Trumpeter Swans**. Collared Trumpeter Swans have not previously been seen in our area, so this may indicate birds from a different population than the usual wintering flock.

Tundra Swan flocks of up to 400 were seen regularly in the area from Suver to Airlie. 510 **Tundra Swans** were near Halsey 28 Dec (Molly Monroe), and three flocks totaling over 1500 were sw. of Brownsville 8 Jan (R Gerig).

Mallards, **Northern Shovelers**, **Northern Shovelers**, and **Green-winged Teal** were abundant through the period, with smaller numbers of **Gadwall** and **Wood Ducks**. Three **Eurasian Wigeon** were with **American Wigeon** flocks at Grand Prairie Park in Albany, and another was at Timber Linn Park 1 Jan (M Cutler, P Vanderheul). Marcia Cutler noted that wigeons increased dramatically at McFadden Marsh in mid-Jan. A pair of **Cinnamon Teal** showed up at Toketie Marsh 4 Jan. It's hard to say if these are very early spring arrivals or wintering birds.

One **Canvasback**, 208 **Ring-necked Ducks**, 38 **Lesser Scaup**, 118 **Buffleheads**, one **Common Goldeneye**, 16 **Hooded Mergansers**, 100 **Common Mergansers** and 256 **Ruddy Ducks** were found in the Airlie CBC.

Seven **Mountain Quail** visited Elsie Eltzroth's place on Vineyard Mtn. 17-19 Jan. No **grouse** were found during the Airlie CBC. I found three sets of fresh grouse tracks in the snow at Meadow's Edge campground on Mary's Peak 12 Jan.

Eight **Pied-billed Grebes** were paddling around in Randy & Mary Campbell's flooded backyard in Peoria 29 Dec. The ASC field trip to Baskett Slough 14 Jan saw a **Horned Grebe** and two **Western Grebes**.

A total of 97 **Double-crested Cormorants**, 47 **Great Blue Herons**, and 17 **Great Egrets** were found in the Airlie CBC. More than 50 **Great Egrets** were along Irish Bend Rd. near Finley 25 Jan (M Cutler, P Vanderheul).

A **White-tailed Kite** was hunting in the West Corvallis Hills 26-28 Dec (Terry Thayer). Good numbers have been seen n. of Corvallis this winter; on 31 Dec Paula Vanderheul and Marcia Cutler saw one at the National Guard Rifle Range, one along De Armond Rd, and five more n. of Airlie. Eight **Bald Eagles** were found in the Airlie CBC. Five were in s. Benton Co. 25 Jan (P Vanderheul, M Cutler). An adult **Golden Eagle** was at the Vanderpool Tract (R Fiori) and later near Airlie (M Monroe) on 28 Dec, and was seen again on the Airlie CBC.

High numbers of raptors continued to feast on this year's high vole population. 22 **Northern Harriers**, 172 **Red-tailed Hawks**, and 153 **American Kestrels** were found on the Airlie CBC. 32 harriers, 85 red-tails, and 59 kestrels were found in southern Benton Co. 25 Jan (M Cutler, P Vanderheul). On 30 Dec, Jim Fairchild noticed that **Red-tailed Hawks** near Philomath had shifted to islands of high ground in the flooded fields. All were facing the waterline, ready for voles fleeing from flooded burrows.

An immature **Ferruginous Hawk** was hunting voles from a fence line at the sw. end of Sauerkraut Rd. near Airlie 8 Jan (Bill Tice, R Gerig), and was seen there thru the period, sometimes perched in nearby conifers. Several **Rough-legged Hawks** were seen in the same area, including a dark morph on 15 Jan. A total of seven were found in the Airlie CBC.

A total of four **Merlins** were seen on the Airlie CBC. In Corvallis, Bill & Lena Proebsting saw one at Bald Hill Park 7 Jan; Don Boucher saw one fly over the e. part of the OSU campus 25 Jan. A **Peregrine Falcon** was along Airlie Rd. 9 Jan (p. obs.) and one was near Crabtree 16 Jan (J Fleischer). A **Prairie Falcon** was seen regularly along De Armond Rd. and Robison Rd., near the Benton/Polk county line, thru the period.

Six to eight **Sandhill Cranes** were along Tennessee Rd. n. of Lebanon 16 Jan (fide Karan Fairchild), where seven were seen last month. 360 **American Coots**, 355 **Killdeer**, and 2600 **Dunlin** were tallied on the Airlie CBC. 500 **Dunlin** and over 100 **Long-billed Dowitchers** were in a large flooded field along McFarland Rd. s. of Corvallis 25 Jan (M Cutler, P Vanderheul). A few **Red Phalaropes** blown inland continued to be found through 30 Dec, when Don Berg saw one in a flooded field near Maple Grove in s. Polk Co.

Eight **Herring Gulls** near Suver were the only gulls found on the Airlie CBC. 300 **Ring-billed Gulls** were in s. Benton Co. 25 Jan (M Cutler, P Vanderheul). **Mourning Dove** flocks included 35 at the Vanderpool Tract 31 Dec (p. obs.), and 35 in a small tree along De Armond Rd. at Berry Creek 15 Jan (John Woodhouse).

A **Spotted Owl** was heard in MacDonald Dunn State Forest 31 Dec (Sue Meiman); **Barn Owls**, **Western-Screech-Owls**, **Great Horned Owls** and **Barn Owls** were also found for the Airlie CBC. This winter's **Snowy Owl** irruption reached the mid-Willamette Valley with an immature owl three miles w. of Perrydale 1 Jan (B Tice). The owl was seen through the period, often beside a five-gallon white bucket.

An **Anna's Hummingbird** was near Crabtree 8 Jan (R Gerig).

In Corvallis, a male and a female were visiting a yard above Hoover Elementary daily as of 11 Jan (Audrey Ansell); a female has been visiting a yard along Survista Rd. near the Corvallis Hospital, and pairs have been regular near Ponderosa St. and Glenridge Dr. all winter (fide E Eltzroth). A male was displaying near Harding Elementary 22 Jan (D Boucher, Lisa Millbank).

On 27 Jan two **Acorn Woodpeckers** were along Independence Hwy. (R Armstrong), two miles ne. of the established colony in Adair Park.

On 17-18 Jan Jim Liesch of Sublimity sent photos of a **sapsucker** that had taken a liking to a maple in his yard. It seemed to be a **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**, a rare visitor to the West; the possibility that it was a Red-naped Sapsucker or a hybrid is still under review.

Among the large numbers of **Northern Flickers** that winter around Corvallis, Rich Armstrong has noticed several which appear to be intergrades between the Yellow-shafted and Red-shafted forms. Marcia Cutler has also seen several intergrade flickers around town.

A **Black Phoebe** continued through 29 Dec at Randy & Mary Campbell's house in Peoria. Nanette & Rich Armstrong found another se. of Garland Nursery 31 Dec, which stayed thru 5 Jan. A Say's Phoebe was along Sauerkraut Rd. in s. Polk Co. 31 Dec (M Cutler).

A **Loggerhead Shrike** was near Plainview 8 Jan (R Gerig). **Northern Shrikes** seem scarce in Polk & Linn Co. this winter. In Benton Co. one was at E.E. Wilson 31 Jan (J & K Fairchild), another was at the National Guard Rifle Range w. of Coffin Butte 2 Jan (p. obs.), and one continued through the period at Marys River Natural Area off Brooklane in sw. Corvallis (D Boucher).

Nik & Martha Geier and I saw six **Gray Jays** while snowshoeing around puddles in Santiam Pass 1 Jan. Corvid tallies for the Airlie CBC included one **Gray Jay**, 48 **Steller's Jays**, 386 **Western Scrub-Jays**, 2210 **American Crows**, and 22 **Common Ravens**.

Two **Horned Larks** ne. of E.E. Wilson were the only ones found on the Airlie CBC this year. Two **Tree Swallows** were found in the Dallas CBC. A **swallow** (species not determined) was along Dorr Rd. s. of Corvallis 25 Jan (M Cutler, P Vanderheul).

Black-capped Chickadees were singing at Marys River Natural Area 22 Jan (D Boucher). Rich Armstrong and Marcia Cutler both noted **Bewick's Wrens** singing in Corvallis as of 5 Jan. Two **Marsh Wrens** were in Marys River Natural Area 22 Jan (D Boucher, L Millbank).

Good numbers of **Western Bluebirds** have been seen in open country this year, including 149 in the Airlie CBC. Marcia Cutler noted that they were widespread s. of Corvallis 25 Jan, perching on utility wires along the roads. A **Hermit Thrush** visited Andrea Foster's yard in nw Corvallis 18 Jan, a day after a **Varied Thrush** showed up.

Large flocks of **American Robins**, such as 600 which several of us counted in one field in n. Benton Co. 15 Jan, are regularly seen in our area in winter. More surprising was a flock of 100 robins which flew over the Santiam Sno-Park while Steve Shunk and friends were getting their skis out to start the Santiam Pass CBC 1 Jan.

A single large flock of over 300 **American Pipits** along Livermore Rd. n. of Baskett Slough 2 Jan (Hendrik Herlyn, Jamie Simmons, Oscar Harper) exceeded the total of 111 which were found in the Airlie CBC.

A wintering **Orange-crowned Warbler** was feeding in leaf litter along with ten **Townsend's Warblers** along Monroe St. in Corvallis 20 Dec; pulling moths and other insects out of the leaf litter (Sandy Segna, Lynne McAllister). Six **Townsend's Warblers** visited Audrey Ansell's suet feeder in nw. Corvallis daily 7-11 Jan. One was in trees along the creek at Starker Park 8 Jan (Joyce Derlacki). An **Audubon's Yellow-rumped Warbler** at Paula Vanderheul's n. Corvallis yard 16 Jan seems to be "king of the suet feeder, chasing two other Yellow-rumped Warblers away.

Sparrow tallies from the Airlie CBC included 174 **Spotted Towhees**, 25 **Savannah Sparrows**, 66 **Fox Sparrows**, 476 **Song Sparrows**, 9 **Lincoln's Sparrows**, 3 **White-throated Sparrows**, 295

White-crowned Sparrows, 487 **Golden-crowned Sparrows**, and 1335 **Dark-eyed Juncos**. Numbers were lower than usual, at least in part due to the soggy weather. All of the **Savannah Sparrows** found were at the dairy on Oak Creek Rd.; wintering populations in fields n. of Corvallis continue to be depressed since the ice storm two years ago.

A **Sooty Fox Sparrow** visited Andrea Foster's yard in nw. Corvallis 17-18 Jan. **Song Sparrows** were singing around Corvallis 5 Jan (R Armstrong) and 22 Jan (D Boucher). A **White-throated Sparrow** showed up in Chris Mathews' Corvallis yard 16 Jan, the first one he has seen there.

A flock of 42 **Western Meadowlarks** has been around the Vanderpool Tract through the period (R Fiori), often flying up into the oaks. One was singing at Dick & Kathy Sherman's place in Scio 21 Jan. The wintering **Brown-headed Cowbird** flock at the Oak Creek Rd. dairy continues to increase, with at least 270 there during the Airlie CBC.

Eight **Purple Finches**, 159 **House Finches**, 14 **Lesser Goldfinches**, and 22 **American Goldfinches** were tallied on the Airlie CBC. No **Pine Siskins** were found on either the Airlie or Dallas CBC.

Coastal Notes

Two **Yellow-billed Loons** were off the south jetty of Yaquina Bay 11 Dec (Chris & Kate Mathews). An immature **Brown Pelican** was along the south jetty 12 Jan (Wayne Hoffman). Five **Great Egrets** were along Beaver Creek during the Yaquina Bay CBC.

After counting tens of thousands of both **Surf Scoters** and **White-winged Scoters** streaming past Spanish Head and Boiler Bay in late Dec - early Jan, Phil Pickering concluded that there must be at least a quarter million scoters off the central Oregon coast -- a significant fraction of the total world population of these species! Among them Phil also saw a few **Black Scoters**, with a high count of twelve on 13 Jan, and one **Long-tailed Duck** 29 Dec. Another **Long-tailed Duck** was found at Yaquina Bay 1 Jan, as well as a **Barrow's Goldeneye** (fide R Cheek).

A **Northern Goshawk** in Hidden Valley near Toledo was the most notable raptor found in the Yaquina Bay CBC. Notable shorebirds included a **Wandering Tattler** at Yaquina Head, and **Red Phalaropes** at scattered locations. **Common Murres**, **Pigeon Guillemots**, and **Marbled Murrelets** were also found. **Ancient Murrelets** were seen off Boiler Bay 29-30 Dec and 11 Jan (P Pickering).

Mourning Doves visited feeders in South Beach and Toledo 1 Jan (fide R Cheek). A **Snowy Owl** continued to hang around Newport thru the period; it was most often seen around the Hatfield Marine Science Center in South Beach (Cindy Ashy).

A wintering **Rufous Hummingbird** which had been patronizing a feeder e. of Newport showed up 1 Jan for the Yaquina Bay CBC.

Eleven **Western Bluebirds** were at a pasture along Drift Creek pasture 27 Dec (P Pickering). A **Townsend's Solitaire** was near Ona Beach State Park 1 Jan (fide R Cheek). A **Clay-colored Sparrow** found last month along the south jetty was seen again during the Yaquina Bay CBC. A female **Bullock's Oriole** visiting at feeder in north Newport was another unusual wintering bird for the count.

Next month

Please send your sightings by 20 Feb to me at:
38566 Hwy 99W, Corvallis, OR 97330
Telephone: (541) 745-5020
e-mail: jgeier@attglobal.net
Joel Geier

Hesthavn Work Party

Saturday, February 25. The work party will go from 9 am to 3:30 p.m. Probably it will follow the usual pattern in that there will be a morning yard work party from 9 to noon and an afternoon barn work party from 12:30 to 3:30.

Ray Drapek

ASC Wish List

As the Audubon Society of Corvallis expands its Hesthavn Nature Center, education programs, conservation outreach efforts, there are items we would dearly love to have but cannot afford to buy. Listed below are some of these items. If you have new or used (but in good condition) items you would be willing to donate, please contact ASC President Chris Mathews (mathewsc2@comcast.net or 754-1172) Thanks so much for thinking about us!!

- Laptop for meeting and educational presentations
- Binoculars for education programs
- Telescopes for education programs
- Tripods for education programs
- Digital camera for covering ASC events
- Wheelbarrow for Hesthavn

Sue Haig

ASC Volunteer Opportunities

Have a few extra hours on your hands? We'd love to have you help us in any way you can. Please consider the following (contact information can be found under "Officers and Committees"):

- Bring snacks to the monthly meeting (contact: Claudia Regier).
- Work at the monthly Hesthavn work parties (contact: Ray Drapek).
- Help out with the Environmental Education programs for kids (contact: Elise Elliott-Smith)
- Collect donations for, and participate in the annual Birdathon (contact: Mary Van Brocklin).
- Help collate The Chat each month (contact: Fran Gates).
- Collect data on nesting Bluebirds (contact Elsie Eltzroth).

Sue Haig

Avery House Nature Center Winter In-Service Programs

Ages 8-11

March 27-29 Spring Break at the Beach II — All about ocean life! Visit the coast and take a boat trip with Marine Discovery Tours ! (Extra fee of \$14 per student for the boat trip)

Ages 5-7

March 30-31 Spring Break at the Beach - All about ocean life! Take a trip to the Hatfield Marine Center and Yaquina Head Lighthouse.

Programs run 9am-4pm. After- and pre-care available for \$3/hr., \$29/day. 15% off if you register more than 2 days. Register by stopping by the Corvallis Environmental Center office downtown at 214 SW Monroe or by visiting our website at www.corvallisenvironmentalcenter.org.

What is Avery House Nature Center?

Founded in 1995, Avery House offers programs to help kids, families, and adults learn about and explore our local environment.

Our classes are small, usually no more than 20 students. Our adult to student ratio is 10:1 for students aged 8-12 groups, 6:1 for students aged 5-7. We usually have a volunteer or two to assist us with our programs.

We regularly take students to natural areas and other interesting sites in our area.

We offer programming through partners such as the STARS afterschool program, OSU Kidspirit, Lincoln Elementary CAEC program, and Monroe Elementary.

We are an independent non-profit, but receive support from the City of Corvallis, Benton County. Most of our programs are held at our nature center, the little gray house in Avery Park next to the train.

Many of our students have been coming to Avery House for years! Join us and help instill appreciation and awareness of our local environment in our kids.

Melissa Matthewson

Siskiyou Field Institute

Winter Ecology

Feb 17-18 Ashland, OR

Strap on some snowshoes and explore the winter world of Mt Ashland! Naturalist Kristi Mergenthaler will lead us in discovering the ingenious ways plants and animals adapt to a life in the cold and snow. We'll practice winter plant identification and learn how to interpret animal signs. Moderately strenuous snowshoeing. Okay for beginning snowshoers! \$60 per person.

For more information, call the Siskiyou Field Institute at 541-592-3777 or go online at www.thesfi.org.

Amy Schell-Lapora
Program Coordinator

Pacific City Birding and Blues Festival

The 3rd Annual Pacific City Birding and Blues Festival will take place from Friday, February 24th through Sunday, February 26th, 2006. For three days discover secrets about the intriguing bird life and wildlife along the spectacular Oregon coast. There will be seven guided nature hikes and 10 interactive daytime seminars. Each evening after an ocean sunset, try some fine restaurant fare, check out the art galleries, and warm your soul with blues in the night. There will be six different music offerings in town from which to choose.

We have selected knowledgeable seminar presenters who will speak to the interests of both new and experienced birders and wildlife lovers. We are proud to have Tony Angell, noted naturalist and artist, who will discuss the topic of his new book, *In the Company of Crows and Ravens*: why these amazingly intelligent birds have fascinated us throughout all human history. Centered at the Kiwanda Community Center, other indoor daytime sessions include secrets for successful birding, tackling problems of backyard bird habitat, conservation tales of the arctic duck, the land of the exotic Japanese Crane, the call of open ocean birding, the special wildlife world of our Nestucca Bay National Wildlife Refuge, and professional tips on both wildlife photography and nature art sketching. Outdoor activities include six guided field trips at nearby Bob Straub State Park, Whalen Island, and the Nestucca Bay Wildlife Refuge. Plus new to the lineup, we have a limited, special all-day Friday Three Capes Birding Tour with a professional bird guide.

The night air will be alive with soulful blues music. This year we are proud to feature the renowned harmonica bluesman, Paul deLay and his 5-piece band with two performances on Saturday night. New to our lineup is The Inn at Cape Kiwanda Blues Benefit Concert featuring Ben Rice

and the Youth of Blues Band. This is an all-ages Friday night dance to support our local Nestucca High School. Additionally, many of the area's restaurants, pubs, and galleries are scheduling their own live blues, art shows, and food. In addition to the featured two nights of community center dances mentioned above, you will find Blues and Brews at the Pelican Pub Friday night with our festival favorite Lloyd Jones and his Trio. If you are up for more, check for additional music at the Delicate Palate Bistro and at the Pacific City Tidewater Lounge.

So mark your calendars. In February join the flock in Pacific City. Come and enjoy the 2006 Birding and Blues Festival on the beautiful Oregon Coast. The festival is a joint project of the Pacific City/Nestucca Valley Chamber of Commerce, the Tillamook County Futures Council, the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Sitka Center for Arts and Ecology with cooperation from the Chimtimini Wildlife Rehabilitation Center. It is supported by a grant from the Economic Development Council of Tillamook County and donations from over 25 contributing individuals and businesses including the Tillamook Headlight Herald and KMUN/KTIL public radio. Pre-registration begins in January. <www.birdingandblues.com>

Gary Lesniak
Birding and Blues Foundation

Oregon Coast Photography Contest

Oregon Sea Grant and Oregon Coast magazine are inviting photographers of all ages, amateur and professional alike, to help us reveal the authentic, vivid, changing place that is the Oregon coast. Deadline for submissions is September 1, 2006. For more information, go to <http://seagrant.oregonstate.edu/photocontest.html>

Submitted by Marcia Cutler

Aleutian Goose Festival

Mar 31–April 3 Crescent City/Del Norte Co., CA
For more information, go to aleutiangoosefestival.org

Contributors to the Chat

Marcia Cutler, Ray Drapek, Joel Geier, Susan Haig, Gary Lesniak, Chris Mathews, Melissa Matthewson, Amy Schell-Lapora, Paul Vanderheul

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the **CHAT**

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

Calendar

Feb 11 Saturday local birding 7:30 am*
Feb 16 General meeting (front page)
Feb 17-20 Great Backyard Birdcount (p.43)
Feb 17-18 Siskiyou Field Inst. Winter Ecology (p.47)
Feb 18 Full day field trip*
Feb 24 Pacific City Birding and Blues Festival (p.47)
Feb 25 Hesthavn work party (p.46)
Mar 11 Saturday local birding 7:30 am*
Mar 17-19 Bandon Coast field trip*
Mar 27-29 Avery House Spring Break at the Beach (p.46)
Mar 30-31 Avery House Spring Break at the Beach (p.46)
Mar 31-April 3 Aleutian Goose Festival (p.47)
April 8 Saturday local birding 7:30 am*
April 21-23 Klamath Basin field trip*
May 5-7 Rogue Valley field trip*
May 18-21 Malheur NWR field trip*

*see Field Trips on page 43

The Chat is published 10 times a year by the Audubon Society of Corvallis, PO Box 148, Corvallis OR 97339. Annual ASC memberships are \$20 for an individual, \$25 for a family, \$15 for a student. Chat-only subscriptions are \$10.

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