



Audubon Society of Corvallis the **CHAT**

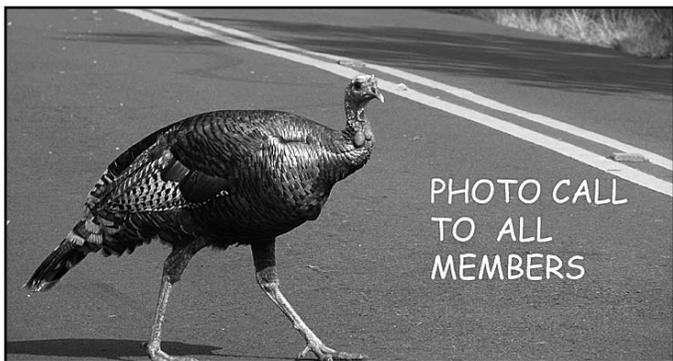
December 2008

VOL. 38

#2

General Meeting

Thursday, December 18, 7:30 – 9:00 pm
First Presbyterian Church



ASC Members Slide Show

Corvallis Audubon's traditional holiday sharing of nature photos offers a great opportunity to see the interesting sights seen by travelers over the past year. Remember that any fun bird, mammal, reptile, amphibian and plant photos are welcome. In order to accommodate as many members as possible, please limit your contributions to 10 of your favorites. Unless you have a slide projector, all photos must be digital and submitted prior to Wednesday, 10 December. Please email the photos or questions to dianaASC@gmail.com or let me know if you want to submit high-resolution photos on a USB thumbdrive. By having all contributions beforehand, I can let you know the order of each presentation and hopefully the show will flow smoothly for everyone's enjoyment.

Join us for the show on Thursday, 18 December, at the First Presbyterian Church. Enjoy meeting other birders for refreshments and Audubon chapter news at 7 pm. The photo show will begin about 8:15.

Diana Brin

Directions

The chapter meeting is in the meeting hall of the First Presbyterian Church (upstairs), 114 SW Eighth Street. The meeting is preceded by a social period with refreshments, which begins at 7 pm.

Climate Masters Class

Corvallis Climate Masters class starts in January

A pilot program from OSU Benton County Extension teaches people how to take individual steps to reduce carbon emission in their own homes and help others do the same. The program is modeled after the Master Gardener idea, where volunteers receive more than 30 hours of instruction from experts in learning practical, low-cost ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from home heating and cooling, transportation, home waste and yards. The course covers successful habit change and how to motivate others. The information shared is based on current research conducted especially for this program.

This program, modeled after a successful program in Eugene, is the first of its kind to come to Corvallis. Classes will be held on Tuesday evenings for eleven weeks beginning January 6, 2009. The course fee is \$66.00 (\$6.00 per class), with scholarships available. There is a discount for two members who come from the same household. Class spaces will be filled on a first-come, first-served basis. Applications and program information can be obtained from the OSU Benton County Extension Office located at 1849 NW 9th Street, or at <http://www.cof.orst.edu/cof/extended/sustain/>. For program details, to contact Viviane Simon-Brown at 541-737-3197 or by email at viviane.simon-brown@oregonstate.edu.

Dave Mellinger

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New ASC Bags 2009 Tote Bags Arrive!

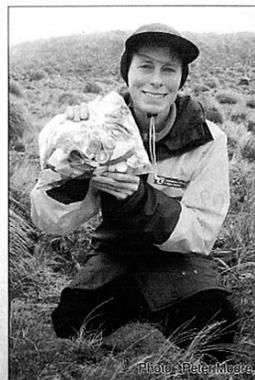


The new ASC tote bag was unveiled at the November 20 general membership meeting. The cloth bag features the Chat illustration by local artist Jon

Janosik. The print color is a deep forest green and has "2009" printed on it. We are planning on having other birds printed on future runs of the bag and changing the date each year. Cost for the new bag will remain as last year's price of \$10 per bag. Using cloth bags is promoted by ASC to increase awareness of sustainable practices. Plastic grocery bags not only waste resources – they can end up polluting bodies of water and damaging a variety of wildlife. Please join us in our efforts to rid the planet of wasteful plastic bags by purchasing a new 2009 Chat cloth bag. The creatures that we share this planet with wish to especially thank you!

John Gaylord

The Problem With PLASTIC



Stacy Moore with plastic recovered from regurgitate found beside nests of Southern Royal Albatross

Room 2 Visits Hesthavn

Muddy Creek Charter School volunteered at Hesthavn

Our class from Muddy Creek Charter School (Room 2) went to the Audubon Society Nature Center yesterday, November 20. We learned about owls and all kinds of birds. We were allowed to look at all the stuff they set up. We liked the bees, the Snowy Owl, and the giant egg. Some of us liked everything! We got to plant seeds to make the place happier and to give the butterflies nectar and the bees pollen in the spring. It felt good to help.

The Students of Room 2

Atop the Nestbox

Bluebird trail report

Due to the bluebird trail's addition of nestbox sites in Linn County, our overall numbers were up for 2008. Spring weather was erratic, with 100-degree temps in mid-May giving way to a long stretch of cold and rain by early June. Because of this, we lost more clutches and nestlings than usual. Demonstrating the resilience of nature, however, the bluebirds rebounded nicely.

The major portion of the ASC bluebird trail is in Benton and Linn counties, with small contributions from Marion and Polk counties. Our 2008 data is as follows:

First broods:	84
Second broods:	56
Third broods:	8
Eggs laid:	718 *
Nestlings banded:	575
Fledged:	533
Fledge rate (banded):	93%
Fledged per box occupied:	4.43 *

*Estimate based on available data

Many thanks to all who donate their time, money, materials, and access to property for the continuation of Elsie's life's work ... for the love of bluebirds! We will ensure that the Western Bluebird and other cavity nesters will always have a champion for their survival in the Willamette Valley.

Raylene Gordin

Hesthavn News

On November 2, Leslie Green led the Art and Nature class for nine young children. They painted trees onto a mural and then made cutouts from construction paper of birds, mammals, leaves, nests and things seen in trees. Leslie provided pottery clay for the children to mold and make nature objects.

On November 22, the open house had nine young children with parents and grandparents discovering nests and eggs, bird specimens, and trail walking.

Hesthavn has added a self-contained handwashing sink inside the center this month. This was purchased with

a grant from OSU Thrift Shop.

In late December, watch for a Hesthavn blog link from our website.

No work party or open house is scheduled for December.

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

A volunteer email bulletin board that publishes work party dates and other events as they happen at Hesthavn Nature Center is available at www.corvallisaudubon.org/mailman/listinfo/hesthavn-news. The website has information on how to subscribe to the Hesthavn-news bulletin board.

Paula Vanderheul

Field Trip Schedule

Monthly Year-Round Saturday Field Trips

Note the new meeting place for all future local Saturday and full-day trips! The Benton Center is at 757 NW Polk Avenue.

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

Jan 10: 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 (757 NW Polk Avenue, 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 richarmstrong@comcast.net 541-753-1978 with questions.

Midvalley birding discussion list

A free subscription email list posts local bird sightings and birding information. I post where the field trip will be going two days before the field trip date on this list. To subscribe, go to www.midvalleybirding.org and follow the instructions.

Spring 2009 Weekend Field Trips

Mar 20-22: Bandon Coast

April 17-19: Klamath Basin

May 1-3: Rogue Valley

May 28-31: Malheur NWR

June 12-14: Summer Lake/Ft Rock/Fremont NFS

Fred Ramsey leads all the spring weekend trips. Fred has been leading these field trips for ASC for over 35 years. He is an amazing field trip guide, sharing his knowledge about finding birds in their habitat and pointing out wild flowers, butterflies, mammals, and reptiles. The field trips fill up early in the fall. Sign-up sheets are available at the

general meeting or email Paula Vanderheul with your requests. vanderp@peak.org

Please note:

- The Rogue Valley and Malheur trips require deposits by February 28, 2009.
- The Rogue Valley deposit is \$40 for the play. The trip date will be announced in future issues of the Chat after the Oregon Shakespeare Festival schedule has been posted.
- The Malheur deposit is \$50. Each deposit must be made payable to Fred Ramsey at 3550 NW Glen Ridge Pl. Corvallis OR 97330.

Rich Armstrong

Culture of Conservation

What is a "Culture of Conservation" and why am I asking?

In short, I'm asking because "to promote a culture of conservation for native plants and animals" is the stated purpose of our Hesthavn. As a new board member I began working with Paula Vanderheul on Hesthavn management, and we started pondering how we could actually work towards the stated goal.

We came to realize that "culture" implied a large number of people, a critical mass, which was identifiable by common values, supporting knowledge, and purpose-driven actions. Those who share a culture may not even know that they are part of something greater than themselves, but their individual actions are driven by and contribute to something that is much more significant than the sum of many individuals acting in isolation. If a behavior is part of your culture, it may be part of you without your even realizing it. The behavior nourishes your soul and supports your bonds with others who share the culture. A culture is long-lived—longer than one human life—and it changes to fit the times.

The American suburban culture is an example. Everyone mows their grass, children play in the street and drivers know to watch for them, certain colors are OK to paint your house, everyone knows (more or less) how much to help their neighbor in various situations and how much to pretend you don't know about their lives lived in close proximity to yours.

In our discussions we envisioned a culture of conservation as one where there was a large body of people taking action to protect and promote native plants and animals: Actions that come naturally without coaching or outside incentives. (For now, let's not get hung up on the terms Conservation, Preservation, Restoration, Rehabilitation, and Habitat Creation, and just think about the type of activi-

see "Culture of Conservation" on page 28

Culture of Conservation, *continued from page 27*

ties that promote native plants and animals.) Some of the actions we imagined included removing invasive plants to make room for native vegetation; establishing food plants associated with animals at risk; providing structure that mimics natural shelters that have been lost; and returning unrestricted waterways and wetlands to the landscape. We realize that there is already a core of such people in our area, and that many of those folks are working with Audubon already. We want to find ways to use Hesthavn to nurture and grow this culture.

While an appreciation of nature is a critical part of a culture of conservation, it isn't sufficient. We can get people excited about birds and native plants, but that doesn't automatically motivate or equip them to take action. Let's use Hesthavn to share the knowledge and skills that will allow more people to begin taking action! We can teach classes on identifying invasive plants and how best to remove them. We can provide a demonstration site with examples of projects that can be done elsewhere. We can mentor youth and adults who want to learn by working at our site. We can document our successes in news articles and printed guides. We can go beyond simply fostering an appreciation of nature and actively promote a culture of conservation.

Gail Andrews

Field Notes

Field Notes: 23 October – 24 November 2008

The last week of October was dry, but the rains came on Halloween and stayed with us for about 10 days. The rest of the period was again dry, which meant fog in the valley and restricted visibility. Dusky Canada Geese arrived along with many large flocks of waterfowl. Oregon's fourth Sedge Wren was spotted very near the location at E. E. Wilson of Oregon's third Sedge Wren. The shock of the century, not just the period, was appearance of a Pyrrhuloxia in Peoria. The bird was a first for Oregon and a real rarity away from its normal range in Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas.

Abbreviations and Locations: m.ob. = many observers. Observer names are noted in parentheses after their reports. Observations without a name (or with WDR) are the editor's. ASC indicates observations made by Audubon Society of Corvallis field trips. EEW = E. E. Wilson Wildlife Area north of Corvallis. ANWR = Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge in Marion County. FNWR = Finley National Wildlife Refuge, and includes Cabell, Cheadle, and McFadden marshes. STP = sewage treatment ponds; Philomath STP are off of Bellfountain Drive south of Philomath. Knoll Terrace STP are off of Elliot Circle in Corvallis. Stewart Lake is at Hewlett-Packard in Corvallis. Toketie Marsh is the remedial wetland for Coffin Butte landfill north of Corvallis, just off of Highway 99W. The Bellfountain Wetland along Bellfountain Drive south of Philomath is also sometimes called the Evergreen Mitigation Bank. The Diamond Hill Road wetland is in Linn County.

A lone adult white-phase **Snow Goose** was with other geese in fields near Philomath STP, 26 Oct. A flock of 13 Snow Geese was near Philomath STP, 23 Nov (R. Hoyer). An immature white-phase **Ross's Goose** visited Bruce Road, FNWR, 9 Nov (m.ob.; see photo). **Dusky Canada Geese** returned to FNWR, 24 Oct, when 10 birds were at McFadden.

Four **Tundra Swans** at Cabell Marsh, 24 Oct, were the first of the fall. The highest local count of Tundra Swans was 138 at ANWR, 13 Nov (M. Monroe). Nineteen **Trumpeter Swans** returned to the Airlie area, 14 Nov (J. Geier).

40 **Wood Ducks** at Monroe STP, 24 Nov, was a good local count (W. Wright). The first fall arrival of **Eurasian Wigeon** was at Philomath STP, 24 Oct, with the highest single count being of only 3 individuals. More than 5000 **Mallards** were at FNWR, mostly McFadden Marsh, in mid-Nov. The dry fall has kept water levels in McFadden Marsh rather low, which has created somewhat limited, but excellent foraging habitat for dabbling ducks. Late **Cinnamon Teal** were at ANWR (R. Armstrong) and at FNWR, 8 Nov; both were adult males. About 500 **Northern Shovelers** foraged daily at Philomath STP. **Northern Pintails** peaked at only 1000 at FNWR the first week of Nov; that number is less than a third of their abundance last year. The high count for **Green-winged Teal** was 3000 at Cabell Marsh, 13 Nov.

Canvasbacks reached their maximum of 22 from 30 Oct-7 Nov at Philomath STP. They also were present throughout the period at Stewart Lake (J. Simmons). At least 2 **Redheads** made their first local appearance of the fall, 23 Nov, at Philomath STP (R. Hoyer). One of few local records, a female **Tufted Duck** stopped by Philomath STP, 8 Nov. Two **Surf Scoters** were at Philomath STP for a day, 5 Nov (WDR, m.ob.). A female **Red-breasted Merganser** visited for a few hours at Philomath STP, 5 Nov (WDR, m.ob.).

Wild Turkeys continue to become more common. A flock of 33 in Soap Creek Valley, 16 Nov (T. Robinson, WDR), was a large group.

Three **Western Grebes** were near Corvallis airport, 9 Nov. As many as 3 **Eared Grebes** continued throughout the period at Philomath STP (m.ob.).

The relatively low water levels at McFadden Marsh attracted as many as 13 **Great Egrets** throughout the period (R. Armstrong).

A late **Turkey Vulture** was along Morgan Drive, Linn County, 23 Nov (C. Whelchel). Up to 3 **White-tailed Kites** foraged at the FNWR prairie (S. Seibel, m.ob.). Regularly seen each fall as they follow flocks of migrating Cackling Geese, a **Golden Eagle** again appeared at FNWR and attacked successfully the grazing geese throughout the period (m.ob.). A **Prairie Falcon** was perched along Lakeside Drive, Benton County, 9 Nov.

A **Virginia Rail** was still present at McFadden Marsh, 22 Nov (R. Armstrong). Numbers of **American Coots** held steady at 500 at Philomath STP.

An adult **Bonaparte's Gull** and 3 adult **California Gulls** were at Philomath STP, 30 Oct. It was perhaps one of the best autumns ever for Bonaparte's Gulls in Benton County. After the 30 Oct arrival, numbers at Philomath STP increased to 13 from 11 to 13 Nov. Others were found at McFadden Marsh (1) and Cabell Marsh (4), 4 Nov. A first-cycle **Glaucous-winged Gull** was at McFadden Marsh, 30 Oct. At least two were at Coffin Butte, 5 Nov, and one stopped by Philomath STP, 22 Nov (R. Armstrong). A first-cycle **Glaucous Gull** was at the intersection of Greenberry and Bellfountain Roads, 8 Nov, for a rather early arrival date and one of few county records.

Still surprising, even though their numbers continue to rise, was a **Barred Owl** in a NW Corvallis neighborhood, 9 Nov (J. Simmons). A **Burrowing Owl** made a stop near McFadden Marsh, 29 Oct (J. Gibson). The one at Lewellyn Road was back 24 Nov (W. Wright). A **Short-eared Owl** was flying around Corvallis airport, 10 Nov (R. Moore, WDR).

Reports of **Anna's Hummingbirds** suggest that they are a bit more common this winter than in past ones (E. Eltzroth, m.ob.). Several continue to visit feeders outside of Corvallis in the countryside and counts of 6 or more per day in town have been reported (R. Hoyer, m.ob.).

The wood-pewee from 7 Oct in last month's notes published as a Western Wood-Pewee should not have been. The bird was probably an **Eastern Wood-Pewee** based on several field marks, including two wing bars of equal brightness (Westerns have much paler upper wingbar), pale throat and lack of sooty gray vest connecting in the mid-breast (Westerns

have dingy throat, strong vested appearance with the two sides of the vest connecting at mid-breast), greenish tinge to back (Westerns have a gray back), and less rigid and upright posture (Westerns tend to sit with the head, body, and tail aligned more directly). Separation of these two species by sight is tough (and only one person saw it), so the Field Notes Editor elected to include the sighting as a late wood-pewee, although he feels nearly certain the bird was a vagrant Eastern. Hearing it call could have clinched the identification, but it was silent. Interestingly, the bird did respond to imitations of Eastern Wood-Pewee calls, but not to those of Western.

Black Phoebes are now regular, but still uncommon, in Benton County. They are most often encountered along the Willamette River. For example, Randy Campbell found 4 birds in a 12-mile stretch of the Willamette River on 11 Nov. The species is still quite rare in the Coast Range and its foothills.

Two **Clark's Nutcrackers** were reported from Marys Peak, 28 Oct (B. and J. Bellin), where they are extremely rare.

Five tardy **Barn Swallows** were along the Willamette River near Peoria, 8 Nov (R. Campbell).

Benton County's second **Sedge Wren** was found 4 Nov at almost the same place as last winter's first county record at EEW (B. Proebsting, K. Hilton).

A flock of 11 **Western Bluebirds** was on top of Marys Peak throughout the period (m.ob.). At the FNWR prairie, 20 were foraging in the post-fire sprouting grass (L. Millbank, D. Boucher, m.ob.). **Varied Thrushes** have been relatively uncommon so far this winter. No large concentrations have been reported yet.

A **Northern Mockingbird** was munching on apples in Ulo Kigemagi's Corvallis yard, 29 Oct. Perhaps this was the same bird found by Matt Hunter in February.

A **Pyrrhuloxia** appeared at Randy and Mary Campbell's feeder in Peoria beginning 12 Nov (see photos). The bird was a hatch-year female. It was somewhat elusive as it fed on seeds and fruits around the small town, but was observed by dozens of birders. The sighting represents Oregon's first record and one of very few away from its normal southwestern desert range.

A tardy **Chipping Sparrow** was at Bald Hill, 23 Oct (B. Proebsting). Small numbers of **White-throated Sparrows** occurred at their usual haunts around EEW and at feeders in Corvallis (m.ob.). A flock of nearly 100 Golden-crowned Sparrows, 29 Oct, was a large gathering (R. and N. Armstrong).

A **Lapland Longspur** was at Corvallis airport, 10 Nov (R. Moore, WDR). A **Snow Bunting** was flying around Marys Peak, 15 Nov, pretty much right on schedule. **Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch** numbers increased to 25 on Marys Peak by 29 Oct. There were also two sightings on the valley floor, one at FNWR, 24 Oct, and one at Philomath STP, 28 Oct, where rosy-finches are very rare. There is only one other valley floor record, from 1977.

Red Crossbills continued to be encountered only rarely, until 14 Nov. Starting then, one or two were heard on several days flying over locations on Marys Peak as well as the valley floor. It appears that we will have a good winter for **Pine Siskins**. Flocks of up to 50 individuals have been regularly detected around Corvallis and in the Coast Range (m.ob.).

Next issue

Please send your reports for the next issue by 24 December.

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This immature Ross's Goose joined a flock of Cackling Geese at Finley NWR, 9 Nov. Photo by Lisa Millbank.



A first record for Oregon, this Pyrrhuloxia visited the feeder of Randy and Mary Campbell in Peoria beginning 12 Nov and was still present at the end of Nov. Photo by Randy Campbell.

Concerns that the Pyrrhuloxia might have been an escaped pet were somewhat assuaged by evidence that it was a young female, an age and sex class that is rarely kept in captivity but is most likely to occur as a wild vagrant. The truncate shape to tail feathers with whitish tips and overall lack of wear indicate the age of this bird. Photo by Cheryl Whelchel.



Benton County Rare Birds

Most birders love to see “rare” birds. There are different levels of rarity. Birds like Calliope Hummingbird, which are fairly easy to see in other parts of Oregon, and seem to show up somewhere in Benton County every spring, and of course are usually found at feeders, might be called low rarities. Birds like Rock Wren, which are also fairly easy to see in other parts of Oregon, but only show up here about once every 5 years, might be called medium rarities. Birds like American Tree Sparrow, which are in Oregon, but almost never show up here might be called high rarities. The Crested Caracara, which is easy to find in other parts of the United States, but which is extremely rare in Oregon, might be called a super rarity. And a bird like the Slaty-backed Gull, which is rare in all of North America, might be called a mega-rarity.

Although Benton County is small with no coast and no Cascades, we have had quite a few rare birds. With OBOL, the Midvalley Birding Listserve, and a phone network of birders, when someone finds a rare bird the word usually spreads fast and many go out to try to see it. People came from all over the state to see Benton’s Crested Caracara a couple winters ago.

Many of these “rare” birds don’t stay very long. They get described as 1-day wonders, and many have actually been more like 1-minute wonders. Unfortunately, some “rare” birds don’t get reported to the birding community, for various reasons. Sometimes the rarity is on private property and the owner is afraid to be inundated by birders. Other times the observer doesn’t know it is rare, doesn’t think anyone would be interested, or doesn’t know whom to tell. For instance, a Chestnut-collared Longspur (high rarity) was reported, but it was on private property where no one was allowed to look. And there was a Rose-breasted Grosbeak (high rarity) that apparently was coming to a feeder for a few days, but did not get reported until it was gone.

It is good to document rarities for science and posterity. And birders, in general, are very willing to abide by landowners’ requests, such as viewing from the road, parking only in designated areas, or visiting only during specific times. And sometimes a bird makes the newspaper and brings some fame to the observer.

Here is a list of rarities (probably missing some) that have shown up in Benton in the last three years. I have organized them using my own estimation of the degree of rarity.

Low: Brant, Clark’s Grebe, Western Gull, Thayer’s Gull, Bonaparte’s Gull, Black-bellied Plover, Black-necked Stilt, Short-billed Dowitcher, Baird’s Sandpiper, Long-billed Curlew, Prairie Falcon, Golden Eagle, Black Swift, Say’s Phoebe, Dusky Flycatcher, Red-eyed Vireo, Calliope Hummingbird, Lewis’ Woodpecker, Townsend’s Solitaire, Gray-crowned

Rosy Finch, Snow Bunting, Harris’s Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow

Medium: American White Pelican, Sanderling, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Caspian Tern, Black Tern, Gyrfalcon, Burrowing Owl, White-throated Swift, Mountain Chickadee, Rock Wren, Mountain Bluebird, Northern Mockingbird, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Red-naped Sapsucker, Tennessee Warbler, Palm Warbler

High: Pacific Loon, Long-tailed Duck, Black Scoter, Black-throated Sparrow, Clay-colored Sparrow, Tree Sparrow, Common Redpoll

Super: Tufted Duck, Pomarine Jaeger, Common Tern, Crested Caracara, Sedge Wren, Blue-headed Vireo, Alder Flycatcher Black-throated Green Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Chestnut-collared Longspur

Mega: Slaty-backed Gull

Birds that are more rare draw more people than less rare birds. Low and medium rarities may cause 10 or 20 people to rush out to see if they can see it. High and mega rarities can draw many more. For instance, a Blue-footed Booby in Texas stayed in one spot for 9 months and was seen by 5068 people (those that signed the homeowner’s books) from all 50 states and 16 countries. I would love to have a mega rarity in my yard, but not everyone loves company. If you find a rarity and don’t want the company, that is fine, but please do report it promptly. Sometimes rare species will wander neighborhoods or visit nearby places where other birders can see them.

Those of us that love to see rare birds in Benton County (and also in surrounding counties like the Broad-tailed Hummingbird that was just in Linn County) would hope that if you think you have a rare bird that you will contact someone. Nobody will be mad if you think a bird is rare when it is not, or even if you misidentify a bird (we have all done that many times). We just don’t want to miss the bird that was there for days without anyone knowing. When I ran a rare bird alert in Texas I hated to hear from someone who said “I had this huge green hummingbird coming to my feeder last month”. Here are some people that would be happy to get an immediate call – Rich & Nanette Armstrong 753-1978, Doug Robinson 231-1567, Tom Snetsinger 223-3300, Paula Vanderheul 752-0470, Marcia Cutler 752-4313. If you get to one of us, you can be sure the word will get out fast to everyone who would like to celebrate your discovery with you.

Winter seems to be the prime time for rarities. So especially keep an eye on your feeders and when you see something you have not seen before it could be the next rare bird for this area!

*Rich & Nanette Armstrong
(with help from Doug Robinson & Tom Snetsinger)*

Pelagic Birding

There are two very different choices for pelagic birding in Oregon.

Greg Gilson leads the traditional pelagic trips. These are excellent one-day trips, mostly out of Newport (leaving Corvallis about 5:30 am and getting back about 7 pm), and cost about \$175. The boat travels close to shore for Murrelets, then goes out roughly 25 miles and spends three hours or so in deep water. The advantages of these trips are that they are close to home, relatively inexpensive, and provide a good variety of birds. The boat can stop or chase a bird, or use chum to attract birds. Most importantly, these trips have outstanding leaders who can identify birds that many of us cannot. The disadvantages of these trips are possible seasickness and misery, the difficulty of seeing birds on a rocking boat with wet optics, only getting out 25 miles, and only being out in deep water about three hours.

An alternative pelagic trip is on a cruise ship. Twice a year there are one-way repositioning cruises with incredible timing. The May trip leaves San Francisco at 5 pm and passes the Oregon border at about 7 am, allowing 12 hours of birding Oregon waters before reaching Washington. The September trip leaves Vancouver at 5 pm, reaching the Oregon border at about 7 am and passing into California about 12 hours later. The September trip goes to Los Angeles, so there is a second day of pelagic birding in California. On both ships you get 12 prime daylight hours in Oregon pelagic waters! The number one advantage of these cruises for most people is that there is no seasickness! It's also possible to set up a scope just like on land, and being 40 feet above the water allows more extensive viewing. In addition, you are 35 – 60 miles from shore for all 12 hours, and your gear doesn't even get wet. While lacking official guides, there are outstanding leaders on the trips who can identify birds many of us cannot. There are disadvantages: the trips take three to four days, cost considerably more money, and the ship does not stop, chum, or chase birds. It is also harder to photograph birds, but not impossible. The September trip goes south so it is usually warmer and less windy.

Regardless of which trip you take, you can expect all four Jaegers/Skua, Sooty, Pink-footed, and Buller's Shearwaters, Sabine's Gulls, Black-footed Albatrosses, Phalaropes, Fork-tailed Storm Petrels, Fulmars, Cassin's and Rhinoceros Auklets (depending on the time of the year). Both trips have the possibility of rarities, though there is probably a slightly better chance if you are further out to sea for 12 hours. On recent cruises there have been Laysan Albatross, Xantu's Murrelet, Ashy, Black, and Leach's Storm Petrels, Murphy's and Cook's Petrel, and Horned Puffin. Marine mammals are spotted too—whales, dolphins, sea otters, and seals, along with some fish.

These are real cruise ships. Although we spend all 12

daylight hours at the front of the ship every day, we eat gourmet dinners and go to a show or two. If you prefer, you could dance, swim, hot tub, or other cruise activities. Total cruise costs include roughly \$175 for the cruise itself, \$11 daily for tips, roundtrip airfare for \$200-\$300, \$50 for transfers to and from airports, and \$24-32 parking at Portland airport. This totals about \$540, but you can calculate it as \$45/hour of deep water Oregon pelagic birding, which compares well to Gilson trips.

So for those of you who don't do pelagic trips because of seasickness, these cruises are a great alternative. It's fun to bring along a non-birding spouse or friend as they can fill their day with cruise activities while you bird. Feel free to call or email if you have any questions.

Rich and Nanette Armstrong

Don't Forget the CBC

Corvallis Christmas Bird Count is Dec 16

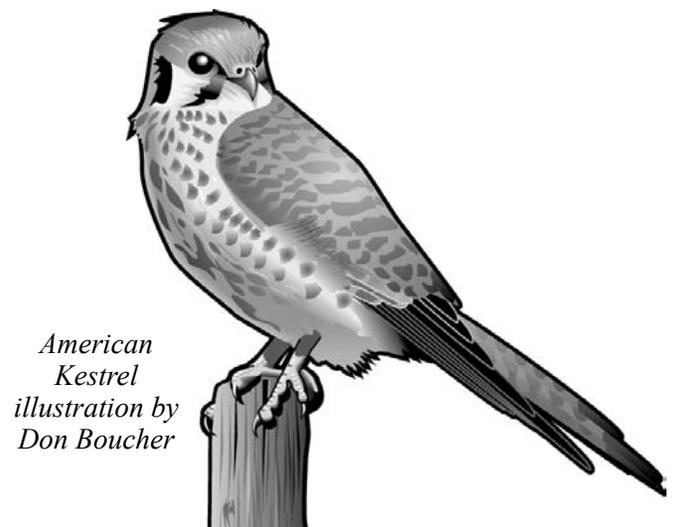
The Corvallis Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is an all-day event open to anyone wishing to participate. This is an excellent opportunity for novice bird watchers to join with seasoned veterans and learn more about identifying and finding the local birds. Half-day participants and home feeder-watchers are also welcome.

If you are interested in participating or would like further information, please contact me at 541-752-4313 or e-mail me at marciafcutler@comcast.net

Marcia Cutler

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*American
Kestrel
illustration by
Don Boucher*

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the **CHAT**

*Renew your membership before the date on the
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Calendar

Dec 11: Board meeting
Dec 13: Second Saturday field trip, 7:30 am
Dec 16: Christmas Bird Count
Dec 18: General meeting
Dec 24: Field notes submission deadline for Jan Chat
Dec 25: Article submission deadline for Jan Chat
Jan 10: Second Saturday field trip, 7:30 am



Banana Slug photo by Matt Lee

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