



Audubon Society of Corvallis the **CHAT**

March 2010

VOL. 39

#7

General Meeting

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

Costa Rica Hummingbirds

A presentation by Matt Betts

The speaker at our March 18 meeting will be Matt Betts, a landscape ecologist at OSU. He will talk about hummingbirds, with particular focus on his ongoing research in Costa Rica about hummingbird-plant interactions and the impacts of human activities upon them.

Dr. Betts studies the ways that landscape composition and pattern influence animal behavior, species distributions, and ecosystem function. He is particularly interested in how animals select habitat, and the ways that human alteration of



Green Hermit Hummingbird



landscapes influences biodiversity.

Dr. Betts is an assistant professor in Forest Ecosystems and Society at OSU.

Doors open at 6:30 pm for refreshments and visiting. The chapter meeting commences at 7:00 pm, followed by the guest lecture at 7:30 pm. Questions about the series can be directed to Dave Mellinger at David.Mellinger@oregonstate.edu or 541-757-7953.

Directions

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

Dave Mellinger

Hark! The Birdathon Approacheth!

Birdathon 2010 is set for the weekend of April 24. This is our yearly fundraiser for the Hesthaven Nature Center. In past years we've raised thousands of dollars for projects and improvements for this wonderful local Audubon sanctuary.

How it works: Put together a team (or go solo). Ask people to sponsor you at so many cents a bird, or for a flat rate. Then go birding the weekend of April 24 and see how many species you can see! (Another weekend in that time frame is fine too, if you have a birding trip planned or a scheduling conflict.) Bird anywhere – your backyard, the Coast, the Rio Grande... the sky's the limit (literally). If you feel shy about asking people to sponsor you, get creative. For example, you can pledge to your own team, perhaps in honor of a nature-lovin' relative. I always ask my kids' grandparents to sponsor our family team – my parents can't say no to that!

see "Birdathon" on next page

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Birdathon *continued from front page*

Just drop me an email to let me know you are planning to participate. Sponsor forms and report forms will be on the ASC website under Birdathon. I will announce results at the May meeting and in the summer Chat.

If you own a local business, you could generate some good publicity by having your business be a sponsor of the event. Your business could sponsor every team at a certain rate. This encourages more people to form a team and participate, knowing they already have their first sponsor. Beyond raising more funds for Hesthavn activities, this involves more people, who then feel they personally have a stake in Hesthavn's success and, more broadly, in wildlife and nature conservation. Everybody wins.

Good Birding! And email me at

Mary_vanbrocklin@yahoo.com

Mary Derr Van Brocklin, Birdathon Coordinator

Klamath Dam Removal!

Agreement signed to remove four dams in the Klamath Basin

An agreement signed by Governor Kulongoski and California Governor Schwarzenegger is an attempt to resolve the century-old water problems in the Klamath Basin and Klamath River. It potentially removes four (four!) dams that block salmon and other fishes from migrating from the ocean to the Klamath Basin. But it also implements a more reliable water supply for agriculture and improves water quality in the river, mainly by managing water storage in lakes and wetlands in the Upper Klamath Lake Basin. Another step in the direction is voluntary retirement of water rights in that basin. It provides additional water for two of the wildlife refuges in the region. And it includes renewable energy options to replace lost electricity from the dams. The dam removal is only "potential" because it depends on agreement from Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, who wants to see some scientific analyses of the impact of dam removal first. The agreement is supported by many environmental organizations, though there are some that say it didn't go far enough to improve water quality.

Dave Mellinger



*Photo of Pacific Tree Frog
(a.k.a. Pacific Chorus Frog) by Matt Lee*

Oregon Legislature Update

Three notable conservation bills

The Oregon legislature passed three notable conservation bills during the one-month session in February:

- A major transportation and sustainable development plan to help control greenhouse gas emission. It will develop a state-level strategy to reduce greenhouse gases from transportation and set transportation-related greenhouse gas reduction targets for Oregon's six major metropolitan areas (Portland, Eugene, Salem, Bend, Medford, and Corvallis). It will also develop a toolkit to assist local governments and planning organizations in reducing greenhouse gases from transportation. (Senate Bill 1059)
- A 10-year extension of the moratorium on offshore drilling in Oregon's coastal waters.
- A revision of the Business Energy Tax Credit to make it stable. Groups were taking tax credits for existing power-generation systems and depleting the fund that pays for the credit, rather than taking the credit for new renewable power systems as had been intended.

Dave Mellinger

Birds of the Boreal Forest

Need Your Help

Stretching from Alaska to the Atlantic Ocean, North America's boreal forest is one of the world's largest intact forests. It accounts for 25% of the earth's remaining forests, covers 1.4 billion acres, and is larger than the Brazilian Amazon. North America's boreal forest supports some of the largest populations of wildlife such as grizzly bears, woodland caribou and wolves, and provides vital breeding grounds for up to a third of North America's land birds (up to a billion warblers and 500 million or more sparrows) and 40% of its waterfowl.

Boreal-breeding birds include many Audubon WatchList species, such as Canada and Bay-breasted Warblers, Olive-sided Flycatcher, and Rusty Blackbird. More than 300 bird species regularly breed in the boreal forest. Eighty species have 50% or more of their western hemisphere breeding range and breeding population in the boreal forest.

Many of the birds that spend their summer breeding in the boreal forest are neotropical migrants that spend the winter in the Southern U.S., Mexico, the West Indies, or Central or South America. These neotropical-wintering, boreal-breeding migrants pass through the United States in large numbers in both spring and fall and provide the highlights of the birding year for many U.S. birdwatchers. Other boreal-breeding birds spend the winter in the United States and are among the most common species found on Audubon's Christmas Bird Counts.

While much of the boreal region remains unspoiled at this point, development is rapidly escalating; oil and gas, mining, logging, and hydroelectric development are pushing northwards at increasing rates. Land-use decisions will determine the fate of much of the boreal region within the next five years.

Two Ways You Can Help Birds of the Boreal Forest!

First — reduce your use of paper catalogs

One of the major threats to the boreal forest is from logging to supply wood, pulp, and paper. The majority of the wood cut in the boreal forest is used to make paper, including catalogs. Each year, catalog retailers mail out about 17 billion catalogs. That's 59 for every man, woman, and child in the United States. Yet almost none of this paper contains recycled content. This means that every year almost eight million tons of trees go straight into catalogs that are often unread and discarded.

Our goal is to encourage some of the larger catalog companies to purchase paper from ecologically and socially responsible sources.

You can also do more in your personal consumption of paper and catalogues. When possible, try to shop online and end subscriptions to catalogues that you do not use. Also, be sure to recycle the catalogs when you are finished.

Second – urge disposable paper companies to use more recycled materials!

One of the largest disposable paper product companies in the world, the Kimberly-Clark Corporation, could significantly reduce its impact on the birds of the boreal forest by adjusting production practices and using more recycled materials. Kimberly-Clark produces such popular products as Kleenex, Scott, Viva and Cottonelle brand facial tissues, toilet paper, and paper towels - products you may use every day! By using appropriate forest management practices that preserve habitat quality and promote a healthy use of recycled paper, companies like Kimberly-Clark can reduce their destructive impact on the boreal forest and instead, have a tremendous beneficial impact on birds and in turn, the overall environment.

To learn more about the boreal forest, boreal forest birds, and efforts to conserve them, please go to www.borealbirds.org
National Audubon Society Website

Field Trip Schedule

Monthly Year-Round Saturday Field Trips

Mar 13: Meet at the Benton Center at 7:30 am
Apr 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 parking area, 757 Polk Ave, Corvallis at 7:30 am. This field trip is especially interesting for beginner birders and birders new to Oregon's mid-valley area. We spend a lot of time identifying local birds by sight and song. We visit the valley national wildlife refuges—Finley, Baskett Slough, and Ankeny, as well as other birding areas throughout the year. Contact Rich Armstrong at richarmstrong@comcast.net or 541-753-1978 with questions.

Spring 2010 Weekend Field Trips

Mar 19 – 21: Bandon/South Coast
Apr 16 – 18: Klamath Basin
Apr 30 – May 2: Rogue Valley
May 20 – 23: Malheur NWR
June 18 – 20: 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 wildflowers,

butterflies, mammals, and reptiles. The field trips fill up early in the fall. Sign-up sheets are available at the general meeting or email Fred Ramsey with your requests at framsey5@comcast.net.

Please note:

The Rogue Valley and Malheur trips require deposits by February 28, 2010.

The Rogue Valley trip includes a play at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland. The play this year will be *Hamlet*. A deposit of \$40 is required for the play.

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

Birding Classes

Two classes for bird watchers will be offered by Don Boucher and Lisa Millbank this spring.

Birding in the Willamette Valley

We'll learn identification skills, how to choose field guides and binoculars, and birding sites. We'll spend time outside with the birds at the peak of springtime.

2-week class:

Wed., May 12: 7-8:30 pm, classroom,
Avery House Nature Center
Sat., May 15: 9-11 am, field trip at Avery Park
Wed., May 19: 7-8:30 pm, classroom,
Avery House Nature Center
Sat., May 22: 9-11 am, field trip, carpool to Finley NWR

Birding by Ear

Would you like to know your local bird songs and calls? Learn to listen and remember bird sounds. Beginners, take "Birding in the Willamette Valley" first.

2-week class:

Wed., May 26: 7-8:30 pm, classroom,
Avery House Nature Center
Sat., May 29: 9-11 am, Field trip to Willamette Park
Wed., June 2: 7-8:30 pm, classroom,
Avery House Nature Center
Sat., June 12: 9-11 am, field trip to
Jackson-Frazier Wetland

Class information:

Don Boucher, 753-7689, bouchdon@peak.org.
Registration cost will be approximately \$24. Contact the Corvallis Environmental Center at 541-753-9211 or www.corvallisenvironmentalcenter.org.

Don Boucher

Hesthavn News

March 27: Work party from 9 am – 1 pm, open house from 10 am – 1 pm

Our next work party is scheduled for March 27 from 9 am to 1 pm at the Hesthavn Nature Center at 8590 NW Oak Creek Drive.

We will be working along the stream riparian area removing scattered blackberry brambles and false brome. Wear your grubby clothes, boots, work clothes, and you may want to bring your water bottle. Most likely it will be muddy.

An open house is scheduled on the same day from 10 am to 1 pm for the public to browse the center. Then take a nature walk along the trail watching for signs of spring native flowers blooming along the riparian areas and looking for wildlife tracks. The birds will be singing and foraging at the feeders.

Map directions are available at www.audubon.corvallis.or.us. The nature trail is open daily to the public to explore the wildlife and native plants.

The Nature Center is looking for additional volunteers interested in working with our educational team to share nature experiences as instructors.

We offer nature classes to schools and other community groups upon request.

Contact me at 541-752-0470 vanderp@peak.org

Paula Vanderheul

Finley Planting Report

Beautiful weather aids ASC/Finley planting effort

A record number of volunteers turned out on February 20 to help plant nectar forbs for the endangered Fender's Blue butterfly. Clear, blue skies and friendly sunshine graced the entire valley for the third annual planting event. 3,200 lupine, checkermallow, camas and other beneficial plants were planted by over 200 enthusiastic and happy volunteers. Lunch was served early by the ASC team as planting was complete by 11:30. Head biologist Jock Beal said, "This is the largest and happiest group we have ever had at Finley." A special thanks goes out to the ASC parking/welcome team of Jerry Paul, Glenn Akins, Chris Mathews, Vic Hadley, and Peter Moore. Food staff included Rana Foster, Kate Mathews, Gail Nickerson, Stacy Moore, Jody Gaylord, Barb Hadley and Linda Hunn. We, as well as the Fender's Blue, appreciate your hard work and efforts. Well done!

John Gaylord

Oregon's Special Session Not So Special

Oregon had a great opportunity to lead the country with several solid environmental bills but fumbled the ball. A bill to ban BPA in plastic bottles died in a tie vote, which killed it due to rules. BPA should be eliminated from drinking containers and House Bill 3703 may bring it back for another try. The plastic bag discussion died in committee but I predict its time has come and it will show up again in the near future. We all should work to eliminate plastic bags in grocery stores as they end up fouling our waterways and oceans and do harm to many

species. The only good news is that the Senate passed a bill, 22-8, to extend the 10-year moratorium on oil exploration off the Oregon Coast.

John Gaylord

Cascadia Butterflies

North American Butterfly Association lecture in Eugene

April 5 7:30 pm lecture

On April 5, Professor David James of Washington State University will deliver a lecture on the life histories of Cascadia butterflies.

David James and his colleague Dave Nunnallee have reared all butterfly species found in WA, southern BC and northern Oregon. Rearing and photographing all stages from egg to adult is a tremendous accomplishment. Please join us to hear about this adventure in finding and rearing butterflies. Hopefully their book on this subject will be available at the lecture.

All North American Butterfly Association lectures occur at the EWEB training center at 500 E 4th street, Eugene, Oregon.

Refreshments are served at 7 pm, with the presentation at 7:30. The lecture is free and open to all.

Eleanor Ryan

Field Notes

29 January 2010 – 26 February 2010

Unseasonably warm weather characterized most of this period with a few stretches of rain. Songbird numbers continued to be low compared with previous winters. For part of the month, Marys Peak had no snow, and was open to the top. There were still very few rarities, although the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker snuck around EE Wilson through all of February. Spring is coming as we report new arrivals.

Abbreviations and Locations: m.ob. = many observers. Observer names are noted in parentheses after their reports. Observations without a name (or with RAA) 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 Evergreen Mitigation Bank is along Bellfountain Drive south of Philomath. The Diamond Hill Road wetland is in Linn County.

45 **Great Egrets** in South Benton at McFarland/Dawson on the 2nd was a surprising number, especially since numbers have been low elsewhere in the area. A Green Heron was in Albany on the 25th (Tristen Gholson). A large flock of swans was seen off Airlie Road all month. As many as 75 **Trumpeter Swans** and as many as 75 **Tundra Swans** in various combinations were reported (Jeff Hayes, J Geier, mob). 100 **Sandhill Cranes** flew east of Lebanon on the 19th (R Gordin) and 40 on the 22nd (George Neavoll).

4 **Greater White-fronted Geese** was seen at FNWR on the 9th (E Knight). **Eurasian Wigeon** have been present in low numbers this winter—1 at Stewart Lake on the 6th (J Simmons), 5 at FNWR on the 9th (E Knight), and 2 at Philomath STP on the 15th. 7 **Canvasbacks** were at Stewart Lake on the 6th and various numbers were reported all month. 3 **Greater Scaup** were at the Adair Village STP (J. Geier, RAA, m.ob.), 1 was at Toketie (J. Geier, RAA), and at least 1 at Philomath

STP. A **Cinnamon Teal** was at Toketie on the 3rd (J Simmons).

A **Virginia Rail** was heard at Jackson-Frazier on the 20th (M Garrard). About 350 Dunlin were at Brownsville STP on the 20th (B Schweibert). There were 5 **Mountain Quail** along the Coffin Butte trail on the 22nd (J Geier).

There was not one report of a gull the entire month!

Hanging around EEW for many birders who chased the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, an immature **Red-shouldered Hawk** was reliably present throughout the period (mob) and an adult was also seen. The species is now seen more widely around Corvallis and there were many reports this month. Jeff Fleisher did 3 raptor runs in our area. The Linn County one always gets the most and on the 10th he had 95 **Red-tailed Hawk**, 113 **American Kestrel**, 51 **Northern Harrier**, 76 **Bald Eagle**, 6 **Rough-legged Hawk**, 3 **Peregrine Falcon**, and 7 **Short-eared Owls**. On the south Benton raptor run on the 2nd he found a **Peregrine Falcon** and a **Merlin** were at the south end of FNWR. Jeff also had a **Peregrine Falcon** and a **Merlin** on the King's Valley run near 20/Priest Road on the 8th. **White-tailed Kites** were regular around FNWR prairie and out Robison Road (mob). At least 8 **Rough-legged Hawks** were also along Robison Road. Dead sheep at Philomath STP attracted 9 **Bald Eagles** and 25 **Common Ravens** on the 15th. An adult **Golden Eagle** flew over 99E just south of Tangent on the 5th (B Schweibert).

Owls were busy again. Lisa Millbank, Don Boucher, & Tristen Gholson heard and saw **Northern Saw-whet Owl** at Willamette Park on the 20th. There was a saw-whet calling near Walnut/Highland on the 9th (NArmstrong). A **Northern Pygmy-Owl** was heard calling in McDonald State Forest at Peavy Arboretum 21-22 Feb (Stefan Schlick, Tristen Gholson). A **Barred Owl** was at Bald Hill on the 11th (R&P Comeleo). One originally found roosting by Bill Proebsting and Ken Hilton at EEW in December was seen occasionally through the period. Another was heard behind J Geier's home on the 23rd.

300 **Mourning Doves** is the largest group I have ever heard of here—they were near Eureka/99 on the 2nd (J Fleisher). **Eurasian Collared-Doves** are now very regular. There have been 15+ at Knoll Terrace STP continuously and 3 were along Lakeside (M Cutler). A **Band-tailed Pigeon** was off Oak Creek on the 21st (B Proebsting). **Anna's Hummingbirds** are regular in town, but the 1st ever for EEW was reported on the 14th (J Geier). There was a **Rufous Hummingbird** on 2/13 (Amy Elder). This would be one day ahead of the earliest report on record for the Corvallis area, according to the spring migrant phenology compiled by Alan McGie.

The 1st **Tree Swallow** report came from Scio on the 21st (P Waldron). The 1st **Violet-green Swallow** report came from FNWR McFadden Marsh on the 23rd (B Proebsting).

The famous **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was seen all month at EEW, although never easily (mob). The FNWR **Lewis's Woodpecker** was seen throughout the period (mob). It has a tree just north of the old HQ where the road makes a sharp left.

The only report of **Black Phoebe** was from Salem (D Beall). 2 **Say's Phoebes** were at Robison/Rifle Range for one day only on the 6th (Bill Griffiths, Paul Jaussi).

Northern Shrikes were in a few places—on Rifle Range near Robison, off Tampico (J Geier), EEW (mob), both north and south parts of EEW (mob), and Basket Slough (R&P Comeleo). An **American Dipper** was on private property on the 18th (M Albrecht).

3 **Horned Larks** were singing on Airlie Road on the 17th (J Geier). There have been extremely few **Varied Thrush** in the valley this winter. There were 20+ quite a ways up Mary's Peak on the 6th. Maybe they are all still at high elevations. **Townsend's Warbler** reports have been few. There were 2 coming to feeders near Highland/Walnut (RAA, P Vanderheul) and 1 up Coffin Butte.

A **Chipping Sparrow** was reported again at EEW (Stephan Schlick). EEW still had at least 1 **Swamp Sparrow** detected periodically throughout the period (J Geier, mob). A few **White-throated Sparrows** were scattered around EEW throughout the period (mob).

Always nice to get reports of our state bird. **Western Meadowlarks** were reported from Robison Road (mob), Kiger Island and Corvallis Airport (M Cutler), and FNWR prairie (mob).

Slate-colored Junco (Eastern subspecies of Dark-eyed Junco) was seen during the month in Albany (Tristen Gholson) and near Walnut/Highland (RAA, Jerry Paul) including on the 25th. **Pine Siskin** reports were few. 10 were at a feeder near Highland/Walnut (P Vanderheul). 1 was at Sunset Park. There were about 45 **Evening Grosbeaks** at the upper campground of Mary's Peak on the 6th. **Red Crossbills** are rarely reported low in the valley, but Tristen Gholson had 10 in Albany on 15th.

During the month the Newport coast area had 2 – 4 **Rock Sandpipers**, many **Common Goldeneye**, and a couple **Red-throated Loons** along with normal coast birds.

Next issue

Please send your reports for the next issue by 27 March.

Rich Armstrong

(541) 753-1978

richarmstrong@comcast.net

Rich Armstrong

Bizarre Front Yard

In the world of bird mimics, our familiar Steller's and Western Scrub-Jays are not without talent. Most of us have heard what we thought was a Red-tailed Hawk to see only a Steller's Jay luring small birds out from cover with its hawk rendition.

Well along those lines, just the other day in mid-February, I heard a spring peeper croaking from inside or near the low evergreen hedge in our very small front yard. I thought, now isn't that lovely to hear; usually we hear them in the distance but not in our yard. Then the next day or so I heard that same croaking raspy sound, again in the front yard, but this time near the open front door. It was a warm sunny winter day so I had the door open. I looked out, only to see a Scrub-Jay croaking away hopping amongst the low branches! No frog this time! Or, was the first time even a frog? So was he mimicking frogs to call their bluff in replying only to be eaten for dinner?

The next unusual avian event in our tiny front yard (8' x 20' flat hardpan landing spot) was a pair of Mallards checking out that same low hedge on February 22. The drake stood guard while his mate ducked here and there; both quacking softly to each other in focused conversation. We think she was checking out possible nest locations but why in our yard, which is at least 2 blocks from the nearest creek?

This early spring, we have mercifully been spared the loony bird doing battle with house windows, car mirrors, and bumpers ordeal!—or at least so far! (see "Song Sparrow Mania" in the February 2009 issue of the Chat).

Andrea J. Foster

Who's Being Seen

The Great Exchange: Winter and Spring Migrants

The spring equinox is this month, woo-hoo! Turkey Vultures and swallows are once again a part of our skies. March is when we have weekly reports of new arrivals. Although many more migrants arrive throughout April and May, in March there is a certain kind of increased migrant activity. As spring migrants are flying in from the south, wintering birds are mobilizing and migrating north or to the mountains.



Yellow-rumped Warblers sing before their departure from the valley in April. Photo by Matt Lee

In March, Ruby-crowned Kinglets get all fired up and sing their complicated, spritely song. By the end of April, all of these kinglets will be gone from the valley. Golden-crowned and Fox Sparrows also sing before their departure. Yellow-rumped and Townsend's Warblers become active and start singing, too. Year-round residents have already been singing and will continue to increase as the season progresses. In March, you could familiarize yourself with these resident songs. When migrant singers arrive in April and May, your ears may notice the new migrant songs better.



Cackling Geese and nearly all Canada Geese will be leaving in April. Photo taken by Sue Powell at Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge.

March is your last opportunity to see wintering birds at Finley, Ankeny and Baskett Slough National Wildlife Refuges. Geese, ducks, swans and the majority of raptors will be leaving the valley throughout April.

March is when most of our Rufous Hummingbirds arrive. Get your nectar feeders ready. These feisty nectar tipplers will upstage the year-round Anna's Hummingbirds at the feeder.

Here's some other common migrants to look for (in chronological order): Violet-green Swallow, Cinnamon Teal, Band-tailed Pigeon, Orange-crowned Warbler, Osprey and Cliff Swallow. Since next month is when migration really ramps up, start thinking about that now and pencil in some April outings so you won't miss anything.

Don Boucher

GreenTip OF THE MONTH

Lowering your thermostat is a quick and easy way to save energy, money, and greenhouse gases. Contrary to popular belief, it takes MORE energy to keep a home warm than it does to warm it back up. (That's because LESS warmth leaks out of the house when it's even slightly cooler.) If you lower your thermostat 10° while out during the day, you'll save roughly 10% on your energy bill in winter—and lower your carbon emissions 10%, too.

If you need help setting a programmable thermostat to do this, please call me (541-757-7953) and I'd be happy to stop by and help.

Dave Mellinger

Atop the Nestbox Bluebird Justice?

During the 2009 bluebird nesting season in Linn County, we observed that there were apparently more eligible males than females. In three instances, a nesting male presumably died with a brood in progress and shortly thereafter was replaced by a new male, as documented by band observations.

When this happens, we never know if the new male will help raise the young. In this case, one did and two did not.

In all three cases, we knew the origin of the new male, and we watched the site of origin as well as the site where the widowed female was courted. In the two cases where the new male did not help raise the hen's young, there was no evidence that the hen went on to produce a brood with the new male. In contrast, the helpful male was "rewarded" with a brood of his own. Was it coincidence, or "bluebird justice?"

We welcome your comments and observations.

Raylene Gordin

The Creek That Jack Built

Frigid-cold water boils out of an opening in the earth and flows down gently-sloping terrain and around scattered small hills like clear, molten glass. Before merging with the Metolious River, Jack Creek, thirty feet wide and seldom more than knee-deep, gurgles and whispers for six miles through an open, pristine riparian setting of old-growth forest in Central Oregon. Surrounding the creek, puzzle-barked ponderosa pines, prickly Englemann spruce and stately grand firs dominate the landscape. An extraordinary variety of plants, animals and

fungi thrive in this transitional zone between the wet woods of Western Oregon and the drier high plateau forest to the east.

Jack Creek is no ordinary creek. Geology reveals the reason: the stream flows at a constant rate from a subterranean reservoir; the water level in the creek varies little, up or down, summer or winter. Geologists speculate that melting snow on Mt. Jefferson seeps down through deep rocky cracks, and replenishes the underground source.

Fallen trees crisscross the creek, and have become nurse logs. Since the creek rarely rises enough to wash over or flood the exposed surfaces of the partially submerged logs, seeds of plants and trees get caught behind and on top of the soggy, rotting wood, germinate, and create dense, diverse plant communities on a maze of long, narrow islands. The vegetation crowds tightly together, each plant or tree competing to keep its precious place on the decaying wood. Lady ferns mass in groves seven feet high, mosses dominate softly between taller plants. In the fall, vine maple reds, willow-leaf yellows and mountain ash pinks appear in the island creekscape—a visual drug for the nature addict.

Large rocks and boulders are not common in Jack Creek, but smaller, gravel-sized rocks cover the creek bottom between the log islands. This submerged gravel provides areas where red kokanee—land-locked sockeye salmon—and bull trout spawn in the fall. Cold water temperatures limit most other aquatic life.

The creek slips under and around the islands, slides through tangled, dead branches, and swirls between exposed tree roots protruding from the lush, brushy shorelines where snowshoe hares—brown in summer, white in winter—nibble the succulent greenery. They must be super alert and vigilant for hungry coyotes. The abundant golden-mantled ground squirrels must also be on guard, especially for goshawks that hunt small mammals in the riparian corridor.

A Douglas squirrel sits on a streamside stump and “shells out” fir cones to get at the nutritious seeds. During this process, some of the cup-shaped cone scales—attached to the seeds—fall into the creek, float down the current, become trapped on the log islands, and grow into stranded trees. The same thing happens when mountain-ash berries—that haven’t been eaten by robins, western tanagers or cedar waxwings—fall into the creek, float downstream, get caught, and sprout into bushy trees. This process repeats itself for fluffy, airborne fireweed catkins and an uncountable variety of aquatic plant seeds and spores from ferns, sedges, horsetails, saxifrages and mosses—an “ordered” chaos of island vegetation.

Like the classic nursery rhyme, “The House that Jack Built,” the interconnected ecosystem in and around Jack Creek is complex: geologically, physically, biologically and aesthetically—a natural treasure—a meditation on an exceptional riverine mixture of wet wood, chlorophyll, minerals and liquid ice.

Gary Gibson

Stop Invasives

Stop the “alien” attack

Imagine aliens—taking the shape of a seemingly harmless plant or small animal—coming into your community and taking over. They no longer face threats from their natural

enemies, so they thrive—ravaging native plants, birds and other wildlife, significantly altering the ecosystem. These aliens aren’t from outer space—they’re Earth-born and bred, and they’re infesting more than 100 million acres of American landscape.

These alien plants and animals find their way—via man, by animals, even by the wind—in a new place far from where they originated. Some of these aliens don’t make much of an impact but others land in areas where they invade, thrive and completely take over—as they have no competitors, no predators, and nothing to really stop them. These species are referred to as “invasive species.”

Examples include a nonnative fish called the northern snakehead, which threatened to ruin the ecological balance of the entire Chesapeake Bay. Also the South American rodent called nutria, which found itself in the middle of the marsh in coastal Maryland, and is eating its way out. Phragmites (frag-my-tees) is a common reed that out-competes with native plants that are unusable as nesting and feeding sites for many bird species. These and other invasive species are wiping pose a major threat to America’s most imperiled bird populations: more than 1/3 of the birds on Audubon’s WatchList are threatened by invasive species.

Federal legislation needed

Audubon is working with Congress to develop and pass legislation that will curb the invasive threat. The most comprehensive bill is known as the Refuge Ecology Protection, Assistance, and Immediate Response Act (REPAIR) which would combat invasives on wildlife refuges around the nation. Since most wildlife refuges have been designated by Audubon as Important Bird Areas, this bill will help protect some of America’s best bird habitat from one of their most severe threats.

You can help make this bill a law by writing Congress. Take action now!

National Audubon Society Website

So long; it’s been fun

Neil and Joan are handing the chat editor job on to Jim Sumich starting with the April 2010 Chat. Jim will continue to use the chateditors@gmail.com email account, so Chat submissions and email correspondence should continue to be sent to that address.

We have had fun working on the Chat during the last five years. Thanks so much to all of the wonderful board members who helped us out all along the way and to all of you for writing and submitting fun and interesting stories and reports through the years!

Joan & Neil

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the **CHAT**

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

Calendar

Mar 6 Bluebird Trail Spring Workshop
Mar 11 Board meeting
Mar 13 Second Saturday field trip, 7:30 am
Mar 18 General meeting
Mar 27 Field notes submission deadline for April Chat
Mar 25 Article submission deadline for April Chat
Mar 19-21 Bandon/South Coast field trip
Mar 27 Hesthavn work party/open house
Apr 5 Cascadia Butterflies lecture
Apr 10 Second Saturday field trip, 7:30 am
Apr 24 ASC Birdathon



*Welcome back! Rufous Hummingbirds return in March.
Photo by Matt Lee.*

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