



Audubon Society of Corvallis the **CHAT**

December 2005

VOL. 35

#4

General Meeting December 15, 7:30 to 9:00 PM First Presbyterian Church

Member Photography Exhibition

Members are invited to bring no more than 10 of their best slides or photos of birds or other wildlife, or nature in general. Be prepared to talk about your slides during our program. For the presentation part of the program, you may supply 35mm slides or digital photographs for display in MS PowerPoint® format. Bring your PowerPoint slides on a USB drive (preferred) or a CD-ROM disc. For technical questions contact Sue Haig, haig_susan@yahoo.com (preferred) or 753-5068. Bring labels for prints. There will be a slide projector and a PC hooked up to a projector monitor. Please come at 7 PM to check in and get your slides organized.

Susan Haig

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.

House Leaders Pull Budget Bill Twenty-five Republicans force removal of Arctic drilling language

Late on Wednesday, November 9, the House leadership stripped Arctic National Wildlife Refuge oil drilling language from the budget reconciliation bill after intense pressure from concerned Americans. The next night, the House leadership scrapped plans to bring the budget reconciliation bill to the floor for a final vote after realizing that they could not muster enough votes – even without the Arctic drilling language!

Key to our success were 25 Republicans who dug in their heels and refused to vote for a bill that contained drilling provisions. They took this stand, in part, because they

heard from so many people back home and it gave them the backing they needed to send a message to the Republican leadership that this underhanded attempt to open the Arctic Refuge is dead on arrival in the House.

Now is a good time to let lawmakers know how pleased you are that provisions to drill in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge have been removed from the budget bill. If the House does pass a budget bill, a House-Senate Conference Committee will convene to work out differences between the two bills. It will be the goal of both House and Senate conferees to send a bill back to the full House and Senate with the Arctic drilling language intact. We must continue to ask Members of Congress to protect the Arctic Refuge from oil drilling.

Jet-Skis on Crater Lake? Helicopters dropping passengers atop Mt. Rainier?

Our National Parks have historically had a mandate to preserve and protect their resources. Last summer, Paul Hoffman, a political appointee with no Parks experience, wrote new draft management policies which, if implemented, will

- remove language saying “when there is conflict between conserving resources and values and providing for the enjoyment of them, conservation is

See "National Parks" on next page

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National Parks

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to predominate.”

- ease the way for increased air and noise pollution and increased high-impact uses previously barred from most national parks, such as jet skiing, snowmobiling, and livestock grazing.
- dismantle protections for existing and potential wilderness.

There was an outcry when this news first leaked out last summer, and Mr. Hoffman's draft was supposedly withdrawn. But then in October, the Park Service published its proposed management policy, and it contained most of the same elements as Mr. Hoffman's draft! The Park Service is inviting comment on its proposed policies, so it's up to us to tell them how bad the changes are.

What can you do? The best thing is to read this web site of the National Parks Conservation Association:

<http://www.npca.org/ActionCenter/IOActionAlertDetail.aspx?nid=1>

It has details about how to comment, including a list of "talking points" for your letter. You can also submit comments directly to NPS; mail them to

Bernard Fagan, Room 7252
National Park Service
Office of Policy
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240
Dave Mellinger
In this issue:

Seattle Audubon Sues For Recovery Plan

Despite 1990 ESA Listing, Federal Agencies Have Never Completed A Final Recovery Plan

Seattle Audubon and Kittitas Audubon have filed a lawsuit to protect Washington's Northern Spotted Owls. This action comes only after numerous rebuffed attempts to work with our Federal Government agencies. This is still an early step. Please help us recognize the hard work of all those at Seattle Audubon, in particular, Alex Morgan, conservation director at Seattle Audubon, and Marina Skumanich, Vice President of the executive Board.

Christmas Bird Count

Tuesday, December 20th

Join us on Tuesday, December 20th, for the Corvallis Christmas Bird Count. For CBC dates around the nation, go to

www.audubon.org. For Oregon and Washington dates, see home.pacifier.com/~patterson/cbc. If you are interested in participating or would like further information, please contact me at 752-4313 or mccarmel@peak.org.

Corvallis CBC Potluck

After the Corvallis Christmas Bird Count on Tuesday, December 20th, please come to the CBC Potluck at the Education Hall of the First Presbyterian Church at 8th and Monroe. The potluck will run between 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. and includes a countdown of the birds seen during the count. Hot chili and drinks will be provided, and participants are asked to bring a side dish or dessert along with their own place setting (plate, bowl, silverware, cup). Feeder counters and family members of participants (including children) are welcome to attend.

Marcia F. Cutler

The Great Backyard Bird Count

In addition to the CBC, please participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count, which takes place from February 17 to 20, 2006. Dave Eshbaugh, Executive Director of Oregon Audubon says, "While the Great Backyard Bird Count looks at birds toward the end of the winter season, the CBC provides a snapshot in the early winter." The Great Backyard Bird Count is jointly sponsored by the National Audubon Society, the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, Wild Birds Unlimited, and the National Science Foundation. Information about how you can participate is available on the Web at <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/>

Chris Mathews

Homer Campbell Award Nominees Sought

ASC established the Homer Campbell Award in 2004 to recognize local achievements in conservation and to honor the memory of Homer Campbell, a former ASC leader and a giant among Oregon conservationists. The first Homer Campbell Award was conferred in Spring 2005 upon Elzy Eltzroth.

Nominations for the 2006 awardee are invited from Corvallis Auduboners and from the local conservation community. To nominate someone, send a letter or e-mail to

Christopher K. Mathews
President, Audubon Society of Corvallis
3336 SW Willamette Ave.
Corvallis, OR 97333
or to mathewsc2@comcast.net

Each nomination letter should give brief biographi-

cal information about the nominee and should describe in some detail the contribution or contributions for which this recognition is being recommended. Additional supporting letters are welcome, but not required. One thoughtful and detailed nomination letter is often more informative than ten perfunctory letters of endorsement.

Nominations should be submitted before January 31, 2006. A selection committee consisting of three ASC Board members will consider the nominations, and the award will be presented at a spring chapter meeting.

*Chris Mathews
President, Audubon Society of Corvallis*

Field Trip Schedule

Dec 10	Saturday local morning birding 7:30 AM
Dec 20	Corvallis Christmas Bird Count -- contact Marcia Cutler
Jan 14	Saturday local morning birding 7:30 AM
Feb 11	Saturday local morning birding 7:30 AM
Feb 18	Full day birding: Fern Hill Wetlands and Jackson Bottom -Forest Grove/Hillsboro

Second Saturdays

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 carpool, 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. It can be reached by turning east on Polk at the corner of Polk and 9th Street where Borders Books is located.

On Feb 18, 2006 I 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 carpool. We should return by 6:00 PM. Contact Paula Vanderheul for questions: vanderp@peak.org 541-752-0470

Spring Weekend Birding

March 17-19	Bandon Coast
April 21-23	Klamath Basin
May 5-7	Rogue Valley, with Shakespeare play "UP"

May 18-21 Malheur NWR

Sign-up sheets and trip information will be available at the general meetings, or contact Paula Vanderheul at vanderp@peak.org 541-752-0470

Paula Vanderheul

Audubon Oregon Establishes Its First New Chapter in 22 Years

The Audubon Society of Lincoln City (ASLC), the first new Audubon chapter in Oregon in twenty-two years, held its kickoff event on November 5. The event was attended by 100 people, and included presentations about the Chapter's leaders and plans, Audubon's centennial, and Pacific Northwest shorebird conservation.

"Underlying all of this is a wonderful sense of excitement and potential in and about the Chapter," said Dave Eshbaugh, Executive Director of Audubon Oregon, who assisted with the Chapter's formation.

The ASLC's Board Members includes the Mayor of Lincoln City, the CEO of the local community college, the principal of one of the local elementary schools, and the chair of the Lincoln City planning commission. Kathleen Nickerson, who has over 15 years of volunteer and staff management experience, is the Chapter President.

For more information about the ASLC, go to www.newportnewstimes.com/articles/2005/11/09/news/news25.txt.

Call for Chat Contributions Please Share Your Stories, Photos, Thoughts, and Discoveries!

What do you want to see in your ASC Chat? It all depends on you! All the items in the newsletter are written or suggested by ASC members. If you enjoy the Chat, that's great -- but it could be even better with your help. The ASC Chat needs your help to fill each issue with interesting news of what is flying, swimming, or hopping in the Willamette Valley. Send your photos, stories, poems, and any other suggestions to the Chat editors:

Joan Newhouse and Neil Lidstrom
joanelaine@cmug.com
2035 SE Stone Street
Corvallis, OR 97333
754-3120

Field Notes

October 25 through November 22, 2005

The weather this month was mostly typical for the season, with rainy weather alternating with colder, foggy mornings which sometimes cleared off to fine sunny days. The first frost at our place near E.E. Wilson was a hard freeze 21 Nov, with temperatures down to 26° F as the period ended colder than average.

Two ASC field trips to Linn Co. and Lane Co. 12 & 19 Nov were led by Paula Vanderheul, with several participants contributing reports. A Salem Audubon Society (SAS) field trip to Mary's Peak 9 Nov was led by Carol Karlen.

One of the most celebrated Willamette Valley birds in previous winters, a **Falcated Duck**, returned to the pond of an RV park near Coburg 18 Nov (Peter Petricelli). This species is native to Asia. Participants in the ASC field trip 19 Nov enjoyed this colorful bird, which has now returned four winters in a row according to the RV park owner.

Abbreviations & Locations: NWR = National Wildlife Refuge; STP = sewage treatment pond(s). Baskett Slough (NWR) is near Dallas in Polk Co. Coffin Butte and E.E. Wilson (Wildlife Area) are north of Corvallis along Hwy 99W. McFadden Marsh is at Finley (NWR) south of Corvallis. Middle Ridge is s. of Lebanon. Snag Boat Bend in Linn Co. near Peoria is an annex of Finley NWR.

Inland Reports

Large wintering flocks of **Canada Geese** and **Cackling Geese** arrived at valley refuges early in the period. A **Snow Goose** was with one such flock at Baskett Slough 18 Nov (Tom Love). **Tundra Swans** also began to arrive, with five near Peoria 10 Nov (Mark Nikas) and numbers increasing thru late Nov at Finley and Baskett Slough.

A **Eurasian Wigeon** was with **American Wigeons** at Baskett Slough 13 Nov (Erik Knight). Well over a thousand **Mallards** gathered at McFadden Marsh by 4 Nov; and many **Green-winged Teal** joined them by the end of the period. The count of **Northern Shovelers** at Philomath STP reached 450 by 13 Nov (Joe Fontaine). **Northern Pintail** were in the Peoria area 12 Nov (ASC field trip).

The ASC field trip to Linn Co. 12 Nov found 15 **Canvasbacks** (P Vanderheul). Two male **Redheads** showed up on Stewart Lake 31 Oct, the first there since 1993 (Jamie Simmons).

Twelve **Greater Scaup** were at Philomath STP 30 Oct (J Fontaine). **Lesser Scaup** (our more common scaup species in the valley) and **Ring-necked Ducks** were reported from many locations, along with **Buffleheads**, **Common Mergansers**, and **Hooded Mergansers**. One of the more unusual diving ducks was a **Surf Scoter** at Philomath STP 5 Nov, when it joined fifteen **Ruddy Ducks** (Noah Strycker).

The SAS field trip saw two **Ruffed Grouse** and three **Mountain Quail** along the road up Mary's Peak 9 Nov. A **Blue Grouse** was beside the same road 19 Nov (N Strycker). Raylene Gordin came across over a dozen **Blue Grouse** which were in shrubs and small trees atop Middle Ridge 7 Nov.

Two **Horned Grebes** were at Philomath STP 1 Nov; one vocalizing which is a sound not often heard in the valley (N Strycker). Three to four **Eared Grebes** were there from 25 Oct thru 13 Nov (N Strycker; J Fontaine), with two remaining 17 Nov (Rich & Nanette Armstrong, Marcia Cutler). A **Western Grebe** visited Philomath STP 25 Oct (N Strycker); three were on the Stahlbusch Island ponds 10 Nov (M Nikas).

Numbers of **Great Egrets** around Finley NWR continued to grow, with ten at Cheadle Marsh 2 Nov and two at Inavale School 4 Nov, and 23 in the area by 6 Nov (M Cutler). Two were just e. of Albany 12 Nov (Jeff Harding).

A very late **Turkey Vulture** was at Stewart Lake 2 Nov (Neil Lidstrom, Joan Newhouse). A few have been staying in the valley in recent winters, so perhaps this will turn out to be one of those.

A **White-tailed Kite** showed up in the s. part of E.E. Wilson in the last week of Oct (fide Ray Fiori). Six were in Kings Valley 9 Nov (SAS field trip).

On 28 Oct Richard Hoyer watched a male **Cooper's Hawk** buzz a larger accipiter that was perched near his place in NW Corvallis; the larger bird turned out to be an adult **Northern Goshawk**, a rare bird to see in town. A **Red-shouldered Hawk** was at McFadden Marsh 9 Nov (Steve Seibel).

With this year's spike in vole populations, many observers have noticed concentrations of **Red-tailed Hawks** in perennial grass fields around the mid-valley. The hawks' main hunting strategy seems to be "standing on the ground and just ... waiting for the next vole to move," Bob Altman noted 12 Nov.

A more unusual choice of prey by a female **Red-tailed Hawk** led to a remarkable chain of encounters which Richard Hoyer and Reed Demarest witnessed along Llewellyn Rd. 15 Oct. A female **Peregrine Falcon** parasitized the hawk by forcing her to release her catch, as the falcon snatched it out of air. The hawk gave chase and amazingly was able to keep up with the falcon. After a second **Red-tailed Hawk** joined the picture, the chase continued until one of the red-tails finally forced the falcon to release her ill-gotten gain, and made off with it.

Investigating an object which had floated down to the road surface during this chase, Richard and Reed found a three feathers from a male **American Kestrel**, stuck to a large piece of leaf-like lichen of a type which grows on the ground. They deduced that the first Red-tailed Hawk must have blind-sided a kestrel that was on the ground.

Rough-legged Hawks were seen in the Llewellyn Rd. area from 1 Nov onward. On 9 Nov three light morphs were in the field n. of Llewellyn Rd., and a dark morph was over McFadden Marsh (S Seibel).

On 22 Nov Wil Geier and I saw an immature **Golden Eagle** along Llewellyn Rd. The same day, Randy Moore saw a **Golden Eagle** in w. Linn Co., as well as a **Rough-legged Hawk**, 30+ **Red-tailed Hawks**, six **Northern Harriers**, numerous **American Kestrels** and three **Prairie Falcons** – just about all in the space of two fields!

A **Merlin** of the *columbarius* subspecies (less often seen here than ssp. *suckleyi*) was at Stewart Lake 1 Nov (J Simmons). **Peregrine Falcons** were reported from McFadden Marsh 9 Nov (S Seibel), and twice at Philomath STP 13 & 17 Nov (J Fontaine; M Cutler, R & N Armstrong). A **Prairie Falcon** was along Davis Rd. 6-12 Nov (J Harding; B Altman). Another was near Peoria 13 Nov (Roy Gerig).

The **American Coot** flock at Philomath STP reached a count of 250 by 30 Oct (J Fontaine). Quite a few were also at Stewart Lake 14 Nov (Andrea Foster).

Eight **Greater Yellowlegs** and 25 **Long-billed Dowitchers** were at the E. E. Wilson canal pond 30 Oct. Two **Least Sandpipers** joined a small flock of **Western Sandpipers** and **American Pipits** along McLagan Rd. in Linn Co. 12 Nov (B Altman). A **Red-necked Phalarope** was at Philomath STP 6 Nov (Karl Fairchild, Jessie Leach; J Fontaine).

A **Bonaparte's Gull** briefly visited Philomath STP 6 Nov (K Fairchild, J Leach). Two clean adult **Western Gulls** were there 1 Nov (N Strycker); although this can be the most common species at the coast, it is surprisingly rare in the valley.

Other, more regularly occurring gull species showed up in numbers this month, starting with a juvenile **Glaucous-winged Gull** at Philomath STP 30 Oct (J Fontaine). 15 **California Gulls** flew over our place on their way to Coffin Butte landfill 31 Oct, where more of their kind were joined on 2 Nov by at least two **Glaucous-winged Gulls** and two **Herring Gulls** R Armstrong).

Bill Proebsting saw a **Barn Owl** along the Campus Way bike path near the OSU swine facility 27 Oct. Two were in the barn near Finley headquarters 31 Oct R & N Armstrong). The approach of mating season for **Great Horned Owls** was evident from one hooting at dawn near Woodland Meadows Park in Corvallis, from late Oct onward (Dave Mellinger).

A **Northern Pygmy-Owl** was on Mary's Peak 30 Oct (George & Cindy Grier). On 2 Nov I watched one that was actively hunting by the upper parking lot, and another perched silently closer to the

summit. At least two **Burrowing Owls** were in the Peoria area by 10 Nov (Randy Campbell). Randy Moore saw one on 22 Nov, and also a soaring **Short-eared Owl**.

A climber on Three Fingered Jack in the Cascades reported a possible **Black Swift** there 29 Oct (Alisdair Turner); this is about two weeks later than the record late date for this species, but this is one of the least well-understood species in our region.

A female **Anna's Hummingbird** visited a feeder on Middle Ridge 28 Oct R Gordin. On 20 Nov one also showed up at Pat Waldron's place e. of Scio. As of 14 Jan a pair at Andrea Foster's place in nw. Corvallis were chasing each other around the premises.

On 15 Nov a **Belted Kingfisher** perched 10 ft. away from an American Kestrel on a utility wire on Stolz Hill Rd (w. edge of Lebanon), an odd pair of birds to see together R Gordin).

An **Acorn Woodpecker** visited our yard near E.E. Wilson 10 Nov, only the second time we have seen one in a year; perhaps it was young bird prospecting for new territory. One was along Bell Plain Rd. in Linn Co. 12 Nov (B Altman). On 20 Nov Andrea Foster had an unusual **Red-breasted Sapsucker** show up in her nw Corvallis yard. From her description it sounds like an individual of the "southern" race (subspecies *dagetti*), which can look quite different from our usual local birds.

A **Black Phoebe** continued at the Monroe STP thru 14 Nov (J Fontaine; R Armstrong). A **Say's Phoebe** was along Pugh Rd. in Linn Co. 12 Nov (P Vanderheul; J Simmons, Hendrik Herlyn, Oscar Harper).

A **Loggerhead Shrike** continued e. of Ward Butte thru 10 Nov (R Campbell). A young **Northern Shrike** was perched along Bruce Rd. just e. of McFadden Marsh 2 Nov. One also turned up at the Marys River Natural Area in sw Corvallis, 20 Nov onward (Kim Nelson, Will Wright).

Jim Fairchild heard the distinctive call of a **Blue Jay** while working near the USDA National Germplasm Laboratory on Peoria Rd. 7 Nov; eventually he and a co-worker were able to see the bird through binoculars. This eastern vagrant was in the company of **Western Scrub-Jays** and **Steller's Jays**. The **Blue Jay** was seen again 12 & 13 Nov (J Simmons; R Gerig).

Seven **Horned Larks** were atop Marys Peak 9 Nov (SAS field trip). A few were along Seward Rd. near Peoria 12 Nov (B Altman).

Paul Bradley and Lori Greenfield spotted an **American Dipper** swimming in the Alsea River 16 Nov, during the Inavale 7th & 8th graders' visit to the Salmon Watch program at Clemens Park.

After hiking up the summit trail at Marys Peak 2 Nov, I returned to find 12 **Western Bluebirds** perched on and around my car in the parking lot; the flock stayed around the thru 17 Nov R Armstrong). A flock also continued atop Middle Ridge thru 21 Nov R Gordin).

Large flocks of **American Pipits** include 60 at Philomath STP 1 Nov (N Strycker), 130 along Greenberry Rd. 4 Nov, and hundreds s. of Seward Rd. near Peoria 12 Nov (B Altman). There were no reports of Cedar Waxwings this month as most left our area; the last I saw this fall were four on Coffin Butte 24 Oct.

A single **Yellow-rumped Warbler** was frequenting a ditch at Marys River Natural Area as of mid-Nov (Kim Nelson, Will Wright). A few were also noted at Finley, Philomath STP, Willamette Park, and Oak Knoll STP among other places. On 4 Nov I saw a flock of at least four **Townsend's Warblers** foraging high in cottonwoods near the Evanite plant at Willamette Park. Two were regularly visiting Rich & Nanette Armstrong's yard in nw Corvallis as of 11 Nov.

The first **Swamp Sparrow** of the season turned up in Randy & Mary Campbell's yard in Peoria 20 Nov. Precious few local birders can claim this very sparse wintering species as a "yard bird." For those of us not so lucky to find one in the back yard, good places to look include E.E. Wilson, Luckiamute Landing, and other soggy, grassy places (native tufted hairgrass or "kack" patches of teasel, grass and blackberries) that regularly host **Lincoln's Sparrows** in good numbers.

Four **White-throated Sparrows** turned up in the ne. part of E.E. Wilson 30 Oct, about a half mile n. of the angling pond. Another was

at Philomath STP 13 Nov (J Fontaine). Our more common wintering sparrow species (**Song, Fox, Golden-crowned, and White-crowned Sparrows**) were all present in abundance thru the period.

Mark Nikas found a **Lapland Longspur** with a large flock of **American Pipits** and **Horned Larks** near Creek & Smith Rds. se. of Peoria 10 Nov. Mark notes that this is nearly an annual site for this species, although they are usually very difficult to relocate.

On 2 Nov I encountered a single **Snow Bunting** atop Mary's Peak, which appeared to be a first-winter bird. It spent most of its time foraging out of sight in grass below the summit. One was again found there 17-18 Nov R & N Armstrong, M Cutler; N Strycker), perhaps the same bird although it must have been good at hiding in the meantime.

On 12 Nov Bob Altman found an interesting mixed flock of **European Starlings** and blackbirds along Green Valley Rd. near Peoria. Along with the expected **Brewer's** and **Red-winged Blackbirds**, the flock included at least three **Brown-headed Cowbirds** and a **Yellow-headed Blackbird**, both rare in late fall and winter.

A **Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch** was reported atop Mary's Peak 9 Nov (SAS field trip). A male **Cassin's Finch** "with a punk-red hairdo" stopped by Andrea Foster's NW Corvallis feeder 13 Nov in the company of **House Finches**. This species is usually found east of the Cascades, and most vagrants to Benton Co. have been on Marys Peak rather than in town.

Nanette Armstrong spotted a **River Otter** in the canal pond at E.E. Wilson in early Nov. A **Giant Stonefly nymph** was one of the highlights for Inavale 7th & 8th graders sampling insects from the Alsea River 16 Nov, with the help of Salmon Watch volunteer Guy Allen.

Coastal Notes

Wintering **Black Brant** flocks began to return to the central Oregon Coast this month, with 18 passing Boiler Bay 25 Oct (Phil Pickering) and 17 on Yaquina Bay by 6 Nov (N Strycker).

Two **Eurasian Wigeons** (male and female) were with about 600 **American Wigeons** on Yaquina Bay 30 Oct (G & C Grier). 400 **Northern Pintail** and 40 **Greater Scaup** were there by 6 Nov (N Strycker).

On 14 Nov a female **eider** (most likely to be a King Eider) flew past Boiler Bay with a flock of scoters (P Pickering). Small numbers of **Black Scoters** passed there along with the usual large numbers of **Surf and White-winged Scoters** through the period (P Pickering). A **Black Scoter** and a **Long-tailed Duck** were between the jetties at Yaquina Bay 6 Nov (N Strycker).

400 **Short-tailed Shearwaters** off Boiler Bay 4 Nov were the first large concentration of the season. 150 **Brown Pelicans** were there 6 Nov (P Pickering). A late **Osprey** was at Yaquina Bay 6 Nov (N Strycker).

Seven **Marbled Godwits** were on the beach at Spanish Head 31 Oct (P Pickering). Two **Rock Sandpipers** were with **Surfbirds** at Depoe Bay 30 Oct (Floyd Schrock); this is one of the more reliable places to see this species in our area.

A **Snow Bunting** was along the nature trail at Hatfield Marine Science Center 29-30 Oct (Greg Gillson; G Grier). An unusual grosbeak visiting Roy Filby's feeder in Newport 3 Nov was determined to be most likely a hatch-year male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** based on photos.

Next month

Please send your sightings by Dec 27th to:
Joel Geier, 38566 Hwy 99W, Corvallis, OR 97330-9320
(541) 745-5020 or jgeier@attglobal.net

New Luckiamute Parklands Send OPRD Your Comments

The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) has started work on a master plan for state park lands at the confluence of the Luckiamute and Willamette Rivers. This land lies between Buena Vista Rd. and the Willamette just south of the community of Buena Vista. Through December 14, citizens can give OPRD comments on issues and priorities for this plan, which will govern over 1000 acres of unique wildlife habitat for the next 20 years.

The centerpiece of this plan is the Luckiamute Landing greenway parcel. This holds one of the largest remnants of the bottomland deciduous forest that once lined the banks of the Willamette. The parcel hosts five species of woodpeckers, Red-eyed Vireo in some years, a small nesting population of Oregon Vesper Sparrow, as well as several nearby nesting pairs of Osprey and Bald Eagles, and an abundance of wintering sparrows and finches, usually attended by raptors such as Merlins, Sharp-shinned Hawks, and Cooper's Hawks.

A second greenway parcel, the Vanderpool Tract, includes bottomland habitat similar to Luckiamute Landing, but also mature oaks that regularly host a Western Bluebird flock. OSU researchers have learned that the ponds contain one of the mid-Willamette Valley's largest populations of Western Pond Turtles, as well as Red-legged Frogs.

Two smaller adjoining parcels are mainly agricultural lands on which OPRD plans to restore native habitats. An additional parcel managed by Oregon Dept. of Fish & Wildlife is not covered by OPRD's master plan for the park lands, but is also being restored and thus adds to the potential of the project as wildlife habitat. Some of this land could serve as nesting habitat for "Streaked" Horned Larks, a critically imperiled Willamette Valley subspecies. Up to 40 of these larks (a significant fraction of the total population), now nest on private farmland within two miles of the park lands.

OPRD presented the initial stage of the planning process at a public meeting in Monmouth on November 14. Park facility ideas are so far mostly positive and modest: the boat-in campground will be relocated from an eroding bank to a spot just up-river. A proper vault restroom and an OPRD field office may be built at existing building sites. Some trails and fishing/hunting rules may be revised to reduce disturbance to pond turtles. OPRD intends to continue with bottomland restoration. Two local farmers who attended the meeting were both supportive of the aims.

OPRD seems to have good intentions for restoring the historical, mid-1800s bottomland habitat. However, one concern is the role that these lands now play in the existing, highly fragmented Willamette Valley ecosystem. Oregon Vesper Sparrows would not have nested in the historic, bottomland forest, but have come to depend on the present-day openings. Tree-planting with the aim of

restoring mid-1800s vegetation has already impacted their habitat. Further "restoration" in this direction could result in greater losses, unless compensatory grassland habitat nearby is part of the plan.

ASC members should also be aware that OPRD will face pressure from recreational users, and perhaps internal pressure to develop something more "park-like." Your comments will be important to ensure that protection of sensitive species and their habitat is a top priority.

Please send your comments on the future of these park lands by Dec. 14 to:

Ron Campbell, Master Planning Coordinator
Oregon Parks and Recreation Dept.
725 Summer St., Suite C.
Salem, OR 97301-1271
or via e-mail at <ron.campbell@state.or.us>,
or by phone at (503) 986-0743.

OPRD's information on the planning process can be found on the Web at:

http://egov.oregon.gov/OPRD/PLANS/planning_luckiamute.shtml

For more information about these lands and the birds that call them home, contact Joel Geier (contact info on the back page of the Chat).

Joel Geier

Avian Flu: What It Could Mean for Wild Birds (and Birders)

Avian flu and the fear of a deadly global epidemic has the potential to radically alter public attitudes and interactions with wild birds. It is already having a drastic effect on some wild bird populations.

"Regular" Avian Flu and H5N1

There are many different strains of avian flu – most cause only mild disease symptoms in birds. The particular virus that is the center of all the current concern is called H5N1. This highly pathogenic strain was only recently recorded in wild birds, and likely originated in domestic poultry.

H5N1 and People

So far, about 120 people (all in Southeast Asia) have been infected with H5N1, and more than 60 have died. The good news is that human-to-human transmission is clearly very rare. The great fear is the *possibility* that this virus could mutate into a form that is easily transmitted between humans. Such a mutation killed 40-50 million people worldwide in 1918. However, it is not inevitable that this mutation will occur.

H5N1 and Wild Birds

In Southeast Asia, domestic poultry is often allowed to mix freely with wild birds. This facilitates transmission to migratory waterbirds, leading to several reported die-offs. Intense research is currently focused on determining whether infected wild birds can spread H5N1 to new areas, or whether H5N1 is so deadly that it kills birds before they can travel.

Most new cases of the virus are clearly explained by trade in infected poultry, not by the movements of wild birds. However, a recent outbreak of H5N1 in northern Mongolia, far from known poultry sources, has led many researchers to conclude that at least in some cases, wild birds can spread the virus to other birds along their migratory routes. Global testing is needed to monitor the extent and spread of the virus in domestic flocks and wild bird populations.

H5N1 poses both direct and indirect threats to wild bird populations. It is estimated that up to 10% of the world population of the rare Bar-headed Goose perished in a recent outbreak in China, while in Thailand, wild Asian Open-bill Storks were targeted for a proposed culling campaign. Culling wild birds is highly unlikely to stop the spread of the disease, and may even make the situation worse by dispersing infected individuals, stressing healthy birds, and diverting resources from more effective measures.

There is no evidence that any human has ever caught H5N1 from a wild bird. However, bird-banders and others who handle wild birds may need to adopt new precautions.

Controlling the spread of H5N1

The most efficient control techniques include:

- reducing contact between domestic stock and wild birds or infected water sources
- culling infected poultry flocks swiftly and completely
- imposing strict controls on wild bird markets and movements of domestic poultry

These measures should be introduced worldwide. Countries currently free of the disease should consider a ban on imports of domestic poultry and wild birds for the pet trade from affected regions. Concerns about the role of the bird trade in spreading avian flu have unfortunately been proven correct. In 2004, two Crested Hawk Eagles being smuggled into Belgium on a flight from Thailand were found to be infected with H5N1, and in 2005 a parrot being imported into England from Taiwan also tested positive. The Asian wild bird trade involves millions of birds per year. Shutting down this trade would be of immediate benefit to wild bird populations throughout Asia.

What about North America?

H5N1 has not yet been reported from either North or South America. Since the 1990's, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has sampled more than 10,000 migratory waterfowl crossing the Bering Sea from Asia to Alaska, but has not found a single bird carrying the H5N1 virus.

For more information:

National Audubon Society:

<http://www.audubon.org/bird/AvianBirdFlu.php>

BirdLife International:

http://www.birdlife.org/action/science/species/avian_flu/

Avian flu and the wild bird trade:

<http://www.wcs.org/353624/191957>

Guidelines for handling wild birds from the National Wildlife Health Center:

http://www.nwhc.usgs.gov/research/WHB/WHB_05_03.html

Pepper Trail, Rogue Valley Audubon

New Books Briefly Noted

Rare Bird: Pursuing the Mystery of the Marbled Murrelet, by Maria Mudd Ruth. Rodale Books, 2005. "Part naturalist detective story, part environmental inquiry, this fascinating saga, told in an engaging storytelling style, introduces us to a curiosity of nature – a web-footed, fish-eating seabird that nests high in the trees of the Pacific Coast's vanishing old-growth forests.

Dragonflies and Damselflies of the Willamette Valley, Oregon: A Beginner's Guide, by Steve Gordon and Cary Kerst. CraneDance Publications (www.cranedance.com), Fall 2005. 120 pages of descriptions and 96 color photos of species found in the Willamette Valley – the only current field guide on this specific region.

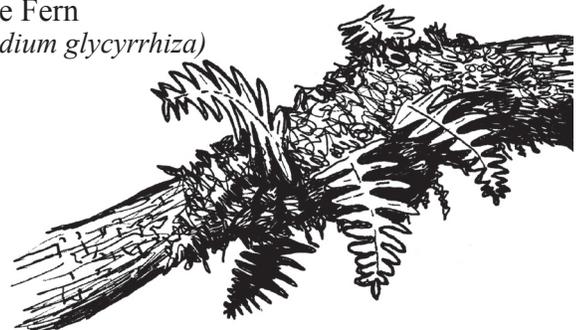
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Licorice Fern

(*Polypodium glycyrrhiza*)



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Calendar

Dec 10 Saturday local birding (p. 27)
Dec 15 General meeting (front page)
Dec 20 Corvallis Christmas Bird Count (p. 26)
Dec 27 Submission deadline for January Field Notes
Dec 29 Submission deadline for January Chat
Jan 14 Saturday local birding (p. 27)
Jan 31 Submission deadline for Homer Campbell Award nominations (p. 26)
Feb 11 Saturday local birding (p. 27)
Feb 18 Full day birding (p. 27)
Feb 17-20 Great Backyard Bird Count (p. 26)

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