

A Blast From The Past 40 Years Ago – Audubon in Central Oregon 1984

By Judy Meredith

I have a pile of old "Eagle Eye" newsletters from the old days; 2 are from 1984 and I used the Field Notes info from those, but the bits about the enviro center, etc are from my old memories. I have been in Bend for over 50 years so I knew a lot of the old timers, and now I am an old timer!

– Judy Meredith (more like a valuable treasure than an old timer – editor)

Birders' Night was held at either COCC (Central Oregon Community College) or Far West Federal Bank on 3rd Street. It was a mostly learning, sharing and educational meeting about local birds. Monthly programs were held at the Bend Senior Center which was just off 5th and Greenwood. And monthly chapter business meetings were called Potluck Night and met at the home of board members such as Jim and Sue Anderson, living on Jones Rd. at the time. Now that location is a city park, Hollinshead.

The Environmental Center in Bend was just a gleam in the eye of Alice Elshoff and Bill Marlett and others at the time. Audubon fundraisers to purchase a meeting place in the future included a Christmas Bazaar selling bird-related items and the year-round selling of birdseed and feeders. An "Audubon House" never materialized, but the chapter contributed later to help purchase the property on Kansas Avenue that is still in use today as The Environmental Center by many conservation organizations. Now you know why the large meeting room there has been called the "Audubon Room."

Other activities 40 years ago by Audubon included an ODFW-sponsored beach cleanup to pick up plastic because of its detrimental effect on wildlife - gee, do ya think?! Another group, led by Jim Anderson, cleaned bluebird boxes at Rimrock Springs. A researcher at OSU was conducting a survey on nest box parasites, so box contents were bagged and labeled to be sent to Corvallis. Harold Winegar, biologist and riparian champion, asked Audubon members to help him at a meeting with livestock people, the USFS, and Grassland reps over the situation with the (degraded, my words) Willow Creek area upstream from Rimrock Springs.

Field Notes included a column by Madras birder Ivy Hilty with a paragraph detailing the 3rd sighting of a Northern Mockingbird in Jefferson County, with one report per decade, 1966, '78, and '84. And Tom Crabtree wrote the Deschutes Field Notes column with most of the sightings from Hatfield Lake, Tumalo Reservoir, Brooks Scanlon Mill Pond, and Bend Airport Pond. Today, 40 years later, the often birded Hatfield Lake is open to the walking public, Tumalo Reservoir is usually dry, not filled, the mill pond area has better access but changed habitat into tidy trails along the river around the Old Mill and the Bend airport pond, formerly lined with dense willows, is dry and bulldozed. Yet we applaud the gradual acquisition of parks and public trail access along many miles of the Deschutes River which give birds space and birders a chance for exercise in a bird-rich area near in town. And the cities of Prineville and Redmond, with forward thinking planners and birders advising them, make sewer ponds into better bird habitat with public access.

In my opinion, each of us can encourage our representatives in government, cities, counties, parks, agencies and organizations to strongly consider conservation needs and habitat for wildlife, birds, pollinators and to make room to welcome people in the wild outdoors.