

THE CALLIOPE

EAST CASCADES BIRD ALLIANCE
QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Winter 2024-2025



President's Message

- Birder backpacks are in all three Central Oregon counties.
- Watch the ECBA website and the monthly newsletter *Chatter* for info on:
 - Rollout of Saturday bird walks in 2025
 - Possible venue change to Worthy Brewing for Birders' Nights
- Elise Wolf is now an ECBA Board Member
- Duke Tufty is no longer an ECBA Board Member or President
- Harney County Bird Festival is April 10-13, 2025
<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/event/harney-county-migratory-bird-festival/>
Registration to attend opens Feb. 14, 2025 Volunteers needed

Welcome New ECBA Members!



Christina Bourne	Bend, OR
Amber Dickey	Redmond, OR
Barbara Hawkins	Bend, OR
Laurie Hildebrandt	Bend, OR
Robert Korfhage	Bend, OR
Debbie Meisinger	Tualatin, OR
Robert Peck	Sisters, OR
Phyllis Pengelly	Bend, OR
Bruce & Martha Rhine	Marana, AZ
BA Robbins	Mt. Vernon, OR
Paul/Renee Smith/Roufs	Powell Butte, OR
David Stout	Sisters, OR

Upcoming Events-

High Desert Museum's Natural History Pub: On the Tail of the Trumpeter Swan

January 6, 2025 at McMenamin's Old St. Francis School Pub, 700 NW Bond Street, Bend
Doors open 5:30pm

7:00 pm - 8:00 pm presentation - free, but advance reservation required, limited seating



Oregon's Summer Lake Wildlife Area is a wetland habitat that hosts thousands of migrating and resident birds. Among them is the Trumpeter swan, the state's largest waterfowl. A species that almost disappeared from the U.S., Trumpeter swan populations have rebounded thanks to partnerships between federal, state and private organizations. Please join Martin St. Louis—retired Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife biologist who managed Summer Lake for over 33 years—to learn how one partnership is enhancing populations of this charismatic bird in Oregon's High Desert.

February Birders Night and March Pinyon Jay Study

Birders Night on February 20, 2025 will be about Pinyon Jay conservation followed by volunteer training for the surveys that would likely occur in early or mid-March of 2025.

Pinyon Jays have historically been understudied and are suffering significant long-term population declines. To gather information for a rangewide status review, the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the East Cascades Bird Alliance (ECBA) are partnering to set up a volunteer monitoring program to help survey for nesting Pinyon Jays in areas within and surrounding Bend, Sisters and Redmond. ECBA volunteers will be trained by USFWS staff to use specific monitoring protocols and in the use of the Great Basin Bird Observatory (GBBO) Mobile Survey App for Pinyon Jay. ECBA and GBBO trained members on the use of this App in April 2024, and since then, our birders have been using it to collect presence and absence data on Pinyon Jays in Central Oregon.



More information on Pinyon Jays, their status, and conservation (including trend data, monitoring protocols, conservation strategies, and past Pinyon Jay research), can be learned from the Pinyon Jay Working Group at the following link: [PJ Project](#)

If you are interested in this Pinyon Jay project and would like more information, please email: ecba@ecbirds.org, subject line **PJ Project**. Include your name and contact information (phone, email address).

Digital classes from Bird Alliance of Oregon (formerly Portland Audubon)

Bird Alliance of Oregon offers online classes, in addition to other field classes, that spark curiosity, foster a deeper understanding of the natural world, and inspire people to protect native wildlife and their habitat. Their programs are open to people of all skill levels and abilities, with a focus on natural history, regional conservation issues, the intersection of art and the environment, and of course, birds and wildlife. When you take a class with Bird Alliance of Oregon, you are supporting their work to protect wildlife, wild places, and humans alike. All experience levels and new birders are always welcome. BAO members pay a reduced rate for classes.

https://birdallianceoregon.org/our-work/learn/adult-programs/classes/?tribe_event_category=76

The link above shows the classes offered online in **January and February 2025** by a variety of instructors. Topics include winter bird ID, photography, habitat, artistic representation, geology, and botany, among others. Although based in Portland, much of the info is applicable to central Oregon. Curriculum may include quizzes and handouts, and all classes are also available by a recording sent out to registrants the day after it is offered live at 6pm in case you cannot watch it at that time. It's a nice winter alternative to driving somewhere for a program, and there is no video or audio of you on the broadcast so you can eat dinner in your PJs while watching the broadcast and no one will know!

Greater and Lesser Scaup ID

By Judy Meredith on COBOL

I am reading this article from *Arizona Birds* and I really like the text descriptions and photo comparisons. The descriptions of bill and nail shape, head shape, etc. are great. Even if you already know everything there is to know about Scaup, you might agree that there is lots of good material here. Always helps me to read how others describe features for ID and I like to learn more. Plus, it is good for me to review, to feel fresh for upcoming CBCs, with lots of waterfowl to be ID'd. There is a PDF at this link that can be downloaded.

<https://arizonabirds.org/journal/2019/identification-challenge-lesser-v-greater-scaup.html>



Lesser Scaup. Photo by Pierre Deviche.

Winter Gull Tutorial by Chuck Gates

(reprinted from Facebook 11/12/24)



California on the left, Ring-billed on the right

If you live in Central Oregon and you are afraid of gulls (or, more accurately, afraid of gull identification), I have some ideas. The real gull experts are going to hate this, but I'm not talking to them. I'm talking to you...the average birder or maybe a hungry beginner that just finds gull ID baffling. Heck, you might even still call them SEAGULLS (a no-no in the minds of most birders). Don't feel bad. It's a journey. I am far from a gull expert so I am on the journey too.

I'm going to use photos from two gulls I spotted today and see if I can get you to take the first baby steps toward identifying Central Oregon gulls.

A BIT OF ADVICE BEFORE WE LOOK AT PHOTOS

1. Don't try to learn all the gulls at the same time. You don't have to. I want you to concentrate only on two species. At least 15 species of gull have been recorded in Central Oregon, but there are two you should get to know because, if you see a gull in Central Oregon, it's most likely one of these two. They are (in order of abundance) the Ring-billed Gull and the California Gull.

2. What you are about to read and do pertains only for Central Oregon gulls. If you go to the Willamette Valley or Oregon Coast, all bets are off. There are lots of different species over there and you can tackle them after you learn these 2.

3. Get familiar with adult vs juvenile gulls and avoid the juveniles for now. Remember the baby steps. Adult white-headed gulls in Central Oregon have white on the head, neck, breast, belly, and part of the tail. The back and wings are mostly gray. Our two gulls have black wingtips that, when at rest, are sometimes mistaken for the tail because of how they fold their wings. Juveniles can be dark brown, almost white, or dingy colored. They're a mess. That's why I won't address them at this stage. We will only look at adults for this exercise.

Now, I could just tell you how to distinguish these two species from each other, but it might be fun to do a little exercise first. See how many differences you can find by going back to the top of this article and looking carefully at the photo. Jot down your differences and then **go to the end of this newsletter** where I will list the 3 most useful field marks that separate non-breeding Ring-billed and California Gulls in Central Oregon. Look at your list of differences. How did you do?



A Blast from COAS/ECAS/ECBA's Past, Winter 1984-5, 40 years ago

By Judy Meredith

THE EAGLE EYE

December 1984 **Central Oregon Audubon Society**

**** CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT ****

It's time to stand up and be counted--if you're a bird that is. Each year at Christmas time the Audubon Society conducts an inventory of bird-life in the US. This is your opportunity to participate. We'll be going regardless of weather. No cancellation, so be sure and show up. Bring your warm clothing (obviously), and binoculars, and a spotting scope, if you have one. This will be an all-day adventure that will end with a potluck at Tom Crabtree's. You don't have to go on the count. You can stay at home and be a feeder watcher. We need everyone's help.

Date: Saturday December 22nd

Meeting Place: Pioneer Park

Time: 8:00 AM (Come a little early if you can.)

Compilation & Potluck: Tom & Kathy Crabtree

It's fun and helpful to look back at a glimpse of ECBA (formerly Central Oregon Audubon Society and later East Cascades Audubon Society) activities: what has changed or stayed the same?

The January 1985 board meeting held a lengthy discussion on environmental concerns such as damming the Deschutes River and geothermal exploration in the Newberry Crater area. COAS planned to provide materials, postcards and addresses, to aid members in expressing opinions. The conservation committee brought stamped and pre-addressed postcards to the next meeting. Surely it took more to preserve the area, but we have a national monument. And today, we write emails to USFS with our thoughts on the proposed changes to the NW Forest Plan, BLM for Sage Grouse plans, and to BLM to help with Redmond Wetlands Project land acquisition. Our engagement remains so very important for birds and healthy habitats.

A Riparian Report in 1985 by biologist Harold Winegar included the very good news that the public portion of Bear Creek (Crook County) was showing early stages of recovery after 15 years of effort to protect it from livestock. He reminded us that huge sediment flows into

Prineville Reservoir, measured in the past decade (1970s) at 693 tons per hour would be a thing of the past! Just imagine that amount of erosion and how it would have negatively affected fish and birds.

Ellen and Chuck Lewis announced an upcoming all-day project with USFS to build bluebird boxes. In the past year of 1984, COAS had built 625 boxes, so this project was remarkable and reminds us of how volunteering can make a huge difference for birds.

An American Kestrel was a notable bird mentioned in the field notes from the Madras area. This brings to mind the major success of the long standing Kestrel Nestbox Program, started the next decade by Don McCartney and engaging years of effort by people such as Diane Kook, Jim Anderson, Ken Hashagen, Dick and Margi Tipton, Kim Kathol and dozens of others. They record healthy numbers of Kestrels in our area, unlike in other areas of the USA, where Kestrels are in steep decline. Thanks to their sustained efforts, we are able to see Kestrels thriving in central Oregon.

Forty years ago, Mourning Doves in winter were notable for being unusual but not so today with overwintering a common thing. Someday perhaps Tom Crabtree or Craig Miller can write a review of the changes that have transpired in local bird populations from 40 years ago. Who knew that Lesser Goldfinches, Scrub Jays, American Crows etc would become common nesters here, much less annual reports of Northern Mockingbird, Red-shouldered Hawk and Black Phoebe in central Oregon. On the other hand, those doing BBS routes are acutely aware of declines in many species over the recent decades. Our reports from casual birding also make a meaningful contribution to citizen science.

Birders Night, different back then from present programs, focused on winter birding in eastern Oregon and farther afield - where to go - with skill building and sharing always key to the monthly meetings.

Wayne and Shirley Eshelman presented a program on bird and mammal experiences from their visit to Tanzania and Viv and Gil Staender presented on their year spent in the Arctic. (Just as birding and travel were also the focus of a program this winter by Steve Kornfeld.) We birders are always eager to dream ahead, explore new places and birds, learn, and yes, to photograph and list.)

Field trips were led to Hay Creek Reservoir and along the Deschutes River. Of course CBCs were held with some rare birds enjoyed. The Sunriver CBC had a Brown Thrasher near the nature center which continued to be seen through at least January 30th. In Crescent, a Blue Jay persisted, and in Bend for the CBC, Lloyd and Barbara Sharp had a "seldom seen in winter" Golden-crowned Sparrow and also a Lapland Longspur lingering at their feeder (perhaps Sandy remembers that bird?) and a Turkey Vulture was in Tumalo State Park.

Interestingly, an Arctic Loon was reported from Wickiup. BUT, the bird was likely the same species we know today as the Pacific Loon as the species was split in 1985, the next year. Wickiup, Tumalo and Haystack reservoirs and Hatfield Lake offered up multiple species flocks of gulls, loons and scoters through November, Six Surf Scoters at one time were observed at Hatfield. The first known local wintering Townsend's Warbler was seen at feeders by several different birders in west Bend. Around Madras, a Northern Mockingbird persisted at the Sid Elliott home, reportedly singing and feeding often on currant berries.

The conservation committee was vacant, seeking leadership, and was soon ably filled by Glenn Van Cise. Today, 40 years later, the conservation committee has several energized members and has robust projects, as you know if you attended the recent annual meeting and learned about current Greater Sage Grouse issues.

The USFS presented awards of appreciation to the chapter for efforts by volunteer birders, handing out shirts with the USFS logo. Birders had carried out surveys at Big Marsh and Davis Lake and in future years, point counts for pre- and post-treatment forest projects, Flammulated Owl surveys, Gray Flycatcher nesting surveys, to name a few. Dave Tracy and Steve Shunk were instrumental in helping birders improve critical skills for surveying birds; identifying the local bird songs and calls. Back in the day we used mnemonics, cassette tapes and accompanying paper booklets to learn the sounds. That was not at all like today, as we carry AI and Merlin into the field on smart phones and can find many other calls and songs on the internet, in Xeno Canto, and in Cornell's library of sounds in ebird. We are in a world rich with resources for birders, including our own ECBA supporting birds and birding.

Federal funding of \$3.5 million will help improve Greater Sage-Grouse habitat in Oregon

By MICHAEL KOHN, *The Bend Bulletin*, Dec 10, 2024



**A male sage-grouse on a lek in Wyoming,
Photo by Tom Koerner/USFWS**

The Crook County Soil and Water Conservation District has been awarded a \$3.5 million federal grant to enhance core sagebrush ecosystems in Oregon. The restoration effort is planned to benefit sage-grouse, pronghorn and other wildlife species in the High Desert.

The grant is part of a \$122.4 million funding effort from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to support [conservation projects nationwide](#).

The soil and water conservation district is managing the grant on behalf of a collaborative group that includes the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. The grant will improve thousands of acres of sage-grouse habitat 70 miles east of Bend, and north of U.S. Highway 20 near Hampton Buttes. The focus area straddles both Crook and Deschutes counties.

Treatment efforts

A focus of the effort is cutting juniper trees to recreate habitat more suitable for sage-grouse to breed and forage for food. Sage-grouse breed in areas called leks, which tend to be scattered around the best habitat for nesting and foraging.

Funds will also be spent on applying herbicide to invasive grasses and the planting of local native seeds. Grazing infrastructure will be removed or improved and efforts will be made to improve grazing management to reduce its impacts on wildlife.

“Three and half million dollars is going to get a lot of work done,” said Andy Gallagher, district manager of the Crook County Soil and Water District.

Gallagher said juniper trees create multiple problems for sage-grouse and the sagebrush habitat they occupy. Juniper trees use a lot of water, robbing moisture from other plants. They also create shade, which prevents the growth of grasses and plants that favor sunlight.

“Everything that we have here on the east side of the state relies on sunlight and most of our plants don’t do well shaded,” said Gallagher.

“So not only do they consume a lot of water, but they shade other plants. They change the structure of the habitat to where it’s no longer suitable for sage grouse or other sagebrush obligate species,” he said.

Sage-grouse are also wary of trees and other high structures because their instincts tell them birds of prey perch in high locations.

“Vertical structures are something they have evolved to stay away from,” said Gallagher.

Heart of Oregon funding

In addition to the \$3.5 million for improving sage-grouse habitat, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation also approved a \$605,326 grant for Heart of Oregon Corps. The funds are intended to improve watershed health and reduce wildfire risk across the Deschutes Basin through conservation projects undertaken by youth groups.

Bend-based Heart of Oregon Corps will use the funds to treat 211 acres for fuel reduction and restore 12 miles of riparian habitat in the Deschutes National Forest, the Ochoco National Forest and the Crooked River National Grasslands.

A further 443 acres in the basin will be improved through general habitat restoration, including wetland and meadow improvements. Work in these areas usually encompasses hydrology improvements to increase the saturation of wet meadows, as well as the planting of native species and removal of invasive species.

Christmas Bird Counts in a Town Near You

This year represents the 125th annual count of feathered friends

By Damian Fagan for the [Bend Source Weekly](#), December 11, 2024

The year is 1900. Frank Chapman (1864-1945), the editor of "Bird-Lore" (the predecessor to today's "Audubon" magazine), has championed an alternative, fading holiday event called the Christmas Bird Count to counter the annual slaughter of wildlife known as the Christmas Side Hunt. Though the times were different back then, teams of hunters in towns primarily along the east coast spent part of Christmas Day bagging waterfowl and wildlife. At the end of the day, the carcasses were counted and the winning team awarded with bragging rights for a year.

But the times were a-changing. People questioned the wanton slaughter of wildlife and the declining populations of certain bird species such as the Carolina parakeet, passenger pigeon and heath hen — all three species would be extinct by 1939. Wildlife conservation was a real concern.

On Christmas Day, 1900, 27 birdwatchers from New York, Massachusetts, New Brunswick, California and other states and provinces went afield to count birds within a predetermined area. Over 18,500 individuals of 90 species were recorded that year, and the Christmas Bird Count, better known as the CBC, took flight.

A Sharp-shinned Hawk patrols for prey.
Photo by Damian Fagan



Fast forward to the 2023-2024 CBC: Over 40 million birds are counted across 2,677 counts in North America, Latin America, the Caribbean and Pacific Islands by nearly 84,000 participants, including feeder watchers. Nearly 41 million birds consisting of 2,380 species were recorded on last year's count. The data provides a long-term look at winter bird populations and unusual trends.

Within a preset 15-mile diameter circle (the Count Circle), birders take to the field to record species and numbers of birds within a 24-hour period (Count Day). Count Week includes the three days pre- and post-Count Day during which time birders may record species not observed on Count Day. Feeder watchers also can participate, reporting the highest number of birds seen at their feeders during the day.

Here in Central Oregon there are still several CBCs that will take place during the count period of Dec. 31 to Jan. 5, including counts in Bend, Redmond, Sunriver, Madras, Summer Lake, Tygh Valley and more. Below is a quick-glance schedule — visit the [East Cascades Bird Alliance's website](#) for contact information of count organizers. No experience is necessary, and often new birders will be paired up with some experienced folks. Dates in the next week include:

Dec. 31: Prineville CBC
Jan. 2: Redmond CBC
Jan. 3: Antelope CBC
Jan. 4: Antone CBC and Utopia CBC

Though some of the counts may already be full, there is always an opportunity for feeder watchers to provide data on birds that visit their backyard feeders. Contact the ECBA for more information about data recording during Count Week and Count Day.

Here are a few comments from several different CBC coordinators regarding the counts.

Tom Crabtree, Bend CBC coordinator, provides some advice for those new to participating in a count. "Be sure to dress for the weather, wear good shoes for walking and dress in layers — the temperature range can be significant." Crabtree adds to be prepared for a long day of birding, although some teams may stop for lunch or a hot drink if the weather turns cold.

"This year, I've carved out some new sectors and some walking intensive areas, parks, trails and waterways, to get better coverage of high-yield areas and to provide more opportunities for more people to participate," says Mark Gonzalez, Prineville CBC coordinator. "Some of these sectors can be completed in a morning, so you will have plenty of time to prepare for New Year's decadence or birthday parties!"

Sevilla Rhoads, the Sunriver CBC compiler, adds, "We are limiting registration this year because our after-party venue has a head count limit at the Nature Center." The Sunriver Nature Center helps support the count and is committed to offering a fully inclusive count experience. "We will give priority to past-year team members and persons who cannot participate in other counts due to mobility needs or some other barrier," Rhoads says. Sunriver's count has two accessible count teams, which allow participation for people in wheelchairs and others who can't join a less-accessible count.

Annette Lange Hildebrand, the Madras CBC coordinator, is looking for additional folks to participate on that count. "We've got space and I can accommodate anyone's needs in terms of walking or driving."

Fun, inclusive, outdoors and birdy-minded folks: It's everything the CBC was meant to do and more. Also, there are owling opportunities for those of you who sleep during the day. If you can't join us in the next week for the end of this year's CBC, put it on your 2025 December calendar. Good birding!

About The Author: **Damian Fagan** is a freelance writer, outdoor enthusiast and avid birder. He is the author of several wildflower field guides including "Wildflowers of Oregon" and "Wildflowers of North America." Fagan lives in Bend with his wife, Raven, and a pollinator-friendly garden.

The above two articles are from local publications which often feature timely news about birds and nature. Both are available online. Please consider supporting [The Bend Bulletin](#) and [The Bend Source Weekly](#) as a subscriber.



EAST CASCADES BIRD ALLIANCE

P.O. Box 565, Bend, Oregon 97709

Website <https://ecbirds.org/>

Email ecba@ecbirds.org

Phone: 541-241-2190 (leave message)

ECBA Board

Wendy Andrick
Laurel Collins
Margi Finch
Aaron Jenkins
Miriam Lipsitz
Brian MacDonald
Gordon Wetzel
Elise Wolf

Winter 2025 Board Meetings

January 10 Board Retreat

February 4

March 4

Board Officers

	President
Brian MacDonald	Vice President
Gordon Wetzel	Treasurer
Wendy Andrick	Secretary

East Cascades Bird Alliance Board of Directors meets monthly, on the first Tuesday, from 6pm to 8pm. Board meetings are held virtually, via Zoom. If you are interested in attending, please email ecba@ecbirds.org at least two days in advance for a Zoom invitation.

Board meeting minutes are posted at [Board Meeting Minutes - East Cascades Bird Alliance](#)

Committee Chairs

Executive	
Finance	Gordon Wetzel
Grants	Brian MacDonald
Membership	vacant
Education	Wendy Andrick
Conservation Science	Laurel Collins

The East Cascades Bird Alliance (ECBA) is a 501(c)(3) organization which furthers knowledge and appreciation of birds and their habitats through field trips, education, and field studies.

Program Leaders

Birders' Night	Aaron, Wendy
Field Trips	vacant
Volunteers	Mary Shivell

Join ECBA and help preserve the birds of central Oregon at <https://ecbirds.org/become-a-member/>

Newsletters

Sherrie Pierce, *Chatter* (monthly) Editor
Claire Weiser, *Calliope* (quarterly) Editor

To contact the membership committee with any questions related to membership issues, email membership@ecbirds.org

Winter Gull Differences Quiz from pp 4-5. 1) CA Gull is slightly larger. 2) CA Gull has a slightly darker mantle. 3) CA Gull shows a black and a red dot in the bill. There are lots more but I think these three are the most useful. I hope you enjoyed this little drill.