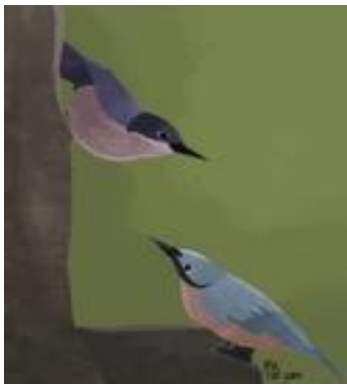




The CHATTER August 2026

August 13 Birders' Night: Ducks Unlimited Wetland Restoration for Wetland Habitat with Ashley Tunstall

Please join us August 13 to hear Ducks Unlimited (DU) Biologist Ashley Tunstall share some of the stories behind conserving one of North America's most important migratory bird corridors. Spoiler alert: it takes a lot of great partners, and a lot more than ducks to make it happen.

As DU's regional biologist for Southeastern Oregon, Tunstall works on the front lines of habitat restoration, helping revive streams, reconnect waterways, and replace aging dams to bring new life to landscapes that wildlife and people depend on.

Through stories and photos from projects across the region, you'll get an inside look at how healthy wetlands and rivers support migratory birds, fish, and entire ecosystems, and why protecting them matters to all of us.

"This job would not be possible without a village that prioritizes this work for all wildlife," Tunstall said. Our relationships with local communities and natural resource professionals are crucial to seeing quality conservation work come to fruition." While the results can be transformative, conservation is a team effort. Learn how partnerships among landowners, conservation groups, agencies, and local communities are helping restore habitat at a scale that makes a lasting difference.

The program begins at 6 p.m., but please come early to enjoy good food and conversation and a few beverages. There is typically a nice group there by 5:00pm or so. Seating is first come, first serve. Birders' Night programs are free and open to the public. And Worthy Brewing offers a nice Happy Hour Menu from 3-5pm (note that it recently changed to end at 5pm rather than 6pm). Their regular menu is still solid and not unreasonable. See here for their food and beverage menus: worthybrewing.com/pub

Summary Findings of 2026 USFW Pinyon Jay Surveys Conducted by ECBA Volunteers

The East Cascades Bird Alliance (ECBA) Pinyon Jay Survey in Central Oregon (March–May 2026) focused on documenting the presence, numbers, and reproduction of pinyon jay (*Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus*). This species is under review for

Endangered Species Act (ESA) listing and identified as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need in Oregon's 2025 State Wildlife Action Plan. Limited prior research and information on local populations and habitat are scant in Central Oregon, prompting the need for systematic surveys to better understand local populations and threats, which include habitat loss due to drought, insect damage, disease, and tree removal.



Volunteers from ECBA were trained by wildlife professionals through online sessions in March. They surveyed 12 sites - 10 previously known and 2 newly identified (including Juniper Trail). Surveys required multiple site visits between March 15 and May 30, 2026, following a standardized protocol from the Pinyon Jay Working Group. Volunteer coordination and communication were facilitated through digital tools, involving ECBA coordinators and FWS staff.

Observations confirmed pinyon jay presence at every surveyed site, with nesting behavior recorded at eight of the 12 sites. The surveys also documented the movement of nesting sites within and outside previously surveyed polygons. Four previously surveyed sites showed nesting was absent, and volunteers discovered one entirely new nesting site around Cline Butte. Flock sizes ranged from 20 to 150 birds, with the Mayfield Pond survey area hosting the largest flock. Nest building behavior was noted at all active nesting sites. While nesting did occur at these sites, it was only at the Barr Road and Mayfield Pond survey areas that volunteers documented nestlings, fledglings, and fledging flock numbers.

No survey season is without challenges, and this one ran into some! Volunteers could not meet protocol-level survey requirements at two of the 12 sites due to insufficient visits. These sites will need to be surveyed next year to confirm nesting is still occurring at them and to track nesting trends. Additionally, BLM conducted a fuels treatment in one of the occupied juniper stands near Cline Butte. Nesting was finished when the treatments took place, but the disturbance prevented late-season monitoring of fledglings in the survey area. Surveys next year will help determine how the treatments in this area impact re-nesting. Notably, at least one cut tree had a nest at the branch-trunk junction that had previously been confirmed as a pinyon jay nest.



In summary, ECBA volunteers surveyed 12 sites around Bend/Redmond/Sisters, recording nesting behavior at eight previously known sites and documenting two new nesting areas. Data collected by volunteers included timing and characteristics of nesting, flock numbers, movement of nesting sites, and photographs showing behavior; all this data provide valuable baseline information as well as information for future management and research on Central Oregon Pinyon Jays. A full detailed report of findings has been provided to ECBA. As surveys continue through the years, it is our hope that these data will be useful to detect trends in habitat use and bird numbers.

By Claudia Funari.

Wildlife Biologist, USFWS, Bend, OR

Related Pinyon Jay News about ECBA Research Grant to Oregon Institute of Technology

In Spring 2026 ECBA awarded a grant to Dr Jherime Kellerman of the Oregon Institute of Technology to conduct research and monitoring on the distribution, nesting, and diet of Oregon Pinyon Jays (PIJA). Specifically, the objectives involved the following:

1. Determine distribution of PIJA in Oregon.
2. Characterize nesting habitat, success, and phenology. (This includes: habitat characteristics, flock nest density and distribution, and nesting food resources)
3. Determine the responses of PIJA to juniper removal treatment

Additionally, ECBA expressed interest in a study of PIJA diet using Genomic Barcoding. PIJA outside of the range of pinyon pines (extant PIJA populations) typically consume Ponderosa pine seeds and juniper berries, but despite their association with conifers, only 10-32% of nestling diet is seeds. Their breeding season diet in Oregon has not been described, yet local Oregon birders have observed PIJA catching insects, and there is published literature about PIJA populations in New Mexico that forage for large invertebrate prey during the breeding season. It is likely that Oregon PIJA have diets that rely on and are synchronized with the phenology of large invertebrates.

In this regard, this research proposal also aims to answer the following questions.

1. What is the distribution of PIJA flocks across Oregon?
2. What habitat types do Oregon PIJA select for nesting, rearing, foraging/feeding, and caching food, and which habitats are most successful?
3. What are the impacts of land management treatments on PIJA habitat selection and use and how might land management treatments be modified to help maintain PIJA populations?
4. What are the PIJA in Oregon eating and how does it vary spatially and temporally?

5. Can we use climate change projections such as expected change in forest cover extent and type to make informed projections regarding PIJA populations?

Dr. Kellermann has brought on two new graduate students that will begin the Masters of Natural Resources program at Oregon Tech this year, Ryan Robles and Samantha Rego. To date there have been 32 Automated Recording Units at 8 sites this spring and early summer. These included several sites that will receive juniper thinning treatments by the BLM this year. This month Dr. Kellerman's group plans to assess fledgling habitat, numbers of birds, and their foraging behavior. The group will also be changing out ARU cards and batteries.

The research team discovered new flocks in the Bear Flat area east of Klamath Marsh National Wildlife Refuge that includes portions of the Fremont-Winema National Forest. Dr. Kellerman has also started collaborating with Dr. Jeff Foster's lab at Northern Arizona University. Foster's lab has also been conducting a Pinyon Jay diet study using fecal samples and has applied for a large grant to support a species-wide genomics study. If Foster's lab is successfully funded, Kellerman's group will also collect feathers from birds here in Oregon to contribute to our population analyses.



Volunteers Needed

We are looking for 6 volunteers to make seed pods for planting out at the Brothers Sage-Grouse Site. This will be a seed pod party at Worthy Brewing some time in October/November. If you are interested, please email [ECBA](#) and put Seed Pods in the subject line.

Save the date for the Birds of a Feather Annual Event on Sunday November 8, 2026 at 4 pm at Aspen Hall in Shevlin Park.

Malheur National Wildlife Refuge Birding Tour 2026

Enjoy a virtual tour of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge by clicking on the title above.

LIGHTS OUT OREGON, 2026

SAVE MIGRATING BIRDS, KEEP DARK SKIES DARK



The Lights Out project is an annual national event sponsored by the National Audubon Society, reducing light pollution during peak fall migration. Reducing lights during peak migration prevents artificial lights from disorienting nocturnal migrating birds, stopping fatal building collisions, exhaustion, and severe energy loss. For Central Oregon, peak migration is usually Sept 19- Oct 19 with some migration starting as early as August 1.

ECBA will ask City of Bend to participate by Proclamation Lights Out. We are asking you to participate individually by doing the following things:

Reduce Artificial lights between 11pm – 6am

- Turn off outside lights in home and businesses, lights aimed down and well-shielded
- Turn off lights where greenery meets glass
- Turn off outside lighting fixtures (or replace with amber bulbs)
 - Use motion-sensor controlled lighting
 - Ask your business to participate and show support

ECBA is cosponsoring this with Bend Night Sky Alliance

Go Birding!

- **Crooked River Wetland Walks**

The 2026 Wetlands Walks schedule is now complete. Come join us as we walk the paved paths of the Crooked River Wetlands. These walks are essentially bird tours, so we go slowly and talk about the birds we see. Wear appropriate clothes for the current weather and remember, "Bring Your Own Water!!" If you are not walking too well these days, we have 3 seats available on a golf cart so everyone can enjoy the walk. If you want to join us, the address is 4035 NW Rimrock Acres Loop Prineville, OR. We meet at 7:45AM and start the walk at 8:00AM. We are usually done by 10:00AM. The walk covers about 2 miles. Walks occur on the 1st and 3rd Saturdays of the warm months (Apr. through Sept.). For more information (including reserving space on the golf cart), contact Chuck Gates at 541-280-4957 or cgates326@gmail.com.

- **Wednesday Birders**

[Wednesday Birders](#) is a group of birders, birding, but not a traditional field trip with a named leader who always provides a guided field experience. Everyone helps everyone else, shares, learns and enjoys birding together. Usually, some advanced birders are there and are so helpful. All are welcomed. We carpool when possible.

Please remember to read [COBOL](#) by Tuesday mornings for last minute details and changes to plans in case of adverse weather, road conditions or detours, bird news or better birding opportunities. Watch COBOL (COBOL is Central Oregon Birders Online and free to join.) for meeting and carpooling times and places or for changes in the plan. Remember to dress for the weather. Be prepared with food, sunscreen, etc. and bring a pair of binoculars. Spotting scopes are helpful on many trips.

ECBA Merchandise is Now Available

ECBA is again offering custom t-shirts and hats for sale. These would make great gifts for any time of the year! Designed by our long-time friend and talented artist, Don Sutherland, we are pleased to make them available online. You can order merchandise from a local small business, Our Personal Touch, and you can either pick up your order in the store or have it sent to your home. Ordering information is at the top of [the ECBA home web page](#)

Don't forget there is a new Dean Hale Woodpecker Festival T-shirt available as well!



Are you a birder? These might be of interest:

The best resource for all things birdy is the [East Cascades Bird Alliance website](#).

If you are interested in knowing what is going on locally and as well as the state, sign up for one of the list serves: Central Oregon Birders Online, COBOL and Oregon Birders Online, OBOL. Go to [this page](#).

Want to know where to go to bird in Oregon? Check out this amazing [collection of information](#).

Are you a social media user? The ECBA Facebook page is administered by Chuck Gates and Don Sutherland. This page has many great bird photos and links to interesting information. Here is a [link to the page](#).

If you are a Fred Meyer Rewards participant, consider [linking your account](#) to their Community Rewards program, specifically the East Cascades account and search for East Cascades Audubon Society. (It is still listed under the old name) The organization number is RY026. That will allow a contribution from Fred Meyer be made to ECBA on

a quarterly basis based on what you have spent, nothing more than that. There are several non-profits that are linked to this so you may find more than one that you would like to help.



Golden Eagle by Amanda.

Good Birding