



East Cascades Audubon Society

Spring Newsletter

April 2012



DEAN HALE

October 14, 1949 - March 17, 2012

SAD SPRING GREETINGS

With the loss of one of our finest members in a tragic car crash in March, it is with a heavy heart we consider the changes that life brings. The onset of another Spring can remind us to embody and continue Dean's optimism, enthusiasm, joyful spirit and love of all things birdy. Dean will be remembered as a founding member of East Cascades Bird Conservancy and before that the Bend Bird Club. He was the consummate volunteer, always ready to build a bird box, guide a field trip or take a beginning birder under his wing. Dean will be missed in so many ways and we dedicate this organization to his memory. Life will go on, the sun still rises in the East, sets in the West, and the more things change the more they stay the same, but we will miss Dean.



ECAS has changed over the last couple of years yet many things have stayed the same. As an organization we are ever dedicated to the enjoyment, study and welfare of the birds. Many activities and projects remain the same, but new faces have appeared in leadership roles. Tony Kutzen joined the Board of Directors, appointed in January. Diana Roberts and Nancy Merrick are coordinating Birders' Night. Karen and Bob Gentry will be monitoring the Bluebird Boxes, and Sue Tank is now chairing the Science Committee. A big thanks to all of these fine folks for their commitment of time and energy. Remember, ours is an organization of volunteers so if any of you would like to become more involved, check out the opportunities found in a related article in this newsletter

Spring is a time of activity and excitement in the bird world and ECAS -sponsored activities provide ample opportunity to learn and enjoy. Improve your auditory and observational skills in "Birding by Ear" led by Dave Tracy on weekly morning walks through Sawyer Park. Expert guides lead and organize weekend Field Trips traveling to various locales. And Wednesday Morning Birders provide the perfect opportunity to join a friendly group checking out local avian habitat. For more information about any of these activities, go to the ECAS website heading "Field Trips."

I recently attended the Winter Wings Bird Festival in Klamath Falls, and after two days of rigorous (sleep-deprived) birding - nighttime owling, Big Day field trip, great dinner - I settled in to hear Ken Kaufman, the featured speaker. Happily, his talk was entertaining and engaging, so no napping occurred. He delivered a brief history of the "bird watcher" followed by a comparison of golf and bird watching as sport. Funny clothes aside, bird watching came out ahead in the making-a- difference category. Bird counts, habitat conservation, citizen science, all contribute to the knowledge needed to protect and understand birds, much more exemplary than trying to put a little ball in a hole with less energy. We know change happens in the bird world. No Dodos, no Passenger Pigeons, no Ivory-billed Woodpeckers. Let's be proud, even competitive, birders, knowing we may be helping birds to stay the same.

Sherrie Pierce, ECAS President

WHAT'S INSIDE

Woodpecker Weekend Returns	3
Personalities -- Jake Schas, Extreme Birder	4
ECAS Comments on Golden Eagle "Taking Permit"	5
Bird Talk	6
You Don't Need to Be A Field Trip Leader to Volunteer!	7
Coming Events	7
Birders' Nights	
Project Inside::Out	
Beginning Birding at COCC	
Earth Day	
Bird-A-Fun	
Winter Sightings	9
Name the Newsletter!	11



Snowy Owl at Burns, December 7, 2011
Photo © Cindy Zalunardo

WOWE!!!

WOODPECKER WEEKEND FESTIVAL RETURNS

After a successful initial offering last year, ECAS decided to continue Woodpecker Weekend in 2012. Dubbed "WOWE!!!," it will once again feature intrepid local guides leading field trips into areas surrounding the town of Sisters. Although many species of birds can be seen, the focus will be the eleven resident woodpecker species – Northern Flicker; Red-napped, Red-breasted and Williamson's Sapsuckers; Hairy, Downy, White-headed, Black-backed, Three-toed, Lewis's and Pileated Woodpeckers. With old and new forest burn areas, hopes are high that all of the species will be in residence when the event takes place June 14 – 17. There will also be field trips to the Ochoco Mountains and Summer Lake on the Thursday and Friday preceding the weekend. Shorter field trips are scheduled for Sunday.

The event will headquarter at the Village Green Park in Sisters, launching Saturday and Sunday morning trips from there. Saturday evening will feature a casual picnic to review birds seen and share stories.

This is a fun event for all involved. If you are interested in volunteering or attending, go to <http://www.ecaudubon.org/> and follow the link to *WOWE!!!* You'll find information on trips, lodging, and registration. Remember, space is limited, so register soon.

*PERSONALITIES: JAKE SCHAS,
Extreme Birder*

I was lucky to catch up with Jake before he left town for his next far-flung assignment—a point count survey along the Colorado River in the desert of Southwestern Arizona.

Since his assignment extends into the hot summer season, this is quite a change for Jake who has spent much of the last decade at polar locations. In his hot weather job with

the Great Basin Bird Observatory, Jake will survey for breeding bird success and focus on seven species of concern: Yellow-Billed Cuckoo, Yellow Warbler, Bell's Vireo, Gila Woodpecker, Summer Tanager and Vermilion Flycatcher.



These warm weather nesters are a far cry from last summer's Alaskan assignment at Toolik Lake Field Station located 150 miles north of the Brooks Range. For several years now, Jake has spent summers there, first as a Field Station cook and more recently as a research assistant. Last summer he worked on a UC Davis project which documented birds' breeding success given the seasonal changes in the ecosystem. Jake and the team mist-netted birds, took blood samples, measured and banded. Three sparrows -- White-crowned, American Tree and Lapland Longspurs -- were the target species. Accommodation during this Arctic summer assignment was Jake's Timberline tent. His regular gear included mosquito netting, repellent and bear spray.

Jake's experience for his work in the Arctic grew out of his time in the Antarctic, where he has gone for twelve (Antarctic) summers. Most recently he took a post at an Antarctic camp at Pig Island Glacier (PIG), 1500 miles west of McMurdo Station, close to the rift in the Pig Island Glacier that was widely reported last fall. Although the area is short on bird species (a small number of Emperor and Adeli Penguins and a few scavenging South Polar Skua) Jake said how much he loves these "deep field camps" where when you look towards the horizon, the white of the snow blends into the blue of the sky.

Another of Jake's winter assignments was in Central Russia at an Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty-monitoring site so secret that it cannot be named. Security clearances were required for all personnel and a chaperone was required for any trip off the fenced compound. Initially Jake found that coworkers were not enthused about accompanying him into the snowy Russian woods to look for birds where the temperature hovered around zero degrees for two-and-a-half months. Jake remembers the excitement as a grouse exploded from the untracked snow and how word of the pleasures of birding spread around the compound until Jake ended up leading a group of eight to search for birds. Jake recalls that the raptors had all left for lack of food, leaving little winter birds including several species of tits (our chickadees). He spotted twenty species of birds while there.

Pretty much self-taught, Jake recalls taking a raptor ID class at Central Oregon Community College from Steve Shunk. The class helped to hone his birding skills—learning to listen and look. Spending time with the friendly East Cascade Birders who were happy to tutor an enthusiastic newcomer in the business of birding was also very helpful.

Jake studied culinary arts and later baking at South Seattle Community College. A position at the restaurant at Black Butte Ranch brought him to Central Oregon. Jake remembers that his boss would expect Jake to leave when the Arctic terns headed south and would look for Jake to return in the spring like a migrating bird.

Many of you readers may know Jake from his yellowlegs@hotmail.com postings on COBOL which have included reports from Camp Polk, Alaska, Antarctica and Russia.

As for the future, Jake looks forward to continuing to transition from cooking jobs to “chasing birds.” He’s not getting any younger, and cooking is hard work he says.

Marion Davidson

ECAS COMMENTS ON GOLDEN EAGLE "TAKING PERMIT"

ECAS has begun to focus on wind energy this winter, and the highest profile issue on the calendar has been a request to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) by West Butte Wind Power for a “taking permit” for up to three golden eagles per year. This sounds as if the developer will get to kill eagles if they get this permit and avoid killing them otherwise, but ECAS learned that things are a lot more complicated than that.



Golden Eagle Photo ©Kevin Smith,

The Oregon Department of Energy must approve wind farms of more than 105 megawatts, but since the West Butte project targets 104 megawatts the state regulations do not apply. Crook County has already granted a conditional use permit for this project and the BALM has permitted an access road on public land in Deschutes County. So the West Butte wind farm will be built, with clear implications for bird and bat deaths.

So what does the taking permit do? Among other things, the permit requires the

developer to conduct up-front mitigation of hazards, primarily to retrofit nearby power poles that already kill eagles. In addition to the up-front actions, for every eagle death, more poles will be fixed. The agreement proposed is quite complicated, but the main advantage of the permit process is that it provides a means to require planning, mitigation, and monitoring steps from wind farms that no other regulations require for this size project.

After much study and soul searching, the ECAS Board took a stand on this issue. We decided to support the taking permit process as a way of making wind power more “bird smart” and collecting information about what that means. However, the current terms of this particular permit need to be revised. Given the uncertainty about golden eagle populations and their likely mortality from the West Butte wind farm, USFWS should take a much more conservative approach to this permit. We urged USFWS to increase the amount of Level 1 mitigation and monitoring above the standards described in the Draft Environmental Assessment of December 29, 2011.

To read the full letter sent to USFWS, go to <http://www.ecaudubon.org>.

Eva Eagle, Conservation Committee Chair

BIRD TALK: SNIPPETS OF EARLY SPRING

(In the Backyard)

Mourning Dove: It's Spring, Spring, Spring.

House Finch: Lorette? That You?

House Sparrow: Screech, Screech, Screech.

Evening Grosbeaks: Heap, Heap, more Heap.

(Along the River Trail)

Goldfinches: A cacophony in a thicket.

Belted Kingfisher: Ka ka ka ka ka Katie!

(Carpinteria, California, February 14)

Oak Titmouse: Be mine, be mine, be mine
be mine, be mine
be mine, be mine, oh Valentine.

Marion Davidson

YOU DON'T NEED TO BE A FIELD TRIP LEADER TO VOLUNTEER!

Are you under the impression that you need to be an expert birder to volunteer for ECAS? I was, and I was wrong! There are many ways in which you can help birds and their habitat in Central Oregon, meet new people, and have some fun as well.

Do you enjoy meeting people? Consider volunteering to help at Birders' Night, Eagle Watch, Earth Day, or our Annual Event. Contact Dean Hale at <mailto:haled81@yahoo.com>

Do you have office skills? The membership, newsletter, and budget committees could use your help. Contact Jan Rising at <mailto:janrising58@gmail.com>.

Do you have computer skills? Can you design a web site? Please contact Sherrie Pierce at <mailto:sapierce@bendbroadband.com>.

Do you have a graphic design background? We could use your help for the newsletter, Annual Event programs, and much more. Please contact the newsletter group at <mailto:meoppen@bendcable.com>.

Are you a writer? Would you like to write for the newsletter? Please contact the newsletter group at <mailto:meoppen@bendcable.com>.

Have you written grants? We could really use you! Please contact Damian Fagan at <mailto:dfagan746@hotmail.com>.

Do you have a background in finance, accounting, or strategic planning? If you do, please contact our Treasurer, Jan Rising, at <mailto:janrising58@gmail.com>.

Do you have a background in the biological sciences and an interest in evaluating field survey projects? Please contact Science Committee Chair Sue Tank at <mailto:wolfies.hound@gmail.com>.

Do you have an interest in conservation of birds and their habitat? Please contact Eva Eagle at mailto:golden_eagle@mac.com.

Do you have an interest in education and working with kids? Please contact Mary Yanalcanlin at <mailto:birdingfun@gmail.com>.

Whatever your skills and interests, you can find a way to contribute to birding in Central Oregon and have fun while you're doing it.

Mary Oppenheimer

COMING EVENTS

PROJECT INSIDE::OUT

ECAS and Bend artist Mary Marquiss are a team! The Bend Arts, Beautification, and Culture Commission paired us for their April-September show that focuses on Bend's natural environment and the non-profits that work to protect it. Mary, who is a member of the Tumalo Art Collective, has created a fine art painting representing birds in their

Central Oregon habitat. She will donate 20 percent of the proceeds to ECAS! Meet Mary, and see her beautiful work in the lobby of Bend City Hall every First Friday from April through September. For more information on Mary, and examples of her work, go to <http://www.marymarquiss.com>.

BEGINNING BIRDING at COCC

Damian Fagan, a wildlife biologist and ECAS Board member, will lead the class, which begins with a classroom session on April 23 and continues with six Saturday field sessions beginning April 27. Damian is also leading two trips to Malheur National Wildlife Refuge for COCC. The first trip is April 20-21, with a classroom session on April 16. The second trip is May 21-22, with a classroom session on May 14.

For more information on these classes, go to www.cocc.edu or call 541-383-7270.

EARTH DAY 2012

Visit our booth in front of The Environmental Center at 16 NW Kansas Avenue from 11am to 3pm on April 21. We'll have lots of information about local birds and birding sites, plus photos of activities past and information about activities future.

FIELD TRIPS

Dean Hale and Howard Horvath have planned an array of field trips, including old favorites like Summer Lake, Burns, and the High Lakes. They also added a hike to Alder Springs. For details, visit our web site at <http://www.ecaudubon.org/>

NORTH AMERICAN MIGRATORY BIRD COUNT

May 12 is the date for the 2012 Spring Migratory Bird Count. Coordinator Chuck Gates is always looking for new volunteers. You don't need to be an expert birder -- Chuck will pair you with someone who knows the birds, so you can learn what they are while you spot them and keep trip records. Contact Chuck at <mailto:cgates326@gmail.com>.

ECAS SUMMER PICNIC

Thursday, July 19, we will resume the ECBC/ECAS tradition of replacing our July Birders' Night with a potluck picnic. New Board member Tony Kutzen has volunteered to plan the event, so watch for details on our web site. There is sure to be good food, activities for kids, and more. The new name of the newsletter will also be revealed. (Read to the end of the newsletter for details.)

BIRD-A-FUN 2012

Watch for information about how to sign up for this fundraiser, to occur between May 15 and July 1. Since it's a fundraiser, there will also be information about contributing.

BIRDERS' NIGHTS

- April 19 -- Dr. Matt Orr, University of Oregon
Matt will fill us in on an important study on one of our favorite local birds, the white-headed woodpecker. He has been collaborating with the Deschutes Land Trust and Pacific Stewardship to study habitat choice and nest success of white-headed woodpeckers in a restored ponderosa forest. Collaboration with OSU-Cascades and

COCC has allowed students to participate in fieldwork on this project and to create independent projects. This talk will be a fine lead-in to WOWEII!

- May 17 -- Chad Karges, Deputy Project Leader, Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, Chad will present the Refuge's draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan as it is readied to roll out for public comment. The CCP guides long-term management of wildlife, habitat, public use activities, and cultural resources. The CCP was developed with input from a broad group of stakeholders including conservation, ranching, and recreational interests. ECAS members and others will be able to learn about the plan and to provide input as the plan enters its final stages.

All Birders' Night programs are held at The Environmental Center at 16 NW Kansas Ave., Bend. Doors open at 6:30pm for coffee, cookies, and fellowship, followed by birding information and program at 7pm.

CENTRAL OREGON WINTER FIELD NOTES

Winter in Central Oregon often conjures visions of icy cold weather and plenty of the white stuff on the ground. This winter was nothing like that. Mild temperatures were the norm and little snow accumulated in the lower elevations. To a birder, these conditions might suggest few opportunities for winter rarities but no one seemed to let the birds in on this assumption. Winter birding in Central Oregon during 2011-12 offered up some wonderfully interesting sightings.

On the water bird front, we experienced some very nice surprises. SNOW GEESE were seen at Aspen Lakes and on the Prineville Christmas Bird Count (CBC). CACKLING GEESE popped up in small numbers at several locations. TRUMPETER SWANS were recorded on the Sisters and Bend CBCs. No fewer than 4 EURASIAN WIGEONS wintered in our area. A WHITE-WINGED SCOTER stayed at Suttle Lake into January to provide a very unusual mid-winter record (This constitutes the only known record of this species in January). A SURF SCOTER showed a little more sense, leaving Suttle Lake by December 7th. Prineville Sewer Ponds and Suttle Lake both hosted LONG-TAILED DUCKS in January. A RED-BREADED MERGANSER stayed for a few days at the Redmond Sewer Ponds where it was joined by an unusual mid-winter GREAT EGRET. HORNED GREBES were spotted on the Utopia (Culver) CBC and the Santiam CBC. Though



hard to find in winter, four SORA were seen on the Prineville CBC.

The meat-eating birds are beloved by birders and several rare birds showed up this winter. TURKEY VULTURES began returning in early February. NORTHERN GOSHAWKS were spotted at 4 locations (Sisters CBC, Prineville CBC, Madras, and Powell Butte). BARN OWLS were tallied in their historic locations in Crook County. NORTHERN PYGMY-OWL sightings came in from many areas. GREAT GRAY OWLS were found at Benham Falls and on the Santiam CBC. Single BARRED OWLS were located in Bend and Redmond. LONG-EARED OWLS showed up for the Bend and Utopia CBCs while the Prineville CBC produced the only SHORT-EARED OWL sighting of

the winter. Finally, NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWLS were reported from the Crooked River and from the Bend CBC.

Near Passerines include the woodpeckers, hummingbirds, and corvids among others. This group produced some good winter species for our area. ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRDS were seen in the region defying all logical assumptions that hummingbirds can't survive cold weather. Wintering WILLIAMSON'S SAPSUCKERS usually leave for warmer climes but several were spotted in Central Oregon this winter. WHITE-HEADED, BLACK-BACKED, and PILEATED WOODPECKERS showed up on local CBC tallies while a single AMERICAN THREE-TOED WOODPECKER was spotted on the Santiam CBC. The area's only BLUE JAY spent the winter at Steve Edwards' at Tumalo Falls.

Passerines comprise the largest group of birds but are not always the stars of winter bird reports in Central Oregon. That said, there were some goodies out and about this year. BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEES were noted at their regular stomping grounds in the Gateway area north of Madras while a single CHESTNUT-BACKED CHICKADEE report was turned from the Shadow Lake Burn area. Only one BOHEMIAN WAXWING sighting was reported this winter (from Bend). YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLERS, SAVANNAH SPARROWS, LINCOLN'S SPARROWS and FOX SPARROWS are not unheard of as winter stay-overs but they are certainly rare enough to note here as a few were seen this season. A single WHITE-THROATED SPARROW spent the winter at Steve Dougill's feeder west of Redmond and TRICOLORED BLACKBIRDS were often seen in the Prineville and ONeil Valley area. A single wintering BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD report came in from the ONeil region.



White-Winged Crossbill
Photo©Tom Crabtree

The finches were the real stars of the passerine show and deserve their own paragraph in this report. Early in the winter it appeared that the SNOW BUNTING near Millican was going to be the finch headline of the season. However, in late January, reports started pouring in about unprecedented numbers of rare winter finches being seen just off of Skyliner Road west of Bend. As many as 100 WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILLS, 4 PINE GROSBEAKS, and 70 COMMON REDPOLLS were regularly being seen in this area. Until this season, no one had ever before reported a flock of White-winged birds. While the 4 grosbeaks and 70 Redpolls did not set records, they still Crossbills numbering more than 9 constituted larger concentrations than most records. The fact that all of these birds occurred together will go down as one of the most amazing birding spectacles ever seen in our area.

Chuck Gates, NAMC Coordinator

NAME THE NEWSLETTER CONTEST

Last, but not least, the ECAS Newsletter has been nameless for too long. So, submit your suggestion for a name that reflects our region, our birds, or our activities to Sherrie Pierce at <mailto:sapierce@bendbroadband.com> by July 1, 2012. The winner will be determined by the Newsletter Group and will be announced at the ECAS Picnic on July 19, 2012. The winner will receive their choice of an ECAS cap or a one-year individual membership.

EAST CASCADES AUDUBON SOCIETY
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