

THE CALLIOPE

EAST CASCADES AUDUBON SOCIETY
QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2021



President's Report

By Tom Lawler

Your Audubon society is run by volunteers. Volunteers keep the organization functioning, support projects, education and field trips that many of you enjoy.

In last month's *Chatter* it was mentioned that the Board would like to have a **Social Media Committee** formed. The Social Media Committee would be responsible for the ECAS website and for spreading our message on Facebook and other social media outlets. Please let the Board know of your interest by contacting us at ecaudubon@gmail.com.

The Board is also working on the **ECAS Strategic Plan** to guide the organization for the next one to five years. The Board would like to have the input of our members and have this completed by the end of the year. If you are interested in helping us with ideas and suggestions please email Jan Rising at ecaudubon@gmail.com.

In other news we would like to start offering **field trips** in August. Carpooling would be required for trips of any length to minimize the number of vehicles at the birding destinations. Starting field trips depends on having field trip leaders. Would you like to lead a field trip? Please contact Mary Shivell at: ecaudubon@gmail.com.

Thanks for getting involved and supporting ECAS. Have a great summer!

Keep an eye on the ECAS website <https://www.ecaudubon.org/> and *The Chatter* for news about upcoming events. (There will be NO JULY Birders' Night)

ECAS Potluck Picnic August 19 at 6pm

By Gordon Wetzel



Bring your binoculars to the next Birders' Night on August 19. We will have a pot-luck picnic and a Birding Palooza at Shevlin Park, Aspen Meadows. You all know what a pot-luck is but what's a Palooza? It's a game for birders to learn new skills, show off their skills and meet other folks. We will set up teams of people with varied skill levels and then send them off into the wilds to identify as many species of birds they can find in 30 minutes. All team members must see the bird for it to count. Fabulous prizes will be awarded to the best team(s).

So, don't be shy, come on out and join us for an evening of food and games and bring a dish to share.

Volunteer Shout-Out

by Miriam Lipsitz

1. ECAS will have at least two openings for Board Members for 2022.

If you have ever been curious to learn how our Audubon Chapter functions, this is your chance to serve ECAS in a most important and dynamic capacity. Our Board members help provide the leadership and direction to keep ECAS growing and advancing our mission to further knowledge and appreciation for our wild birds. These openings on the Board are three-year terms and are open to new and previous Board members.

2. Volunteers are needed to help match ECAS members who want to volunteer with the project that works best for them.

We would like to have one (or two people working together) to help match members who want to volunteer with projects or programs which need help and which are a good fit for the interests and skills for each volunteer member. Guidance will be provided.

3. Getting it out on social media:

ECAS also would like to have another group of volunteers form a "Social Media/Online Media Committee." This committee would be responsible for our message getting out on Facebook and maintaining the website. If we want to be involved in other social media outlets then this committee would be responsible for that, too.

If you would be interested in helping with any of these opportunities, please email ecaudubon@gmail.com, subject line Volunteers.

Whiskey Springs Restoration Work

Article and Photographs by Judy Meredith

Whiskey Springs is located about 15 miles from Sisters, up on Green Ridge in Jefferson County. During the horrific Oregon wildfires in August and September of 2020, it was one of the casualties in the Green Ridge fire. Although the spring itself is on private property, the landowner has been willing to allow respectful birders to visit. It has become one of the favorite places in Oregon to be with birds.

The fire burned very hot at Whiskey Springs. The formerly heavily vegetated and secluded spot is now wide open for viewing from the roadside, and this area is bare and less appealing to birds, birders and photographers. A few months ago, concern arose that the spring could go dry. Volunteers have been bringing water for some of the shrubs which are starting to sprout from deep, unburned roots. Barriers surround the area, asking visitors to stay back to allow the plants to have ideal conditions to recover (without foot traffic compacting the soil etc.)



Diane working by some burned trunks near the center of the photo. Note the emerging green vegetation!

Jake Schas and his brother, Jim, brought restoration to the next level by coming up with a plan which included a big tank above the spring and 650 feet of hose to use gravity to bring water to the spring area. ECAS helped to purchase some supplies, and volunteers have been visiting about 3 times a week to pull weeds, haul water and water the emerging shrubs.



Jake with water jugs, tank and hoses.

Mike Golden, Diane Kook and Judy Meredith are ready for some additional volunteer help and have just begun sessions introducing the work to others on June 22. This is heavy, dusty and sooty work, but we are surrounded by very nice birds, and we get to experience the joy of seeing recovery after a fire, knowing that the effort is making a difference for wildlife. If you want to pitch in with us, we would happily introduce another group to the tasks needed. Please contact Mike at gardenbug99@bendbroadband.com or Judy at jmeredit@bendnet.com

For all the details to get you there and the birds to see, go to the ECAS website by clicking on <https://www.ecaudubon.org/> select the Birding Oregon tab and scroll down to Birding Locations.

Or click:

https://e8118311-379c-4750-b2f8-1e2827e9cc68.filesusr.com/ugd/2c5973_b41a9430a7d04f98929ef9ecfe4e1eb3.pdf and scroll to page 19 on Whiskey Springs

Thanks, and Good Birding,
Diane, Mike and Judy

Kestrel Chick Gets a New Home

By Miriam Lipsitz

On Friday, June 4, a few construction workers from Central Oregon were on a jobsite in Medford. At their parking lot, they noticed a very small fuzzy white baby bird on the ground that they assumed was in trouble. They looked for a nest but didn't know to look for a cavity and didn't see any parent birds around, so they gathered up the bird and brought it back to Think Wild (www.thinkwildco.org) in Bend and left a nice donation. Think Wild kept the American Kestrel chick, which was in good health, for a few days. Think Wild's Executive Director, Sally Compton, wrote and asked ECAS if we could possibly foster the nestling with a pair of adults who have chicks of roughly the same age through our Kestrel project. We called Don McCartney, (the leader of ECAS's Kestrel nest box project) but weren't able to reach him, and so we called Ken Hashagen and the ball started rolling. By evening we had a plan with both Don and Ken on board. Ken picked up the chick on June 10 from Think Wild and drove it to Prineville where there were two potential nest boxes with chicks of the right age. He banded all the kestrel chicks including the new one. Ken put the foundling in the nest box monitored by a couple, Dave and Alice, who will watch over the nest box to make sure all is well. ECAS member, Diana Roberts was our photographer in the field and Think Wild provided the photo of our patient in the hospital. Thanks to all for a truly collaborative effort.



Ander Spots a Bay-breasted Warbler (BBY #171)

By Sevilla Rhoads, ECAS member, Ander's mom, and photographer



Our family moved to central Oregon from Pennsylvania in May 2020. Birding has been a way for us, in the pandemic, to help make Deschutes County our home. We live in the Sunriver area and my son, Ander, is ten. We have a Big Year Facebook page, "Deschutes County Birding Big Year 2021." Ander is the one who wanted to do this Big Year because it was something to help us get through the challenges of the pandemic together. His other hobbies include mountain fat-tire biking, paddle boarding, reading, nordic skiing, and farming (he used to be a champion chicken showman for 4H in Bucks County) and just started his eco-vegetable garden here using volcanic rocks and recycled plastic covers etc. He has a pet rescue cockatiel called Hobbit. His sister, Chloe, is seven. She is also an awesome birder, but her passions are drawing nature and biking. **Chloe and Ander at left.**

Ander got into birding after I took him to a birding festival in Cape May in 2018. After that festival, he became a regular at the Bucks County Audubon Society near our last home. He started a young birders club there and, due to his and his friends' interest, the Bucks County Audubon held after-school programs at his school (Buckingham Friends).

Ander with his best friend birding in our backyard back in PA.



One of the reasons we moved to Oregon was that Ander's mentor, Alec McDonnell, lives here. Alec has nurtured and encouraged Ander's birding hobby (he gave him his first real camera.) At



left is a photo of them from 2019 when we visited this area before the pandemic and Alec took Ander on his first Malheur birding trip. The day of the warbler sighting, we were with a friend and had spent the morning hiking with a National Forest Service technician who was gathering data in the Sunriver area about birds and wildlife. One of Ander's dreams is to be a wildlife biologist and so it had been a great morning learning about the team and work of the National Forest Service. The NFS technician, Sky, gave Ander information on how to get into a career in the field and inspired him with stories about his interesting work with birds. Mentors are so important for kids.

It had just poured with rain and hail, so we were hurrying along a trail to get to shelter. Suddenly, Ander, who was in front, stopped us all and said, "I see a small bird with chestnut coloring!" (He has been looking for a Chestnut-backed Chickadee for our Big Year.) He pointed into a pine quite some distance away and said, "Mama, quick get your camera out and photograph it!!" Due to the rain, my camera was in my bag and Ander did not bring his camera that morning because of the weather. So, trusting Ander's good birding eye (he spots most of our rarer birds), I dropped everything on the wet trail and pulled out the camera as fast as I could. He had to point several times before I found the small silhouetted bird in the low light. He kept saying, "It's something unusual - look at that chestnut coloring!" Ander has studied the local birds enough to know when something is rare even if he does not know what it is.

Then my camera fogged up completely due to the moisture in the air! Finally, the fog on the lens cleared enough to get a few shots (I did not even have time to set lighting) before it flew away. It was in the tree for less than five minutes and did not call. We couldn't find it after that and thunder started rolling right above us anyway, so we had to hurry back home. We went out later when the storm ended but had no luck finding it again. It was astonishing that Ander spotted that bird in those conditions!

When we got home, we downloaded the photos and matched it to the Bay-breasted Warbler in our guide, then emailed Tom Crabtree and Chuck Gates who both kindly helped us with our ID questions. Tom quickly confirmed the ID and mentioned it was a Deschutes County first! The Bay-breasted Warbler was species #171 for us in our Big Year. I was so proud of Ander!



I am really interested in getting other kids into birding and hoping this article might help that effort. It would be great if we could encourage more young people to bird and really wonderful if we could find other families with whom to bird. We have yet to find any other families with kids who bird together in the Bend area. Ander misses having birding peers and the lack of peers can discourage kids from birding as a pastime. If any families with kids want to bird with us or would like to start a kid birding program here, they are welcome to reach out to me by email. sevillaclaydon@gmail.com Good Birding!

2021 Spring Field Notes

By Chuck Gates

The spring of 2021 will be remembered for many things. We saw limited precipitation causing almost record low water levels in some areas and we witnessed the beginning of the end of a multi-year pandemic. There were plenty of bird-related reasons to remember our recent spring as well. Below you will find a summary of the most interesting bird sightings of Spring 2021.

Even though water birds were impacted by drought, we still had some interesting reports. Four TRUMPETER SWANS were found on the Crooked River on 4/9 (Authier, Gates). A late SNOW GOOSE stayed at the Crooked R. Wetlands until 5/16 (Authier). As many as 7 ROSS'S GEESE spent some time at Houston Lake between 3/22 and 4/6 (Gates, Namitz, Crabtree). CACKLING GEESE were reported 7 times with a high number of 40 found near Terrebonne on 4/18 (Robinson). CINNAMON TEAL began arriving on 3/14 (Miller) and high counts of 8 BLUE-WINGED TEAL occurred at the Crooked R. Wetlands (Gates) and Hatfield Lk. (Low). A single EURASIAN WIGEON was spotted at the Crooked R. Wetlands on 3/5 (Bango) and 2 more were seen at Crane Prairie Res. on 4/27 (Weiser). A EURASIAN GREEN-WINGED TEAL was found and photographed at the Crooked R. Wetlands on 5/3 (Nordstrom, Gates). GREATER SCAUP were located on 7 different occasions with a high count of 21 birds showing up at Wickiup Res. on 4/17 (Low). The lone RED-BREASTED MERGANSER report of the season came from Hatfield Lk. on 5/19 (Gross). A COMMON LOON was found at Houston Lk. for, somewhat surprisingly, the first time ever on 3/1 (Tinsley). HORNED GREBES were discovered in 5 different locations by multiple observers and RED-NECKED GREBE reports came in from Wickiup Res. on 4/17 (Low), Brewer Res. in Jefferson County (Wolfe, Golden), and at Haystack Res. on 5/19 (Cahill). CLARK'S GREBES were located on Prineville Res. on 4/8 (Gates) and at Haystack Res. on 5/19 (Cahill). On 5/31, a GREAT EGRET was spotted at Brothers far away from any large water source (Meredith). Crook County's second record of SNOWY EGRET was witnessed on 5/13 noting both the yellow feet and black bill (Authier). AMERICAN BITTERNS returned to their historic breeding site at Houston Lk. (Gates). On 5/6 Hatfield Lk. produced 25 WHITE-FACED IBIS which proved to be the largest springtime flock ever before seen in our area (Jackson). SANDHILL CRANES are somewhat expected in the high lakes but a flock of 6 migrants at Ryan Meadow on 4/15 was somewhat surprising (Cahill).

Spring shorebirding is a brief and often frustrating adventure since few birds have the time to stay long as they visit our region on their journey north. SNOWY PLOVERS were located at 3 different occasions this season: on 5/5 at Hatfield (Low), on 5/31 at Camp Creek Corrals (Burgess, Meredith), and on 5/30 at the Crooked R. Wetlands (Erland, Freiboth). An AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER turned up at the Crooked R. Wetlands on 5/12 for only the fifth Crook County record (Meredith et al.). Two somewhat unusual spring LESSER YELLOWLEGS were reported from Hatfield Lk. on 4/20 (Low). SOLITARY SANDPIPERS were spotted at Tumalo Res. on 4/29 (Low), Redmond Sewer Ponds (4/26), and near La Pine State Park on 5/2 (Rhoads). WILLETS turned up at Hatfield Lk. on 5/6 (Miller), at the Crooked R. Wetlands on 5/14 (Mayer), and at their historic nesting grounds in eastern Crook County (mult. obs.). A LONG-BILLED CURLEW showed up at Hatfield on 4/11 (Horvath, Oppenheimer, Cowan) and a presumably different bird on 5/24 visited the same location (Boever). Even though both species are exceedingly rare in spring, a SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER was found at the Crooked R. Wetlands on 5/5 (Meredith) and a PECTORAL SANDPIPER was seen on the Redmond Sewer Ponds on 5/24 (Gates). SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER reports came in from Tumalo Res. on 5/1 (Cahill) and from Hatfield Lk. on 5/6 (Buck).



Snowy Plover –5/30/21 - Crooked R. Wetlands - Chuck Gates Photographer



American Golden-plover – 5/12/21 – Crooked R. Wetlands – Tom Crabtree Photographer

The spring of 2021 saw some unusual gull and tern numbers including an unprecedented showing of FRANKLIN'S GULLS. Franklin's were reported a whopping 22 times from 10 different locations including two from Jefferson County which turned out to be the 3rd and 4th county records (Cahill, White). An ICELAND GULL at Hatfield Lk. on 5/16 was the 3rd spring record for that species in Central Oregon (Crabtree). Crook County's first ever sighting of MEW GULL was made on 4/15 at the Prineville Sewer Ponds (Gates). Black Terns were found in relative abundance this season with birds being seen at Hatfield Lk. on 5 occasions (mult. obs.) and the Redmond Sewer ponds on 5/31 (Kathol).



**Mew Gull – 4/15/21
Prineville Sewer Ponds
Chuck Gates Photographer**

Our game birds are mainly non-migratory (apart from the doves and pigeons) so spring surprises are somewhat limited. That said, there were some eye-opening reports. With a newly discovered lek, as many as 18 male GREATER SAGE-GROUSE were observed in the Millican Area starting on 3/26 (Neuman). A relative plethora of MOUNTAIN QUAIL reports occurred this season with birds being spotted near Prineville Res. (Helton), Lake Billy Chinook (Kornfeld), Davis Lk. (Meredith, Kornfeld), east of Madras (Gates), Trout Cr. Swamp (Kornfeld), Whiskey Springs (Meredith), near Post (Welch, Hourt), and McKay Creek Rd. (Gates, Chamberlain). CHUKAR reports were received from Crooked R. Ranch on 3/17 (Cahill) and from Trout Cr. Campground on 4/21 (Pidgeon). BAND-TAILED PIGEONS were tallied at Tumalo Res. on 5/1 (Cahill), in Bend on 5/13 (Kaputa), at Sunriver on 5/15 (Vine, Paznokas), and at Calliope Crossing on 5/27 (Ona).

Raptors, both nocturnal and diurnal, are perennial favorites of our readers. Four different NORTHERN GOSHAWKS were found this season: in Sisters on 3/13 (Gard), at Calliope Crossing on 3/30 (McDonell), at Trout Cr. Swamp on 5/4 (Nordstrom), and near Big River Campground south of Bend on 5/14 (Rhoads). PEREGRINE FALCON sightings were spotty with birds seen at Calliope Crossing (Kleinbaum), Powell Butte (Gates), Hatfield Lk. (Low), and

Smith Rock (Neuman). A rare Deschutes County BARN OWL was reported from Mt. Goat Rd. in Bend on 5/5 (Arneson). BARRED OWLS turned up in 3 different locations in Bend (Fagan, MacDonald fide, Jakse) and one in Sisters (Greer). SHORT-EARED OWLS wintered in Powell Butte and stayed just long enough to make this spring list (McCurry). WESTERN SCREECH-OWLS continue to be under-reported with a single record coming in from east of Paulina on 3/13 (Groo). GREAT GRAY OWLS were discovered in the Sunriver Area (Lawler) and in the Ochoco Mtns (Gates, Authier). A FLAMMULATED OWL was heard calling on the FR 1030 west of Sisters on 5/15 (Gates). NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWLS were in Terrebonne on 3/16 (Kathol), in the Ochoco Mtns. on several occasions (Gates, Authier) and on FR 2061 in the Cascades on 5/15 (Gates).

**Barred Owl – 4/11/21
Sisters, Oregon
Jim Greer Photographer**



Woodpeckers and hummingbirds have long been located next to each other in field guides and reviews such as this. Recent genetic discoveries have warranted moving them away from each other, but we will group them still for old times' sake. BLACK-CHINNED HUMMINGBIRDS were found in Sisters on 4/4 and 4/10 at different locations (Tackmier, White), in Prineville on 5/11 (MacDonald), Camp Sherman on 5/8 (Beal), near Benham Falls on 5/4 (Sterner), and on the west side of Bend on 5/28 (Meredith). AMERICAN THREE-TOED WOODPECKERS turned up at Trout Cr. Swamp (Cash Lowe et al.) and, reportedly for the second county record, in the Ochoco Mtns on 5/5 (Hoyer). A pure YELLOW-SHAFTED NORTHERN FLICKER was photographed at Black Butte Ranch on 4/13 (Williamson).

Now for some unusual Passerine sightings. Single BLACK PHOEBES were tallied at La Pine on 3/14 (Hibbs), in Bend along the 1st St. Trail on 3/29 (Crabtree), and at Rosland Campground on 4/24 (Kornfeld). EASTERN KINGBIRDS were spotted east of Paulina on 5/18 (Gates, Chamberlain) and at the Redmond Sewer Ponds on 5/31 (Kathol). BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHERS were found at Smith Rock on 3/4 for the first March record in Central Oregon (Jakse, Penpraze), Hatfield Lk. on 5/15 (Low), near Gray Butte in Jefferson County on 5/17 (Bradford, Minty), and near Eagle Rock on Hwy 380 on 5/23 (Maynard, Punches, Van Norman).



Black Phoebe – 3/29/21 - Bend, Oregon – Tom Crabtree Photographer

BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEES were found in their traditional haunts along the Deschutes River near Warm Springs (Hinkle, Miller, Crabtree, Pidgeon) while CHESTNUT-BACKED CHICKADEES turned up in their usual haunts near the Cascade Crest (Shunk, Centanni). After breeding at Black Butte Swamp in 2020, a VEERY returned to that location on 6/6/21 (Nordstrom). A NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD was found at Prineville Reservoir on 4/6 for only the 3rd Crook County record. Other mockingbirds were located at Laurel Ln. in Culver on 5/20 (Gates), in Redmond on 5/25 (Bowers), and at Hampton on 5/30 (Dolan, Arendt). An odd report of a BOHEMIAN WAXWING in Bend at Hollinshead Park was submitted on the incredibly late date of 5/24 (Lear). LARK SPARROWS (unusual in Deschutes County) were found at the Redmond Sewer Ponds on 5/25 (Rhoads) and 5/31 (Kathol). A BLACK-THROATED SPARROW was seen at Smith Rock State Park on 5/14 (Jenkins). WHITE-THROATED SPARROW reports came in from Bend Hollinshead Park on 3/5 (Cahill), Sisters on 4/24 (Schas), Tumalo Res. on 4/30 (Crabtree), and Bend Cimieron Rd. on 5/3 (Cowan). TRICOLORED BLACKBIRDS were reported from near Lower Bridge on 3/8 (Burgess), Sunriver on 3/14 (Rhoads), north of Prineville on 4/7/21 (McAtee), and a breeding colony was located south of Metolius on 4/27 (Gates). A COMMON GRACKLE was well documented at Sunriver on 3/3 (Vine) and a GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE was briefly present at the Little Deschutes River State Rec. Road on 5/15 (Gross). Small numbers of BOBOLINKS were noted at their historical breeding sites off Puett Road in Crook County (Gates, Chamberlain). A single GRAY-CROWNED ROSY FINCH was noted on the slopes of Mt. Bachelor on 5/13 (Mauer) and a BLACK-BACKED LESSER GOLDFINCH was photographed in Bend on 5/22 (Mayer).



Northern Mockingbird – 5/20/21 – Culver, Oregon – Chuck Gates Photographer



Tricolored Blackbird – 4/29/21 - Metolius, Oregon – Tom Crabtree Photographer

Observers (in order of appearance)

Bob Authier, Chuck Gates, Russ Namitz, Tom Crabtree, Chris Robinson, Craig Miller, Peter Low, Samantha Bango, Claire Weiser, Jeff Nordstrom, Wink Gross, Joel Tinsley, Walt Wolfe, Mike Golden, Matt Cahill, Judy Meredith, Brett Jackson, Diane Burgess, Heidi Erland, Kari Freiboth, Sevilla Rhoads, Mike Mayer, Howard Horvath, Mary Oppenheimer, Lisa Cowan, Nancy Boever, Vickie Buck, Brian White, Kim Kathol, Colby Neuman, Lauren Helton, Steve Kornfeld, Jeremy Welch, Jacob Hourt, Ken Chamberlain, Coleen Pidgeon, Mike Kaputa, Milton Vine, Lynda Paznokas, Team Ona, Loren Gard, Alec McDonell, Georges Kleinbaum, James Arneson, Damian Fagan, Nancy MacDonald, Kara Jakse, Jim Greer, Kayla McCurry, Tyler Groo, Kristen Tackmier, Doug Beal, Dave Sterner, We Hoyer, Jack Williamson, Ondi Hibbs, Tom Penpraze, Bill Bradford, Laura Minty, Jill Punches, Kelli Van Norman, Steve Shunk, Caleb Centanni, Wayne Bowers, Barb Dolan, Dennis Arendt, Jerry Lear, Aaron Jenkins, Jake Schas, June McAtee, Alan Mauer.

Welcome to the ECAS Flock, New Members!



Bob Banks	Bend, OR
Eugenia Becker	Bend, OR
Jennifer Bolen	Bellevue, WA
Rod & Mary Jo Brobeck	Bend, OR
Kendra Carter	Bend, OR
Brenda Cullen	Bend, OR
Marjorie Hamlin	Bend, OR
Linda Hoffman	Bend, OR
Pat Homeyer	Bend, OR
Ruth Morton	Gladstone, OR
Sue Neulist	Bend, OR
Heidi Rusina	Bend, OR
Jeff Sacker	Redmond, OR
Robert Shea	Bend, OR
Sarah Walker	Moscow, ID

Woodpeckers, Nests, and Ecosystem Engineering - An ECAS-Supported Research Project -

By Mary Oppenheimer, Chair, ECAS Grant Committee

On June 18, I had the opportunity to talk with Kurt Trzcinski who is currently conducting point counts of woodpeckers and other species in the Sisters Ranger District. Kurt is a community ecologist based at the University of British Columbia (UBC). Along with Steve Shunk, whose woodpecker expertise is well known by ECAS members, Kurt is engaged in a multiyear project to track how climate change affects the distribution of species at different elevations and in diverse habitats here in Central Oregon. Matt Orr of OSU-Cascades and some of his students are also contributing to this important project.

As most readers know from personal experience, we enjoy excellent birding here on the east side of the Cascades due to the 6000 foot gradient from the high desert to an alpine environment. That gradient also makes our area an excellent place to study how climate change affects species: as temperature rises and as habitat changes, will species adapt to change by moving to different elevations and adapting to changed habitat, or will they disappear? The abundance and diversity of woodpeckers in Central Oregon also makes this an attractive research site. Research by Kathy Martin (UBC), Kurt, and others has previously



A Williamson's Sapsucker feeds young at its nest cavity near Sisters. Photo by Claire Weiser

demonstrated that cavities created by woodpeckers are essential for maintaining the biodiversity of over 20 species of secondary cavity nesters, such as chickadees, nuthatches, chipmunks, and squirrels. In addition, because we have some of the highest diversity of woodpeckers in North America with 11 different species, Central Oregon is an attractive venue for further research on the effects of woodpeckers as ecosystem engineers.

Baseline data is, of course, the first prerequisite for studying change, and I was somewhat surprised when I realized that no detailed study of bird distributions along an elevational gradient has been done in this ecoregion. Kurt explained that as birders we wear naturalist hats, drawing observational conclusions about what species are more abundant at what places, but that these observations may be misleading. For example, we may believe Williamson's Sapsuckers are abundant in a certain area but they may simply make more feeding trips to their nests and are therefore more easily noticed.

In 2020, the team made a start on building the needed database by completing point counts at 50 locations in the Sisters Ranger District, noting the distribution of woodpeckers and other birds as well as habitat types. By its nature, this research involves one researcher, or a very small group, working outdoors in uninhabited areas, and was therefore not curtailed by COVID-19 restrictions. An extensive report on that year's work is available by contacting Kurt or ECAS.

This year the team is strengthening the data base by conducting further 16-point counts at the lowest and highest elevations. In addition, a new project was initiated in the spring of 2021 to track creation of cavities by woodpeckers and their subsequent use by secondary cavity nesters. In support of this new portion of the project, Kurt and Steve are now also searching for woodpecker nests. ECAS members and other birders have been able to contribute to their work as citizen scientists by reporting woodpecker nest sightings to Kurt or Steve. Kurt expressed thanks to those who have contributed in this way and encouraged members to continue reporting woodpecker nest sites to them, without disturbing the birds in any way. The nest data reported will, of course, remain confidential, and you shouldn't report it on eBird yourself.

Using nesting data, the next step is constructing a "nest web." This is a graphic depiction of the interrelationships between the elements of an ecological community. The nest web which was created for the British Columbia community was included in the team's 2020 research proposal, and I found it fascinating and quite beautiful. From a baseline consisting of tree species, lines of varying breadth indicate the frequency of nesting use by the seven British Columbia woodpecker species (lots of lines from aspens!), while the thickness of the lines from each woodpecker species shows the frequency of use of the cavities they created by secondary cavity nesters. Those included chickadees, nuthatches, Mountain Bluebirds, Yellow Flying Squirrels, and Douglas Squirrels. The goal is to create a nest web for Central Oregon over the next 3 to 4 years.

This year's work will enable the team to strengthen the bird distribution database and to start the Central Oregon nest web database. As work continues in future years, these will serve as tools for answering such questions as:

- Are woodpeckers nesting at higher elevations as temperatures rise?
- Are they instead nesting earlier?
- Are they remaining at similar elevations by adapting to habitat change?
- Have they instead disappeared from the region?
- And, are their secondary cavity nesters moving, adapting, or disappearing with them?

I was interested to learn from Kurt that the "nest web" is a concept not limited to ornithology. In fact, Kurt was previously focused on bromeliad communities throughout the Neotropics. His switch to woodpeckers in Oregon was serendipitous – his UBC colleague Kathy Martin, who was a pioneer in developing the concept and study of nest webs, approached him because of a paper he'd written some 20 years earlier on the effects of both forest habitat amount and fragmentation on the distribution of forest breeding birds. She asked if he'd be interested in

woodpeckers and their associated bird communities. He'd been interested in birds since boyhood, had used the first Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas for a Master's of Science project in landscape ecology, and thought it would be exciting to return to studying bird communities. And thus he's in Central Oregon this spring and summer.

This project has received significant financial support from our ECAS Laughrige grant program, with additional grants and in-kind contributions from the Oregon Birding Association, OSU-Cascades, and the US Forest Service. ECAS has already committed to supporting the team's work in 2022 with an additional Laughrige grant. Laughrige grants are the fruit of a substantial unrestricted bequest to the former Central Oregon Audubon Society from the estate of Katherine Laughrige. Our files contain no information on the reason for the bequest, but the funds have been invested conservatively in a socially responsible manner and have grown substantially. Grants are made to public schools, 501©(3) organizations, and governments for projects in Oregon that further education, conservation, or scientific research. The ECAS Grant Committee reviews grant requests and makes recommendations to the ECAS Board, which makes grant decisions. More information on these grants is available on the ECAS website at the Documents button, or click on this direct link <https://www.ecaudubon.org/policies>

Note: Steve Shunk and Kurt Trzcinski presented a program on Elevational Woodpecker Nesting at the May 2021 ECAS Birders' Night which can be viewed on the ECAS YouTube site at <https://youtu.be/cyl-pHAiakk>

Research from across the pond about consequences of bird feeders ----

Garden bird feeders are boosting blue tit numbers – but leaving other species hungry

By Jack Shutt, Manchester Metropolitan University May 26, 2021

I've filled feeders with seeds and nuts since I was a child and I've always loved seeing which birds arrive. I'm not alone – around half of all UK households do the same nowadays, spending £250 million on 150,000 tonnes of bird food each year. That's enough to feed three times the breeding populations of the ten commonest garden species if they ate nothing else all year, with one feeder for every nine birds that use them.

Have you ever wondered how all of that additional food might be affecting wild birds? How much has our generosity changed their natural diet, and what of the bird species we don't see visiting garden feeders?

If you live in the UK, one garden visitor you're probably used to seeing is the blue tit. Blue tits are small, fast and often feed high in trees on tiny insects. Seeing exactly what they eat is tough. But with new molecular technology, we were able to test blue tit poo from 39 woodlands across Scotland – some close to houses, some on remote mountainsides and some by the sea – and gain a fascinating insight into their average diet.

What myself and fellow researchers found surprised us. A small moth caterpillar that lives on birch trees was their most common natural prey item, present in a third of the poos we sampled. But among hundreds of species of insect prey, we also found garden bird food – and lots of it.

Peanuts were present in half of all the poos – the most common food item for Scottish blue tits – and sunflower seeds in a fifth. And the birds weren't just popping next door to find these garden treats. Some were travelling as much as 1.4km from remote areas to nibble on their favourite garden snacks. Clearly this has become part of their staple diet.

**Blue tits love the peanuts
people leave for them.
Ambrogio1997/Wikipedia**



A blue tit bonanza

Eating the food we provide gives blue tits more energy to lay eggs – five days earlier than blue tits that don't. These earlier breeders are likely to raise more healthy chicks. Eating bird food was also linked to a nearly four-fold increase in the proportion of adults available to breed in a given area. Where there used to be one pair of blue tits nesting, garden bird feeders nearby meant there was now likely to be almost four pairs sharing the same space.

Other woodland species such as great tits, nuthatches and great spotted woodpeckers that enjoy garden bird food are doing very well too. Their UK populations have increased on average over the last 25 years that bird feeding has really taken off.

All this feeding might be giving these species an unfair advantage. These species have natural competitors in the woods that aren't using bird feeders as much or at all, either because they're shy or because they're bullied by more dominant species, or because they don't like the food people provide. These species include the marsh tit, willow tit, pied flycatcher, wood warbler and lesser spotted woodpecker. What's happening to them is, sadly, not such good news.



**Lesser spotted woodpecker
populations are declining in the UK.
Risto Puranen/Shutterstock**

How to help all woodland birds

On average, woodland birds that don't use garden bird feeders have declined over the past 25 years, some to the point where they have almost disappeared from the UK countryside. Nobody knows exactly why, and while this may be partly due to their habitat fragmenting and the climate warming, garden bird-feeding may have also played a role.

Due to people feeding them, there are now more dominant blue and great tits in the woods than 25 years ago, eating more of the limited natural food and evicting other species from their nests.

There are also more great spotted woodpeckers and squirrels, which eat the chicks of some birds. Perhaps an extra 700,000 pairs of very healthy and dominant great tits in woodlands is too much for the UK's remaining 2,000 pairs of shy and subordinate willow tits.

While our results suggest there's a link between how much woodland birds visit feeders and their population trends, they don't show a direct cause, so we shouldn't panic yet. While scientists study this problem, responsible bird lovers can help.

Consider contributing to the garden bird surveys organised by the RSPB and the British Trust for Ornithology to help scientists keep track of where birds are, in what numbers and what they're doing. If you're lucky enough to live where rare woodland bird species can still be found, consider providing less bird food to common species and cleaning your feeders regularly.

Meanwhile, there are more natural ways to encourage wild birds into your garden. Planting native shrubs and trees like rowan, hawthorn, silver birch, spindle and guelder rose is one option. They are all beautiful year-round, fairly small and provide excellent habitats for wild birds. Other ideas include mowing lawns less often and digging ponds.

As some rare species nest close to the ground, please keep dogs on leads while walking in woodlands during the spring too. But most importantly, keep enjoying the UK's beautiful birds – in all their miraculous diversity.

From our neighbor to the north--

Astonished Birders Spot Bear in a Nest 'Four Stories' Up a Tree

By Pete Thomas, For the Win Outdoors, Yahoo News, June 9, 2021

Birders observing Great Blue Herons in Ontario, Canada, were surprised Tuesday to see a black bear standing in a nest more than four stories up a tree.

"How do I report this on eBird?" photographer Ken MacDonald joked on Facebook, referring to the online sightings database.

MacDonald told For The Win Outdoors that the bear must have climbed "four or five stories" to reach the nest, and while that's impressive, the bear's motives were sadly clear.

"We couldn't see chicks in the nest that the bear was sitting in but it did seem to be nosing down into the nest and feeding," MacDonald said. "The bear was also looking at the nest below and behind it, but it would have had to climb back down and then up another tree to get to that nest."

Great Blue Herons establish nesting colonies in treetops and adults can be fiercely defensive while fending off potential predators. But on Tuesday, as MacDonald reported, "The heronry didn't seem quite as busy as it was earlier in the spring, perhaps for a good reason."

Black bears are prolific climbers and among their prey items each spring are Great Blue Heron eggs and nestlings.

MacDonald said adult herons did not so much as swoop on the bear, "though all the birds in the neighborhood were silent and watchful.

"We wondered if some adults might attack the bear as it made its descent but we weren't able to hang around long enough to see that."

MacDonald said the bear, being well-fed, might have been content to remain in the nest into or through the night.

The heron nesting colony is in Ontario's Severn township. The photos appeared on the Midland-Penetanguishene Field Naturalists Facebook page.



Black bears sometimes prey on heron nestlings. Photo: Ken MacDonald



This Black bear chose one of the highest nests. Photo: Ken MacDonald

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2021 Summer Zoom Board Meetings

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August 3

September 7

Board meetings are held at 1pm on the first Tuesday of the month online via Zoom. All members are welcome to attend virtually with a link from Tom. Minutes and meeting dates are posted at www.ecaudubon.org/board-meeting-minutes



The East Cascades Audubon Society (ECAS) is a 501(c)(3) organization that furthers knowledge and appreciation of birds and their habitats through field trips, education, and field studies.

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