

# Storm Petrel

## Kalmiopsis Audubon Society

Curry County, Oregon

Volume 44, Number 1

Winter 2021

### Upcoming Events

#### February 12–15, Great Backyard Bird Count, Your Backyard

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is held each February with the goal of creating a real-time snapshot of where birds are — all around the world. To participate, identify and count birds for as little as 15 minutes or for as long as you want during the four-day period — in your backyard or another favorite place. Then tally the number of birds of each species you see and report your count by filling out an online checklist.



As the count progresses, you can log in to explore which birds are being reported and where. This global, citizen science project helps give researchers better understanding of birds' habits and habitats, and it identifies trends that may call for greater conservation attention and study.

If you're new to the count, you'll need to create an online account with Cornell Lab. This is the same system that is used for E-Bird and Merlin, popular birding apps, so participating in the GBBC is an easy way to check out E-Bird and Merlin, too. This is a fun way to join birders across America and around the world. For more information about how to help, go to the Great Backyard Bird Count website: [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org).

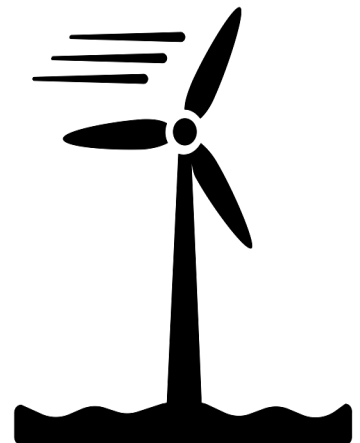


#### March 5, Friday, 6 p.m., KAS Annual Meeting and Gathering, Online

The KAS annual meeting is always a time to meet with old friends and make new ones, too! We'll be gathering online this year, but we will make it as festive and fun as possible. For those who want to start with some social time, tune in at 6 p.m. You can "bring" your own potluck dinner dish and/or chat with fellow KAS members. The meeting will officially start at 6:30 p.m. with an update on our group and the election of our board members. Then we'll kick off the fun — featuring music, poetry, and photos from this past year's nature adventures. Please RSVP to [ann@kalmiopsisaudubon.org](mailto:ann@kalmiopsisaudubon.org), and I'll send you the link. If you'd like to share some photos with the group, please be in touch when you RSVP.

#### March 23, Tuesday, 7–8 p.m., Offshore Wind Energy in Oregon, An Educational Webinar

As Oregon starts to plan for wind power development off our coast, with the goal of transitioning toward cleaner, renewable energy sources, there will be important natural and community values to consider. To help everyone learn more about the public process for siting future facilities, the Oregon Audubon Council (OAC) will host an educational webinar. Speakers will include Andy Lanier (Marine Affairs Coordinator) from Oregon's Department of Land Conservation and Development, Whitney Hauer (renewable energy specialist) from the federal Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM), David Pereksta (Avian Biologist) from the BOEM, Portland Audubon avian scientist Joe Liebezeit, and coastal chapter leaders Ann Vileisis and Harv Schubothe. After the presentations, there will be a moderated Q&A session. Portland Audubon has generously offered to host the webinar for the OAC. To receive the event sign-in link, please register ahead of time here: <https://bit.ly/2LUmJPW>.



## From the President's Desk

Happy New Year, friends! I hope everyone has endured the dark days of this pandemic winter in as good of spirits as possible. I've enjoyed watching mixed flocks — white-crowned sparrows, towhees, thrushes, juncos, chickadees — in my backyard. Sticking together as they move, they demonstrate a genius-of-crowd strategy, helping each other to find good forage and protection from predators. I find inspiration in their loose working-together for mutual benefit. Staying inspired is critically important to maintaining hope and energy; we're fortunate that the beautiful and unique ecosystems of our special corner of Oregon place inspire in so many ways!

COVID has distanced us all, but we remain together in spirit and purpose. After a past year of hunkering down, I know many of you have mentioned missing field trips, service projects, and other opportunities to get together and connect outdoors. Hopefully, we have much to look forward to later this year.

I am very grateful for everyone's support for our grassroots Kalmiopsis Audubon chapter, and each January, I like to thank those who have pitched in to help. First off, thanks to all who sent in donations, participated in our raffle, and gave gift memberships to friends. I want to also thank KAS members who have joined our Nest Egg Club to support our organization's mission far into the future. Your enthusiastic response to our annual fundraising drive means we can focus on conservation advocacy. It also means that we can speak from a position of greater strength when it comes time to advocate for our local wildlife and nature.

I want to also recognize our KAS Board members for all their dedication and hard work, playing ongoing, behind-the-scenes roles that are absolutely crucial to our organization's persistence and success. Thanks to Foncy Prescott, our Vice President and Development Committee Chair; Sara Lovendahl, our Treasurer; Linda Tarr, our Membership Chair; Max Beeken, our Secretary; Penny Suess, who oversees creation of our *Storm Petrel* newsletter; as well as Tim Palmer, Al Geiser, and Deb Buitron, board members at large, who always contribute their knowledge and support. We continue to improve some organizational "systems" with the aim of keeping KAS up to date and strong.

Other key volunteers deserve a big thanks as well: Teresa Bird fits in a category of her own, leading our forest advocacy efforts, representing KAS on the Forest Collaborative, helping with organizational projects, and contributing Plant Notes to our *Storm*

*Petrel*. Carol Hacherl has generously helped with the technical aspects of managing our group's ever-growing membership list. I want to thank the many people who help to make our *Storm Petrel* such a special publication: Joy Wolf and Tim Rodenkirk, who are now compiling our Bird Notes; poet Vicki Graham and biologist/writer Mark Lanier, who are contributing, respectively, poetry and essays that help us to appreciate the natural world; and wildlife photographer Rowly Willis, who brings the beauty and wonder of wild birds and animals into our pages. We have a merry band of people who help to fold the *Storm Petrel* and to distribute free copies — thanks to all who helped before COVID hit.

Finally, I want to thank everyone who donated prizes for this year's raffle: Dave Lacey of South Coast Tours, who donated a spectacular trip via sea kayak or his new oceangoing boat, *The Black Pearl*; Rebecca Malamud of Point B Studio, who offered the stunning Lois Miller print, and Carol Malley of Uptown Frames, who created its lovely frame (and we fondly remember Lois for allowing us to continue using her remarkable photos); Rowly Willis, who contributed one of his beautiful bird photographs; Cora Wahl of Wild Rivers Lamb, who donated a half leg of local, sustainably produced lamb; and Tim Palmer, who gave us one of his gorgeous photo books for the raffle. — Ann Vileisis

*The Storm Petrel* is the quarterly newsletter of Kalmiopsis Audubon Society, P.O. Box 1265, Port Orford, OR 97465, in Curry County, Oregon. Kalmiopsis Audubon Society is a chapter of the National Audubon Society.

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The KAS board meets quarterly. Visitors are always welcome at meetings and other functions. Please call any of the listed officers for the date and location of the board meeting.

### Officers

|                       |                |                |
|-----------------------|----------------|----------------|
| <i>President</i>      | Ann Vileisis   | (541) 332-0261 |
| <i>Vice President</i> | Foncy Prescott | (541) 332-1032 |
| <i>Secretary</i>      | Max Beeken     | (541) 373-1599 |
| <i>Treasurer</i>      | Sara Lovendahl | (541) 366-2063 |

### Coordinators

|                           |                 |                |
|---------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| <i>Conservation Chair</i> | Ann Vileisis    | (541) 332-0261 |
| <i>The Storm Petrel</i>   | Penny Suess     | (541) 332-3017 |
| <i>Membership</i>         | Linda Tarr      | (541) 332-1032 |
| <i>Dark Skies</i>         | Al Geiser       | (541) 332-6720 |
| <i>Let's Go Birding</i>   | Gary Maschmeyer | (541) 412-0806 |

### Directors

|                 |             |                            |
|-----------------|-------------|----------------------------|
| Max Beeken      | 2018 - 2022 | maxbeeken@gmail.com        |
| Deborah Buitron | 2020 - 2024 | grebes@frontier.com        |
| Al Geiser       | 2018 - 2022 | oneocean@frontier.com      |
| Joan Geiser     | 2018 - 2022 | oneocean@frontier.com      |
| Sara Lovendahl  | 2017 - 2021 | sjlovedahl@charter.net     |
| Tim Palmer      | 2019 - 2023 | tim@timpalmer.org          |
| Foncy Prescott  | 2019 - 2023 | foncyprescott@frontier.com |
| Penny Suess     | 2017 - 2021 | penny@net-gain.us          |
| Linda Tarr      | 2019 - 2023 | lindatarr@frontier.com     |
| Ann Vileisis    | 2020 - 2024 | ann@kalmiopsisaudubon.org  |

**KAS Website** <http://www.kalmiopsisaudubon.org>



Black-capped Chickadee  
 Photo by Lois Miller

## KAS Raffle Winners

Congratulations to this year's fortunate winners!

**Adventurer's Prize** (*South Coast Tours "Black Pearl" boat trip*): Kathy Krebsler, Brookings

**Lois Miller Memorial Prize** (*photo*): Deb Matthews, Port Orford

**Bird-lover's Prize** (*Rowly Willis photo*): Ann Schmierer, Port Orford

**Eat-local Prize** (*Wild Rivers lamb*): Randy Scholten, Port Orford

**Book-lover's prize** (*Tim Palmer book*): Linda Gordon, Port Orford

## HOOT OUT News



With COVID and so much happening online these days, we are finding that many events are being planned on shorter notice, which makes our KAS email HOOT OUTs and Facebook page good places to share information about events.

We encourage you to sign up for our email HOOT OUTs or to follow us on Facebook. In the coming months, we aim to shift our HOOT OUTs to another email system to improve our internet security and to avoid problems with email spamming. We'll keep you posted.

To stay informed, join fellow KAS members by signing up for the **HOOT OUT** alert list. You will receive timely emails between issues of the *Storm Petrel*. Contact [ann@kalmiopsisaudubon.org](mailto:ann@kalmiopsisaudubon.org).

## Membership News

Greetings! I am pleased to welcome several new Kalmiopsis Audubon Society members, and we also appreciate our longstanding members who faithfully renew every year. Your support is essential as we continue to advocate for conservation. Thank you for joining us and sustaining us! – Linda Tarr

## Nest Egg Club

Our Nest Egg Club is just the thing for members who want to support KAS's excellent mission far into the future through planned giving. We want to thank those members who have already joined us in this exciting effort. For further information, just contact Foncy Prescott at [nestegg@kalmiopsisaudubon.org](mailto:nestegg@kalmiopsisaudubon.org).



## Storm Petrel Online

If you'd like to be able to see the photos in this newsletter in full color, you can now view the *Storm Petrel* online at the KAS website: [www.kalmiopsisaudubon.org](http://www.kalmiopsisaudubon.org). In the near future, we plan to offer members a digital subscription option, but we remain committed to a paper publication, too, since we know many members enjoy receiving it in the mail. ■



## Conservation News

by Ann Vileisis

### Floras Lake Land Swap Complete

I am pleased to report that the Floras Lake land exchange was finalized just before the 2020 year-end deadline, so it's now official! We succeeded in adding 90 acres to the magnificent Floras Lake State Natural Area, including some important lake frontage. The effort to fend off ill-conceived development plans for county-owned lands at Floras Lake has been going on since at least 2005. That year, long-standing KAS members will remember, we fended off the first secret deal, and then we did it again in 2015, when two county commissioners proposed a pie-in-the-sky plan to take over part of the state natural area to develop a golf course. I am reminded of the Board of Commissioners' images of golf "greens" photoshopped onto scruffy headlands; of the ensuing scandal of county involvement with digging illegal test pits INSIDE the state park; and most of all, of the more than 200 people who showed up at critical OPRD Commission hearings to speak in support of State Parks. OPRD staff and commission members said it was the largest show of public support for Oregon State Parks ever!

In 2016, we aimed to turn a new page by pushing for a more proactive effort for the county land at Floras Lake. We urged Curry County to consider a land swap with Oregon State Parks. With the support of then-Commissioner David Brock Smith, and then Tom Huxley and Sue Gold, County Planning staff researched options, and then they organized a special outreach event for community input in Langlois in 2017. For the past three years, KAS members from throughout Curry County, together with citizens from Langlois, have shown up at key meetings to show overwhelming public support for the land swap. Commissioner Boice became an enthusiastic supporter of the swap, reaching out to OPRD to build goodwill; both he and Commissioner Gold made the votes needed to proceed. Though Commissioner Paasch was not in support at the outset, he earned my respect because he put aside his disagreement, supported the direction of the Board of Commissioners, and subsequently voted to get the job done.

But the devil is always in the details, so we waited and waited for the roads to be vacated and the parcels to be partitioned. With COVID-19, county staff attentions were understandably directed elsewhere, while State Parks saw its budget deeply slashed, with many staff members laid off. Nevertheless, we persisted with friendly reminders and attending BOC meetings, and we saw the deal to its completion. Of course, the county still owns approximately 400 acres at Floras Lake, so we'll need to keep vigilant (and, at

some point, begin work on "Phase 2"), but with this swap, hopefully we've turned a critical corner. Also, the final exchange agreement does have a reversion clause dependent on trail planning work — so that is another detail we'll need to watch.



Floras  
Lake

Photo  
by  
Tim  
Palmer

I am proud that KAS has defended Floras Lake and the special lands between the lake and Blacklock Point, and I am still hoping we can celebrate this success post-COVID!

Please consider sending a note of thanks to our Curry County commissioners for their leadership in conserving beautiful Floras Lake. Here is a sample note that you can end with a personalized touch.

*Dear Commissioners,*

*I was glad to learn that Curry County recently finalized the Floras Lake land swap with Oregon State Parks. Thank you for your forward-looking leadership in conserving beautiful Floras Lake through your support for this exchange.*

Send a thank-you note via snail mail to: Curry County Commissioners, 94235 Moore Street, Gold Beach, OR 97444. Or you can email them (Chris Paasch, Court Boice, and former commissioner Sue Gold): [paaschc@co.curry.or.us](mailto:paaschc@co.curry.or.us), [boicec@co.curry.or.us](mailto:boicec@co.curry.or.us), [golds@co.curry.or.us](mailto:golds@co.curry.or.us), and PLEASE cc John Jezuit at [jezuitj@co.curry.or.us](mailto:jezuitj@co.curry.or.us), who can forward any emails of thanks to former commissioner Gold.

### **A Path to Protecting Port Orford's Drinking Water**

Last fall, through her work monitoring the Oregon Department of Forestry FERNS website, Teresa Bird noticed a clearcut slated for the North Fork Hubbard Creek, the watershed that supplies the city of Port Orford's drinking water. She shared that information with Port Orford Watershed Council (POWC) Chair Linda Tarr, who reached out to express concerns to the timber company, which granted 20-foot buffers, not required by law for the small stream. Oregon Forest Practices laws are notoriously inadequate to protect municipal water supplies, and so this agreement from the land owner was some measure of protection that otherwise would not have happened.

Through this interaction, POWC learned that an even larger, steeper parcel of timberland in the city’s watershed was up for sale and would likely be logged the next year, given the high price of timber. The city’s reservoir has already been heavily silted in by past logging, and the city’s Water Master Plan recommended finding ways to prevent logging and road building, ideally through city ownership. With that, the POWC set out to find some way to proactively protect the city’s watershed from logging.

With lots of research and networking, the POWC found the possibility of the Conservation Fund (CF) acting as a bridge buyer; the CF has a special revolving fund to help cities buy their water supply lands. In our December HOOT OUT, we asked Port Orford-based KAS members to write letters to the city council, urging them to partner with the CF to purchase this crucial 160 acres of timberland, which is very close to the city’s reservoir and has several tributaries and steep slopes.



◀ Turkey-tailed Bracket Fungus

▶ Brown Pelicans Fishing

*Photos by Rowly Willis*

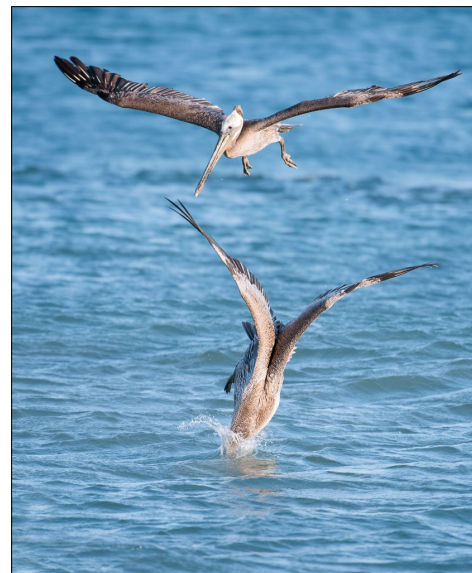
The council received dozens of supportive letters and voted unanimously to proceed with this proactive effort that will hopefully protect our municipal water supply as well as the forest habitat into the future. The owner agreed to take the land off the market while CF carries out the due diligence and appraisal that are necessary for a successful transaction. There is still much work to be done and funding to find, but there is real reason for optimism that this key piece of forested land might be preserved to protect our drinking water. A huge thanks to Linda Tarr and the POWC for working to find this proactive, protective option, and to all KAS members who pitched in with letters of support. It was so good to see the Port Orford City Council vote for a proactive and protective step instead of repeating the error of past inaction.

Please thank Port Orford City Council members for taking this step by giving them a call or sending an email. Here is a sample message you can use:

*Dear Port Orford City Council Members,*

*Thank you for your recent vote to partner with the Conservation Fund to purchase forest lands in our city’s watershed, which will help protect our city’s water supply into the future. Many other small coastal cities have seen their watersheds ruined by logging, so I am glad to know that our City Council has taken a proactive, protective, and cost-effective approach.*

Email the city councilors at: [pcox@portorford.org](mailto:pcox@portorford.org), [claroche@portorford.org](mailto:claroche@portorford.org), [gburns@portorford.org](mailto:gburns@portorford.org), [jgarratt@portorford.org](mailto:jgarratt@portorford.org), [tpogwizd@portorford.org](mailto:tpogwizd@portorford.org), [lkessler@portorford.org](mailto:lkessler@portorford.org). Please remember, if you are interested in helping to track clearcuts and aerial spraying on the timberlands in your watershed, contact Teresa Bird at [teresa@kalmiopsisaudubon.org](mailto:teresa@kalmiopsisaudubon.org).



**Federal Environmental Policy Update**

Over the past four years, dozens of federal policies protecting public lands, clean water, birds, and wildlife were targeted by the Trump Administration. Under the rhetoric of “deregulation,” numerous longstanding environmental rules, as well as opportunities for public input, were cut. Several egregious changes were finalized in just the past few weeks.

For birds of the Pacific Northwest, some of the most troubling rule changes include evisceration of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and a surprising, last-minute effort to remove protection for more than three million acres of critical habitat for the Northern Spotted Owl.

Draft rule changes to weaken the Migratory Bird Treaty have been in the pipeline since 2017. In response to an earlier lawsuit filed by National Audubon and other conservation groups, a district court ruling last summer found that the proposed changes did not align with the intent of the ▶

◀ 100-plus-year-old law. Despite this ruling, the Trump Administration proceeded to finalize regulations that shield industry from fines and prosecution if migratory birds are incidentally rather than intentionally killed. It's important to note that the MBTA has long served as a disincentive for companies to kill large numbers of birds through their operations, such as with oil spills; and damages paid have provided for important mitigation and habitat restoration efforts (such as, locally, with the 1999 *New Carissa* spill, which killed around 3,000 birds on Oregon's coast, including threatened Marbled Murrelets).



Red-breasted Merganser

Photo: Jessica Botzan / Great Backyard Bird Count

Rule changes that remove protection for 3.4 million acres (42 percent) of critical habitat for the Northern Spotted Owl were finalized by the Trump Administration in mid-January. Just weeks earlier, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologists had released a report indicating that the rapidly declining population of owls warranted uplisting from “threatened” to “endangered,” but despite the urgent need for increased protection, the Trump Administration had decided not to uplist owing to “higher priority actions.” Rather than simply not uplist, the Trump Administration then proceeded to remove 42 percent of owl habitat from protection, citing only “discretion” of the Secretary of the Interior. For nearly 30 years, National Forests (and BLM lands) of the Pacific Northwest have been managed under the Northwest Forest Plan, with specific protections for remaining old-growth forests that provide habitat not only for Spotted Owls but also for other birds, fish, and wildlife — including our region's iconic salmon. Many biologists regard this new rule as accelerating the owl's path to extinction.

So with the recent inauguration of President Biden, where do we now stand with rollbacks to these and

many other federal laws that affect our local public lands and wildlife? The Biden Administration issued a “hold memo” that requires all federal agencies to hold and review any recently published final or draft rules. That will apply to both the MBTA rule and the last-minute Spotted Owl rule. There is also the Congressional Review Act, a procedural tool that allows lawmakers to consider and possibly nullify recently finalized regulations with a simple majority vote. It's also very likely that the worst administrative rule changes will be litigated. National Audubon and a coalition of conservation groups have already filed suit against this final MBTA rule change. Until challenges are resolved, the new Spotted Owl critical habitat rule will likely create a fair measure of chaos for land management agencies. Stay tuned.

### Southwestern Oregon Mining Withdrawal

With the new Congress, we need our senators and Representative DeFazio to reintroduce and advance the Southwestern Oregon Salmon and Watershed Protection Act (SOWSPA) in order to finally make permanent the 20-year mineral withdrawal we all worked so hard to secure back in 2016. In the last Congress, SOWSPA was paired up with the Rogue Wilderness bill as the Oregon Recreation Enhancement Act but did not advance beyond hearings. Meanwhile, Red Flat Nickel Company (RFNC) continues to assert that its mining claims at Red Flat, up atop the headwaters of Hunter Creek and Pistol River, are valid, while the Forest Service continues to evaluate RFNC's assertion through a technical process known as a “surface use determination.”

Also important to note, St. Peter Port Capital, the offshore, U.K.-based company that owns RFNC, recently indicated it intends to auction off its RFNC holdings. Given rising interest in electric vehicle (EV) batteries, there is also increasing interest in nickel mining. The auctioning-off could be a sign of the company's weakness, but a new buyer could also reinvigorate interest in further exploration. Southwest Oregon's nickel deposits are relatively small and low grade, and thus far have not proven economical for mining development in a global context, but as long as the Mining Law of 1872 remains in place, they remain vulnerable to exploitation. EV batteries typically require high-grade nickel sourced from nickel sulfide deposits. The low-grade nickel in Southwest Oregon's laterite deposits can be extracted only by strip mining the unique ecosystems at the headwaters of our cherished rivers. We'll keep you posted on how to help.

### Jordan Cove Dealt Major Setback

On January 18, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) handed down an important decision

## Curry Plant Notes

by Teresa Bird / Illustration © Regents of the University of California

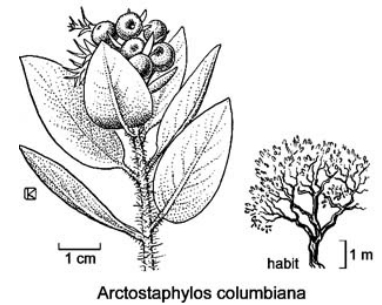
### **Arctostaphylos: The Manzanita**

Last week while I was taking a walk and feeling the midwinter botany doldrums, clusters of white caught my eye in the midst of the dull green on a nearby bush. It was a manzanita, filled with tiny, white, bell-shaped flowers. In January! While it's not too unusual for manzanitas to start flowering in early spring or sometimes late winter, seeing flowers shortly after the new year seemed a bit early and was an unexpected surprise.

*Manzanita*, meaning “little apple” in Spanish, was thus dubbed by the Spaniards in California for the small apple-like fruits (often dull reddish-brown to green) that will be soon following the flowers. On a walk early last fall a friend and I encountered many piles of bear scat full of some kind of reddish fruit, long after our native berries had ceased to produce, and it took some time to realize that it was manzanita fruit, apparently a bear favorite. The scientific name *Arctostaphylos* comes from the Greek *arktos*, meaning “bear,” and *staphylos* for “a bunch of grapes.” I've snacked on a manzanita fruit now and then, but they're really mealy and not recommended to be eaten in large quantities if you want to feel good afterward. They're better left to the bears, although native peoples are thought to have eaten them occasionally, and used the bark and leaves for making dyes and the hard wood for small tools.

Manzanitas are common in coastal chaparral/scrub-type habitats, mingling with shore pines, madrone, salal, and kinnikinnick. The New River trails are a good place to see this kind of habitat, but it can be found far up into the Siskiyou Mountains as well. Manzanitas growing in areas with frequent disturbances, such as fire, have adapted by growing burls and lignotubers, or swellings in the roots where they store starches that can act as a food source to support regrowth when the plant is damaged and cannot photosynthesize. I witnessed this widespread resprouting on a hike in the Kalmiopsis Wilderness after the Chetco Bar fire — as well as a cool view of the underground lignotubers revealed by a cut-out road bank. Manzanitas also produce abundant seed, and germination can be stimulated by fire (some manzanita species are more adapted to fire than others).

Identifying manzanitas as to species can be tricky — you'll need to carefully study the leaves and stems — but the most common and widespread species in this area is the hairy manzanita (*Arctostaphylos columbiana*, pictured above), which true to its name has conspicuous hairs on the stems and leaves, and even small hairs on the flowers and fruits! Other species that grow in this area (from the coast to this side of the Rogue River–Siskiyou Mountains) are the hoary manzanita (*A. canescens*), glandular manzanita (*A. glandulosa*), greenleaf manzanita (*A. patula*), Gasquet manzanita (*A. hispidula*), pinemat manzanita (*A. nevadensis*), and kinnikinnick (*A. uva-ursi*). When growing together, species often hybridize, making ID'ing all the more difficult. My favorite thing about manzanitas is the reddish color of their bark and the way their stiff trunk and branches grow in a twisted fashion — unless I have to hike through them off-trail! Keep your eyes open for the clusters of white-pink flowers on your drives down Highway 101 or on hikes in the coming weeks. Happy botanizing! ■



that we hope will put the kibosh on the Jordan Cove LNG export terminal and gas pipeline across southern Oregon. The Canadian Company Pembina had asked FERC for a waiver from Oregon water quality regulations, but FERC upheld the requirement that projects must meet water quality standards. In Oregon, the state has the regulatory authority and responsibility to implement the federal Clean Water Act. KAS has long opposed the Jordan Cove project, along with a broad coalition of tribes, conservation groups, fishers, impacted landowners, and citizens concerned about clean water, climate change, and

public safety. Pembina may petition for reconsideration or apply for a water quality permit again, but given the changing economics of natural gas, this permit denial is a significant setback.

### **Rocky Shore Proposals Now Under Review**

In December, KAS sent a letter to support three Rocky Shore Habitat proposals put forth by the South Coast Rocky Shores group, which includes Oregon Shores and PISCO (the Partnership for Interdisciplinary Studies of Coastal Oceans), for Blacklock State Park, Crook Point, and Cape ►

## Winging It

by Mark Lanier / Photo © Nigel Voaden / Macaulay Library

### Varied Thrush

One day, during the first winter my wife and I lived in Curry County, I took a walk on our acre-ish, forested “spread” and found a surprise: The understory looked raked it! I was pretty sure this wasn’t the work of a crew (though the thought of contemplation and catch-solved the landscaping mystery. Varied Thrushes that had



Varied Thrushes are a West striking mix of orange and an initial temptation to call upon further consideration, I around. After all, a Varied Sibley field guide, not its

Coast avian icon to me, a blue-gray. I have to admit to them Robin-wannabes, but think it’s the other way Thrussh graces my tattered more celebrated cousin!

The Varied Thrushes in our area thrive in the moist environs of our coastal forests. Summers tend to find them higher in elevation, feeding mainly on invertebrates on the forest floor and nesting in small conifers. Winter sends many downhill, their diet shifting to seeds, nuts, and berries. Territorial feeders, their feeding technique involves claiming a piece of ground, doing a little land clearing by grabbing and tossing aside sticks and leaves with their bill, then jumping back with a little ground scratch before taking a look at what may have turned up. Our “raked” grounds explained!

Not quite the vocalists of some of their thrush kin, Varieds do have a distinctive two- to three-second single note song, repeated about 10 to 20 seconds later, often in a slightly different pitch. Bird artist Louis Agassiz Fuertes called this simple tune “as perfectly the voice of the cool, dark, peaceful solitude which the bird chooses for its home as could be imagined.”

Varied Thrushes summer up to the Bering Sea and winter as far south as Baja, but some data point to birds in our area being year-rounders. Though they like the forests, you might spy individuals in winter, especially after a cold snap, staking a claim to a spot on your lawn as they travel with groups of robins. They may also be attracted to spillage from your feeders. If your non-lawn areas include native shrubs like salal, huckleberry, toyon, or cascara, they will enjoy those too, and maybe do a little yardwork for you to boot!

◀ Blanco. As part of its Territorial Sea planning process, the state is currently updating its Rocky Shore Habitat Plan and had requested citizen proposals for new designations. The aim is to protect the diversity of marine life in these rich habitat areas. All proposals are currently under review by the Rocky Habitat Working Group, and a public comment period is expected later this spring.

### Port Orford Dark Sky, Update

Port Orford’s Dark Sky lighting ordinance has simmered on the back burner for the past few months. Last fall, the city council sent it back to the planning commission for refinements. However, they also sent the commission a request to work on building heights, which took higher priority. The lighting ordinance update has been a work in progress for over

a year now, so hopefully 2021 will be the year to get it done. Meanwhile, the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) still plans to install six pairs of new lighting fixtures on Highway 101 next summer as part of its reconfiguration and paving project. ODOT has selected shielded LED fixtures with 2,700 kelvin (warm) color temperature that we hope will comply with “dark sky” goals of the ordinance, and now Coos-Curry Electric Company (CCEC) wants to field test them to assure they can withstand coastal weather. We’ve been told that demonstration fixtures will be installed some time in February. This will give us all a chance to see what the new LED fixtures actually look like. CCEC aims to shift toward LED lights throughout its service area, but has been leaning toward 3,000 kelvin fixtures, so pay attention to changes in street lights in your neighborhood. ■

## Bird Notes

Winter 2020 / 2021

### OCTOBER

17 – Tim Rodenkirk found individual **Tropical Kingbirds** in the Brookings area at two different locations.

27 – Patti Truhn and Sandra Morey found a late **Chipping Sparrow** in Gold Beach and a **Clay-colored Sparrow** at Chetco Point in Brookings.

27 – Randy Scholten photographed a **Blue Jay** at his Garrison Lake feeder in Port Orford! Unfortunately, the bird only stayed one day.

29 – Terry Wahl found a **Rock Wren** on the family’s upper ranch above Langlois in an old quarry, and the bird was still there at the end of December! This species breeds locally up in the Kalmiopsis Wilderness area but normally migrates south afterward and is gone by late September.

California  
Scrub-Jay

Lou Orr /  
Great  
Backyard  
Bird  
Count



30 – Paul Shallert saw several shore birds in the Frankport–Sister’s Rocks area, including a **Willetts** and a **Black-bellied Plover**. Terry Wahl reported a **Tropical Kingbird** on the family ranch near Cape Blanco.

31 – Tim Rodenkirk saw a flock of five **Horned Larks** on the north side of Floras Lake.

### NOVEMBER

1 – Tim found a different **Tropical Kingbird** at Floras Lake.

5 – Paul Shallert spotted a “Black Hawk,” which is a

dark-phase **Red-tailed Hawk**. This bird has been returning to Cedar Valley each fall for the past five or six years.

10 – Paul reported seeing a large, bright blue **California Scrub-Jay** at Canfield Bar. Also finding them in Ophir, he observed that they seem to favor scrubby, south-facing habitats. This species is fairly common in the lowlands of southern Curry County and is regular north to Euchre Creek. It also likely breeds in open serpentine Jeffrey pine woodlands up to about 2,500 feet, where it has been observed during breeding season at Hunter Creek Bog, east of Gold Beach, and Packsaddle Mountain, east of Brookings, by Tim Rodenkirk.



Tropical Kingbird  
Brian Henderson / Audubon Field Guide

11 – Paul found three **Virginia Rails** at Cedar Bend Golf Course, and the next day, he observed **Wood Ducks** on lower Euchre Creek.

18 – Paul saw a **Snowy Egret** and a **Great Blue Heron** on the pond at Arizona Beach State Park and a **Virginia Rail** again at Cedar Bend Golf Course.

19 – Mick Bressler and W. Michaelis found a **Clay-colored Sparrow** at the north jetty area in Gold Beach.

22- Tim Rodenkirk spotted a **Clay-colored Sparrow** along the road on Floras Lake Loop. It was seen again about a week later and may be overwintering and not just migrating through.

28 – Charley Kahler observed a **Tropical Kingbird** in his yard on Tanbark Road in Brookings, where it was perched on some wires and then flew down into his crabapple tree. Terry Wahl observed another **Tropical Kingbird** on his ranch. This species really likes the open ranchland habitat at the ranch and has been seen numerous times over the past 20 years.

30 – Mary Anne Clayton found a **Long-tailed Duck** in the Brookings harbor area. ►



## DECEMBER

3 – Tim Rodenkirk reported an immature **Bullock's Oriole** in a Brookings neighborhood. Orioles found this late often overwinter and have been seen feeding on apples in residential yards.

10 – Frank Lospalluto reported a **Glaucous Gull** in Gold Beach.

15 – Mick Bressler and W. Michaelis found and photographed an **American Tree Sparrow** at Jerry's Flat, just outside Gold Beach.



Clay-colored Sparrow  
Photo by Kaaren Perry / Flickr

18 – Jay Withgott photographed a **Rock Wren** foraging on a rocky beach near China Creek, north of Brookings — a very late bird in an unusual location!

22 – A **Costa's Hummingbird** was found and photographed by Adrian Hinkle and Logan Kahle in a neighborhood near the Winchuck River mouth. It was seen again on December 29 and is probably overwintering there. On the same day, they found two different **Clay-colored Sparrows** in Brookings. This species is usually found earlier in the fall in Curry as a migrant, and birds this late are likely overwintering. They then birded up in Gold Beach where they found a rare, overwintering **Nashville Warbler**.

24 – Jim Benson reported a **Bullock's Oriole** visiting his hummingbird feeder in Brookings.

27 – An amazing six **Vaux's Swifts** were well described by experienced birders Mick Bressler and W. Michaelis at Jerry's Flat near Gold Beach. This is the first ever winter record in Oregon, and this is a species that does not normally winter anywhere in the United States! There were also records in Arcata, California, this winter, which is very ominous.

27 – **Turkey Vultures** were observed by Bressler and Michaelis in Gold Beach. They have been overwintering in Brookings in recent years but have gone north of there during November/December and historically did not return until about February. They have been migrating back north earlier and earlier, though, and are now returning in late December. It is likely that this species will become a year-round resident throughout lowland Curry in the next decade or so. Coos County had no overwintering birds either until about 10 years ago. Now they are regulars year round in the Coquille Valley. Times are a-changing!

28 – Ann Vileisis and Tim Palmer reported a **Red-Breasted Merganser** (photo on page 6), **Western Grebe**, and a half dozen **Buffleheads** in the lower Sixes estuary, and about a hundred **Western Gulls** at the mouth. They noted that it would have made a perfect day for the Christmas Bird Count.

29 – Paul Shallert reported six brilliant **Western Bluebirds** at Cedar Bend Golf Course. Carrie Rogers saw an enormous flock of **Pine Siskins** in a yard on the east side of Port Orford. She believes these may be part of the broader irruption that has been documented across the west. Terry Wahl reported a flock of more than 500 (!) of the birds on the family ranch near Cape Blanco also.

31 – Kelli Van Norman and Jack Maynard observed a **Common Yellowthroat** at Jerry's Flat. While common in the breeding season, this species rarely overwinters on the South Coast.

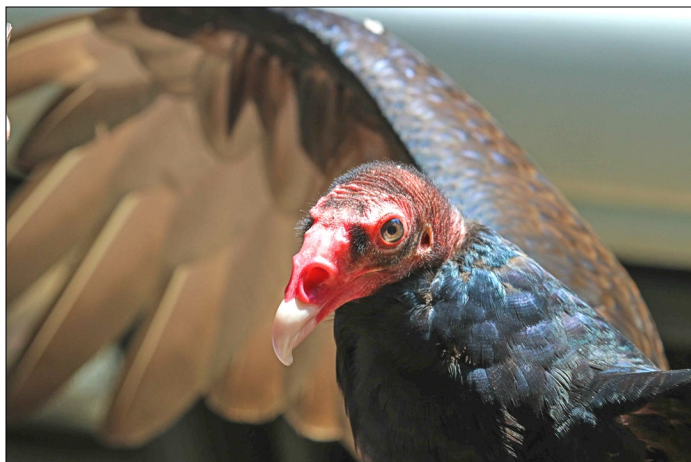


Rock  
Wren

Photo  
by  
Rowly  
Willis

## JANUARY

7 – Joy Wolf found a flock of **California Quail** and a **Great Blue Heron** on her property on Elk River Road. Dawn Albright was birding in Alfred E. Loeb State Park and found a flock of *seven* (!) **White-**



Turkey Vulture

Michelle Maani / Audubon Photography Awards

**throated Sparrows.** Tim Rodenkirk had a **Pipit** flock with two **Lapland Longspurs** at Floras Lake. Laplands often winter in the private ranchlands in the New River bottomlands but are not often seen elsewhere during winter.

**Say's Phoebes** are now a regular wintering species. This year there are at least three in the Brookings area, three on the upper and lower Wahl ranch near Cape Blanco/Langlois Mountain, and two along the road on Floras Lake Loop (seen by multiple observers). There are likely others overwintering elsewhere in the open lowlands of Curry.

**Northern Mockingbirds** are wintering in Brookings, Sixes River Flat (along Highway 101 just north of the river), and possibly in Gold Beach (seen by multiple observers). Wintering birds are almost always found in or near holly trees, and they jealously guard the berries from other birds, such as robins and jays.

*Compiled by Tim Rodenkirk and transcribed by Joy Wolf. Thanks to KAS members and friends for sharing your unusual bird sightings. Send your new observations to KASbirdnotes@gmail.com.*



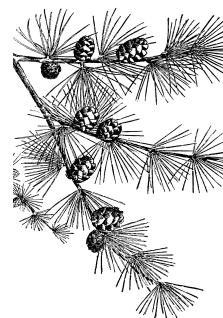
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Please include your name, street address, city, state with ZIP code, and email address.

**Thank you!**

POETRY CORNER



*Winter Songs*

by Vicki Graham

Sometimes a wren's trill,  
notes rising clear above the clash  
of creek water on rock,

and sometimes the fluty si si si  
of golden-crowned kinglets  
feeding in the canopy,

sometimes the flicker's staccato tap,  
or the wheezy contact calls  
of pine siskins, winter nomads,  
wings flashing gold in the firs.

One moment the wild cleansing  
of the riverbed,

the next, the pure three-note whistle  
of a chickadee in the willows,  
fee bee bee, promising spring.





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| <b>What's Inside</b>   |    |
|--|----|
| <b>Upcoming Events</b> .....   | 1  |
| <b>From the President's Desk</b>   |    |
| <i>by Ann Vileisis</i> .....   | 2  |
| <b>KAS News</b> .....  | 3  |
| <b>Conservation News</b>   |    |
| <i>by Ann Vileisis</i> .....   | 4  |
| Floras Lake Swap, Port Orford's Drinking<br>Water, Federal Environmental Policy Update,<br>Southwest Oregon Mining Withdrawal, Jordan<br>Cove Setback, Rocky Shore Proposals, Port<br>Orford Dark Sky Ordinance Update |    |
| <b>Curry Plant Notes</b>   |    |
| <i>by Teresa Bird</i> .....  | 7  |
| <b>Winging It</b>  |    |
| <i>by Mark Lanier</i> .....  | 8  |
| <b>Bird Notes</b>  |    |
| <i>by Tim Rodenkirk and Joy Wolf</i> .....   | 9  |
| <b>Poetry Corner</b>   |    |
| <i>by Vicki Graham</i> .....   | 11 |

