

# The Qual

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**News from Lane County Audubon Society** 

#### **From Our President**

Maeve Sowles, 541.343.8664, maeveanddick@g.com

# **Birding Enriches Our Lives** in Countless Ways



Birding

There are many reasons to love birding. It keeps your mind and senses active. Listening, observing, then trying to decide what bird you are watching are great exercises for the brain. It creates learning challenges for the visual, the sounds, and the memory of birds you know, to come up with a bird's identification.

There is also a sense of anticipation and excitement in a day of birding. One is always looking for a new or unusual sighting that gives birding the feeling of a treasure hunt. At times there are surprising discoveries! One year on the Eugene Christmas Bird Count, Dave Bontrager identified a rare Falcated Duck on a pond near Coburg. It was a cold, wet, windy day but he persisted in watching this bird riding the whitecaps on the pond, until he was certain of its identity. Way to go Dave!

Bird watching also takes us out of our own headspace and into the world of the birds. Observing their behaviors and feeding strategies, watching them bathe and preen as they interact with each other, delighting in their lovely feathers and songs; all these offer us yet another aspect of the birding adventure. Peeking into their world also creates a form of escapism, so that we feel a part of the bird's world, a kinship with nature and a sense of awe in the beauty of this world around us. I know it makes me feel happy!

Birders tend to be fun to be around. There is a humor, enthusiasm and optimism to birders' approach to the pastime. I've met many friends through birding and find we have much in common. Birders tend to be alert, eager to learn, engaged in the world, and also willing to share their experiences. Every birding experience is not necessarily a happy one. Birds are like every living thing—they need to eat to survive, and sometimes they eat each other. They compete for food, territory, and nest sites; they may be injured or killed.

It can be sad and distressing to watch these events, but we find a way to accept the finality of nature and take this experience to heart. Birding

continued on page 4

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Conservation.....2



Field Notes ...... 3



Program Meeting...... 5



CBC ......6-7

#### **Conservation**

Debbie Schlenoff, 541.685.0610, dschlenoff@msn.com

# **Cooperation—Some Birds Do It, Can We?**

onserving biodiversity is a big ✓ challenge, but there is much we can do. Populations suffer from habitat loss and fragmentation, the wildlife trade, invasive species, and disease. These are exacerbated by climate change, as animals shift range, search for food, and crowd into smaller habitats. And all of these factors work together to stress populations, increase the chances of human encroachment into wildlife habitat, and provide the fuel for the next pandemic.

A concerted effort on the part of people cooperating to enact solutions is long overdue. But is cooperation possible? These are stressful times the pandemic, the economy, politics, wildfires, and the state of the environment—just to name a few things. During times of stress, it's easy for people to be less tolerant and less cooperative, for us to withdraw or just not want to bother. But we would do well in these difficult times to draw on the better aspects of human nature, our capacity to be generous, compassionate, and cooperative.

These traits are not unique to humans. They are part of our deep evolutionary history and we may benefit from the recognition that we share this evolutionary history (and this planet) with other animals who, like us, exhibit both conflict and cooperation. Much of the research on cooperative behavior has been done with primates (our closest relatives) and other mammals, but there is plenty of evidence that birds cooperate for such activities

as breeding, chasing off predators, finding food, flocking, mutual preening, and more. I am always energized by the fun things we learn about animals and humbled to know we have so much in common. I can't resist sharing a few summaries of research that provides evidence of cooperation in birds.

When flying in flocks, especially during migration, whoever is out in front expends the most energy while those who travel in the wake of others conserve energy. Do the trailing birds take advantage or cooperate? Researchers placed GPS monitors on a flock of 14 migrating juvenile bald ibises. The results: the ibises took turns leading and following with each bird getting a chance to fly in another's wake, and all taking their turn working hard as leader.

A study on flycatchers demonstrated that social animals practice a tit-for-tat approach. Pied Flycatchers cooperate with one

another to chase away predators: you come to my aid when I call for help and I'll come to yours. But if you don't help me, I won't help you. In one round of the experiment, the researchers prevented some birds from responding to the help call. Next round: flycatchers did not cooperate in mobbing if the help call came from an individual who had not previously helped them. But they did help when the call was uttered by cooperative birds.

In a recent study examining prosocial behavior in parrots, study subjects had access to tokens that they could give to their neighbor, who could then use them to trade for food from researchers. The subjects themselves got no tangible reward for sharing the token. African Grey Parrots voluntarily and spontaneously transferred tokens to their study partners.

In an experiment with groups of Azure-winged Magpies, one individual at a time was given a large amount of mealworms, considered a yummy delicacy. Most of the birds shared the treat through a wire-mesh with their neighbors, and were even more inclined to share when their neighbor had nothing.

continued on page 4



#### **Field Notes: October 2020**

Tom and Allison Mickel, 541.485.7112, tamickel@riousa.com

# **Oriental Greenfinch, Little Bunting, Cassin's Sparrow, Pygmy Nuthatch**

V/e didn't think we could have another month of birds that would top last month, but we did! With three new birds for the county, two of which were second state records, and the other a first state record and only the third record for the lower 48 states! Is it because everyone is birding locally or is it because of global weather changes affecting migration?

Abbreviations: Fern Ridge Reservoir (FRR), North Jetty of the Siuslaw River (NJSR), South Jetty of the Siuslaw River (SJSR)



Oriental Greenfinch



Little Bunting

Tundra Swan	Oct 27	Oakridoe	MLS	First report & unusual location
Eurasian Wigeon		O		1
Long-tailed Duck				•
•				A large flock for this late in the year
Vaux's Swift (325)	Oct 3	Agate Hall, UO	BC	A large number for this late in the year
Vaux's Swift (2)	Oct 19	Agate Hall, UO	BC	Last seen roosting in chimney
Sora	Oct 27	FRR - Royal Ave	DA	Late report
Black-necked Stilt	Oct 4	FRR - Orchard Pt	EC,KL	Very late for this species
Wandering Tattler	Oct 11	SJSR	KL	Getting to be late for this species
Red Phalarope	Oct 7	FRR - Orchard Pt	SHi	Rare in the valley, especially this early
Caspian Tern (2)	Oct 4	Roaring Rapids	JS	An unusual location - Willamette River
Turkey Vulture (25+)	Oct 4	Mt Pisgah	JF	All headed south
Turkey Vulture (46)	Oct 12	W Eugene	VT	All headed south
Osprey	Oct 9	Delta Ponds	fide LMc	Will they winter in small numbers?
Rough-legged Hawk	Oct 23	I-5 N of Coburg	AB	The first report for the winter season
Great Gray Owl	Oct 17	Waldo Lake area	TG-T,NC	Not often found
Short-eared Owl (3)	Oct 28	FRR - Royal Ave	EW	Earlier than normal

#### **WOODPECKERS TO THRUSHES**

**SWANS TO OWLS** 

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Oct 2	Willow Creek Preserve	LMc,et al	Less than ten records for Lane Co.
White-headed Woodpecker			•	
Pacific-slope Flycatcher	Oct 4	Florence	RA	Very late report
Say's Phoebe	Oct 8	FRR Orchard Pt	RR	The first fall/winter report
Tropical Kingbird	Oct 12	SJSR deflation plain	RA,et al	Found in very small numbers most years
Tropical Kingbird	Oct 22	Old Town Florence	BMc,KAFound in	very small numbers most years
Northern Shrike	Oct 17	FRR - Royal Ave	Ma	First report for the winter season
California Scrub-Jay	Oct 11	Glenada Rd	KL	First report south of Siuslaw River
Violet-green Swallow (150)	Oct 13	River Rd area	RH	Flocks moving south
Pygmy Nuthatch	Oct 6	Waldo Lake	MM	Less than five records for Lane Co
Western Bluebird (14)	Oct 29	SJSR	JL	Flying south – an unusual location
Swainson's Thrush	Oct 24	SE Eugene	A&TM	A very late report
Northern Mockingbird	Oct 12	SJSR deflation plain	RA	They've wintered in the area before

continued on page 4

#### **SPARROWS TO GROSBEAKS**

Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch	Oct 19	Luper Cemetery	SHu	Very unusual location!
Oriental Greenfinch	Oct 17	Old Town Florence	TG-T,NC	First Oregon record, third for lower 48
Lapland Longspur (2)	Oct 16	SJSR	JS,LJ	Small numbers at this time most years
Lapland Longspur	Oct 16	SJSR - Dog Pond	SHi	Small numbers at this time most years
Lapland Longspur	Oct 28	NJSR	LG	Small numbers at this time most years
Little Bunting	Oct 20	Bond Rd	RA	Second Oregon record & first Lane Co.
Cassin's Sparrow	Oct 20	Bond Rd	RA	Second Oregon record & first Lane Co.
Chipping Sparrow	Oct 26	Alton Baker Park	KT-J	Last report for the breeding season
Clay-colored Sparrow	Oct 3	Waite Ranch	JG,AC	Normal time for their arrival/migration
Clay-colored Sparrow	Oct 7	Springfield	SM	Not commonly found in the valley
Swamp Sparrow	Oct 9	Waite Ranch	TJ,AC	Earlier than normal for winter season
Palm Warbler	Oct 12	Old Town Florence	RR	Normal time & place for small numbers
Palm Warbler	Oct 12	SJSR - Dog Pond	JS,et al	Normal time & place for small numbers
Orange-crowned Warbler	Oct 8	River Rd area	RH	Last report for the breeding season
Common Yellowthroat	Oct 25	FRR - Royal Ave	EG	Last report for the breeding season
Black-throated Gray Warbler	Oct 8	Skinner Butte	TM	Last report for the breeding season
Hermit Warbler	Oct 28	River Rd area	RH	Very late report - will it winter?
Wilson's Warbler	Oct 8	River Rd area	RH	Last report for the breeding season
Western Tanager	Oct 13	Hendricks Park	TM	Last report for the breeding season
Black-headed Grosbeak	Oct 26	River Rd area	LMa,DM	A very late report

AB Aaron Beerman, AC Alan Contreras, A&TM Allison & Tom Mickel, BC Barbara Combs, BMc Barry McKenzie, DA Dennis Arendt, DM Don McLean, EC Ellen Cantor, EG Eoghan Gormely, EW Evan Wilder, GM Gerry Meenaghan, JF Judy Franzen, JG Joshua Galpern, JL Joshua Little, JS John Sullivan, KA KC Anderson, KL Kit Larsen, KM Kim Moodie, KT-J Kellum Tate-Jones, LG Linda Gilbert, LJ Laura Johnson, , LMc Larry McQueen, LMa Libbie, Marshall, Ma Maitreya, MLS Mary Lee Sayre, MM Mike Mayer, NC Nolan Clements, RA Ramiro Aragon, RH Rich Hoyer, RR Roger Robb, SHi Sally Hill, SHu Signe Hurd, SM Sylvia Maulding, TG-T Torrey Gage-Tomlinson, TJ Tye Jeske, VB Vickie Buck, VT Vjera Thompson

#### From Our President continued from page 1

gives us rich experiences, which may be either positive or sad. It does make us feel alive and gives us a deeper understanding of nature's ways. Natural processes will prevail, if given a chance.

Caring about birds and nature is one way to find peace of mind and hope for our future, even if it's only a glimmer of hope. All of these reasons make me feel thankful to be a birder!

#### **Conservation Column** continued from page 2

Similar to many birds, Eurasian Jays bring gifts of food to their mates. A study demonstrated that the birds may exhibit an understanding of

the feelings and desires of others, often defined as "empathy." In the experiment, the male could choose which kind of treat to bring to his mate. He could also see if one of these types of food was already available to the female. Males would choose whichever kind of treat was not available to the female, the ones she most desired. It is notable that he made his choice based on what the female would prefer, not on what he himself might prefer.

Pinyon Jays and other birds produce mesotocin, a hormone. In one experiment, the jay subjects were given food while their neighbors were not. When the hormone was administered to some of the birds, they were more generous in sharing their food than were the birds who

did not receive the hormone. The same has been shown in several types of animals (including humans) when administered a dose of the mammalian equivalent, oxytocin, dubbed the "love" hormone or "trust" hormone. Studies like these provide evidence for a biological basis underlying acts of generosity, sharing, and caring.

And a word of caution: Zebra Finch couples typically cooperate and share food, but when stress levels are experimentally raised, sharing decreases 15 percent. Perhaps, armed with this knowledge, we can work harder to compensate for the effects of stress in our own lives, and in so doing, allow our better natures to help both ourselves and the animals with whom we share the planet.

# **Zoom Program Meeting** Tuesday, January 26, 7:00 pm

Dennis Arendt, 541.221.3691, dennisarendt@gmail.com



For access details, check laneaudubon.org

# **Polyglottal Passerines – Mimicry Is Not Just for Mockingbirds**



Rich Hoyer

hile birding at Finley National Wildlife Refuge in his teens, Rich Hoyer heard the most amazing thing – a Purple Finch incorporating sounds of a California Scrub-Jay in its jumbled song. He thought he had discovered something new, since such behavior wasn't mentioned in any field guide. Since then he's been fascinated and intrigued by mimicry in birds, collecting personal observations

and recordings of the phenomenon. In this audiovisual presentation, Rich Hoyer will present examples of mimicry in songbirds from throughout the Americas and share his enthusiasm for this curious and often entertaining behavior.

Born and raised in Oregon, Rich Hoyer earned bachelor's degrees in German and Zoology at Oregon State University. Following a few years as an itinerant biologist and summer guide on Saint Paul Island, Alaska, he moved to Tucson, Arizona and has been working as a professional birding tour leader for WINGS for the past 23 years. He leads tours to such exciting locations as Brazil, Bolivia, Peru, Costa Rica, Mexico, Belize, and Jamaica, but he also looks forward to his annual tours that explore the beauty and diversity of his home state. Rich now lives in Eugene, eagerly adding birds and insects to his ever-growing yard list.



Lesser Goldfinch



Lawrence's Goldfinch



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This and past Lane Audubon Zoom Program recordings are available on YouTube for anyone to view.

The September Program by Ken Bevis, Dead Trees: Why We Need Them, at youtu.be/efbd2V\_KJAI

The October Program by Janet Essley, All Tied Up in Knots: Seven Years with Calidris canutus, at: youtu.be/hNOoonhbb2o

# 2020 Eugene Christmas Bird Count

by Dick Lamster



he 2020 Eugene Christmas ■ Bird Count (ECBC) will happen, but it will be different! Our 79th Count will occur on Sunday, January 3, 2021. National Audubon Society (NAS) has issued guidelines for conducting the CBC this year and we will abide by them. The guidelines include wearing masks, social distancing, and large gatherings only in accordance with the state rules.

The biggest difference this year is that we will not have a Chili Feed Countdown at the end of the day. This event has always been a really fun ending to a long day of birdwatching. In recent years, more than 100 people have attended. In its place this year, we are planning a Zoom Countdown. Details will be posted to the LCAS website in mid-December.

We will have 27 Team Leaders looking for birds in their designated areas within the 15-mile diameter circle. Each Team Leader will manage their team according to what works best for them. If you were on a team last year, the Team Leader should be contacting you with information for this year. If you have not heard from them by the first week of December, contact them or Dick Lamster at maeveanddick@q.com or 541.343.8664. Others birders wanting to go on the count this year can also contact Dick.



# **Last Year's ECBC** Results

ast year the weather was very nice for the ECBC with just a little rain at end of the day. 162 people were in the field all day and combined with the 81 Home Counters saw 123 species. Eight more species were seen during Count Week. The 162 field observers were a record for our count. The previous high was 157 in 2012. The number of Home Counters was a little below average for the past ten years. The number of species seen was a little below average for the past ten years although when added to the eight seen during Count Week, it was about average. Our record is 140 species in 2005.

We recorded 357,948 individual birds last year. This is way above our record high of 129,874 seen in 2000. This high number was due to two teams seeing a huge "flock" of European Starlings. After studying photos and starling habits, an estimate of 270,000 birds were seen. When you remove this huge number of starlings from the total, our total individual birds seen was about average.

You can view results of last year's ECBC as well as all the other CBCs in North America at www. christmasbirdcount.org. Our count code is OREU.

We hope you can join us for this year's ECBC. We look forward to seeing you on Sunday, January 3, 2021.

## **News Flash** — Home Counters!

fter 30 years of serving as ECBC Home Count Coordinator, Herb Wisner (age 98 1/2) is taking a break and turning the job over to Marcia Maffei. LCAS thanks you, Herb, for your dedication over all those years!

#### Interested in Being a Home Counter?

If you cannot participate on a CBC team in the field this year, please consider being a CBC Home Counter. From the comfort of your own home, you can record the birds you see at your feeder, in your yard or overhead. Your bird count

will be included in the report to the National Audubon Society. To see if your home is in the official Count Area, click on this link: laneaudubon.org/sites/default/files/ ECBC-mapcircle\_0.pdf

Close to 100 households participate as Home Counters each year. If you want to participate in this way this year, please contact Marcia by December 28th. You will receive instructions and she will assist you in recording your count.

Contact: birds2count@gmail .com or call 541.501.1280 and please leave a message.

# **Cottage Grove CBC**

Because of COVID-19, only experienced bird enthusiasts are invited to take part in the Cottage Grove CBC on Saturday, January 2, 2021. Social distancing and masking are required at all times in the field, and carpooling may **only** occur within existing family or social "pod" groups. Participants will receive and return data by email and Zoom. The end of day Countdown will take place the next day, Sunday, January 3, via a Zoom meeting at 2 pm. Be sure to bring your birding gear, weather appropriate clothing and lunch to get you through the day.

FMI or to participate: contact Grace Fowler-Gore at GraceLovesBirds1 @gmail.com or 817.975.4936. Please provide a contact telephone within your email.

The Florence Christmas Bird Count has been canceled for 2020. The Oakridge Christmas Bird Count TBA: joel.geier@peak.org

# **Thank You For Supporting LCAS**

want to express my gratitude County Audubon Society (LCAS) receives from our members and volunteers. Every November we send our annual donation request to support our education, conservation, and outreach programs. Our members always respond generously to this request, and we are deeply grateful for the continued support of many people. Lane Audubon thanks you, members, for your financial support!

Each year in December, we have a Volunteer Recognition gathering which serves to thank our wonderful volunteers for their efforts. This will be the first year in decades that we won't be able to gather for that fun event. Lane Audubon volunteers are the brains, heart and muscle of our organization. Every person who volunteers contributes greatly to our work and we truly appreciate your efforts.

We hope that next year we can gather again in person to enjoy socializing and sharing a meal with the special people who contribute to our work with their time and energy. Thanks to each one of you for your volunteer contributions!

-Maeve Sowles

## **LCAS Board Election** Results

We held our annual Board elections at our October Zoom Program Meeting. All incumbents were reelected.

Congratulations and thank you to the following: Ramiro Aragon Rachael Friese Jim Maloney Ron Renchler Debbie Schlenoff Maeve Sowles Rebecca Waterman

#### **Successful Osprey Dive**

By Cary Kerst











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The Quail is the newsletter of Lane County Audubon Society, a chartered chapter of National Audubon Society. Local members of National Audubon Society receive a free subscription to The Quail but are encouraged to voluntarily join Lane County Audubon Society.

The Quail Subscriptions

Contact Tim Godsil at 541.915.8852 or tgodsil@gmail.com

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Submit material to Karen Irmscher at quailkaren1@gmail.com

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# Lane County Audubon Society Welcomes You—Join or Renew Today!

We ask you to become a local member of Lane County Audubon Society and support our grassroots efforts in the local community. Your membership dues for National Audubon Society no longer fully cover the costs of a membership in your local chapter. Your local dues stay here to help us work on local education projects and conservation issues related to birds and their habitats. With your support, we will continue to do the things you expect from us. We welcome your suggestions this is your Audubon! We appreciate your support. - Maeve Sowles, President

#### Lane Audubon Membership Benefits

- The Quail—9 issues/yr.
- · Field trips and bird walks
- · Program meetings
- · Educational publications
- · Conservation issue representation
- · Answers to questions: 541.485.BIRD
- · Website: laneaudubon.org

☐ Individual \$20	\$ Name
☐ Students and Seniors (65 and over) \$15	\$ Mailing Address
☐ Family \$25	\$
☐ Lifetime Membership \$400	\$
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# Of Ravens, Wolves and People

**A LCAS Co-Sponsored Talk December 11, 7:30 pm** zoom.us/j/97499095971



ohn Marzluff will present a Zoom meeting entitled Of Ravens, Wolves and People. LCAS and the Eugene Natural History Society are cosponsors.

John Marzluff is a professor of wildlife science at the University of Washington (Go Dawgs). His talk will report on the travels of ravens as they forage among wolves, pumas, and people.

He has studied how humans affect birds through habitat fragmentation and increased urbanization, as well as the challenges of conserving birds on islands. Currently he is focusing on the habits of common ravens in Yellowstone National Park. Some ravens in the park commute long distances to exploit human and canine hunters, agricultural subsidies, sewage ponds, and dumps. Travels of 60 miles per day are not unusual. Others beg at picnic grounds and pullouts. One rings a bell for roast beef at the home of a tavern waitress.

He has written or co-written six books about birds, most focusing on his favorites, the crows and ravens. While his work has focused primarily on corvids (ravens, crows, and jays), he has also worked with falcons and hawks throughout the world. Conversely, he is interested in all the ways that birds affect people. How, for instance, birds influence art or language. In addition to his

research, he has written several popular science books about crows, including: Gifts of the Crow: How Perception, Emotion, and Thought Allow Smart Birds to Behave Like Humans. His latest books take a broader look at avian issues: Welcome to Subirdia considers how birds respond to urbanization and what we can do to keep them in our neighborhoods; In Search of Meadowlarks explores the challenge of providing sustainable food for our growing human population while also conserving nature on the farm. In recognition of his work, he has been awarded the H.R. Painton Awards from the Cooper Ornithological Society, as well as the Washington State Book Award for general nonfiction.

The Zoom meeting will open at 7 pm, to prepare for the program portion of the meeting, set to begin at 7:30 pm. This is to make sure everyone has enough time to get properly connected. First-time Zoom users should join at the earlier time, in case they encounter glitches that require assistance. We plan to use this Zoom link for the remainder of ENHS meetings. However, please double-check each time to make sure the link hasn't changed at eugenenaturalhistorysociety .org. Type in the following link to join the audience for the December presentation: zoom. us/j/97499095971

#### **Audubon Adventures Makes Nature Fun for Kids!**

he National Audubon Society's colorful and engaging educational program for elementary-age youngsters offers both printed and online materials. They are available in a variety of formats and subjects suitable for classroom groups, libraries, afterschool clubs, science and nature camps, and homeschoolers, as well as families with students in grades 3-5. If you are interested in having the printed materials for your home-schooling or classroom children, Lane Audubon can

purchase the kits for school classrooms and homeschool groups.

FMI: contact Rachael Friese via email: audadventures@gmail.com, and/or check out audubonadventures.org.





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#### **LCAS Bird Walks & Events**

Rebecca Waterman, 541.653.3354, fieldtrips@laneaudubon.org

# Third Saturday Walks Will Resume in **December!**

ome changes are being put in place in order to keep our participants as safe as possible.

We will not be meeting to carpool. Masks are required. Folks wishing to join need to email Bex at rebecca.waterman@gmail.com for more information or to sign up. The walk will be capped at 10 participants. If more than 10 sign up, I'll schedule another walk!

I am also still available to lead single-person or single-household walks for those who do not wish to join in group activities. Beginners welcome. Same email address.

Hope to see y'all soon!

-Rebecca



# Sunday, January 3, 2021, **Eugene Christmas Bird Count**

In January, the Eugene CBC takes the place of the Saturday Bird Walk. Full details are on page 6 of *The Quail*.



# **Bird Walk Coordinator** Needed!

ebecca Waterman, our current walk coordinator, is leaving the area soon. Lane Audubon is looking for a volunteer to take her place in planning our monthly Third Saturday Bird Walks. This is a fun opportunity to meet and learn from birding experts; best of all, you get to be out birding! Lane Audubon has the traditional dates set, a network of willing field trip leaders, and a list of past birding locations to choose from. Your responsibility would include deciding on a location, contacting field trip leaders, emailing the field trip publicity, and meeting the birding group on the day of the walk to get things started.

Contact Maeve Sowles at 541.343.8664 or president@laneaudubon.org