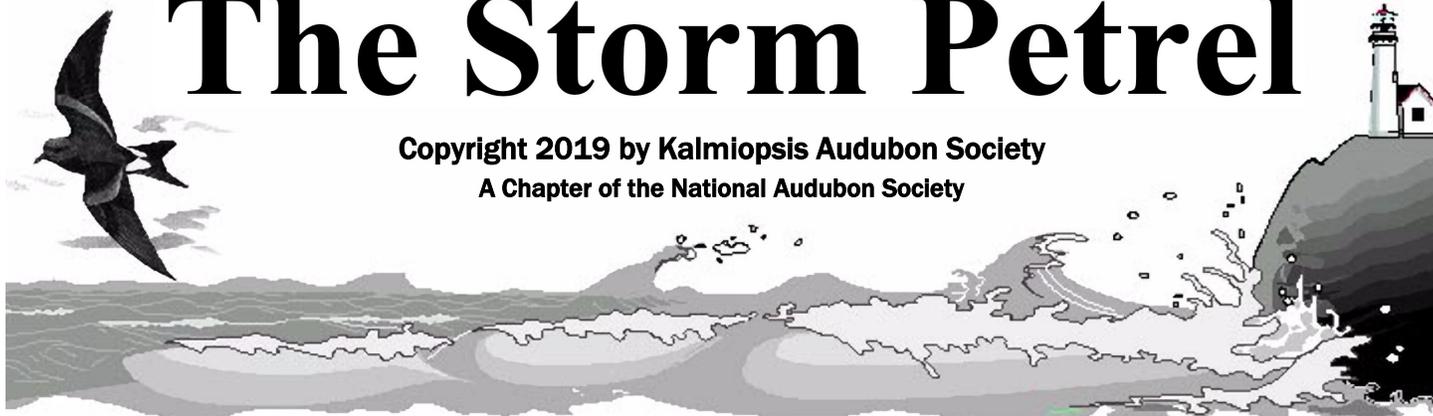


The Storm Petrel

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Volume 42, Number 2

Curry County, Oregon

Second Quarter 2019

UPCOMING OUTINGS AND EVENTS

May 11, Saturday, 8:30 a.m., Let's Go Birding: Lola Lake

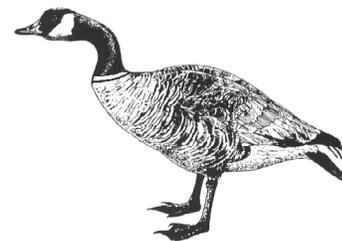
Owing to trail flooding in April, trip leader Gary Maschmeyer rescheduled this trip in the Pistol River watershed to May. Gary says the trail is beautiful — a TEN!!! No birding experience is required, and Gary welcomes experienced birders to come and share their knowledge. Binoculars are recommended, and Gary has some available to borrow. Meet in Brookings at 8 a.m. at Azalea Middle School (505 Pacific Ave., west of Oak St.); in Gold Beach, meet at 8:15 a.m. at the Visitor Center (south end of town) for a no-host car pool. NO HOST means that if no one else shows up, you will need to drive south in time to meet Gary at the parking area on the west side of Hwy. 101 just south of the Pistol River Bridge at 8:30 a.m. If you want to join this field trip, please contact Gary at 541-412-0806 or gmasch44@gmail.com so he can let you know about any last-minute weather or road-condition-related changes. Rain cancels. *Sponsored by Kalmiopsis Audubon.*

May 11, Saturday, 8:30 a.m., Wren Pond/Stone Chair/Signal Buttes Loop, North Fork Hunter Creek ACEC

Join trip leader Al Collinet for this six-mile loop hike to Wren Pond and Stone Chair Meadow, with time to appreciate plants and the Wren Pond homestead. This outing explores the BLM's North Fork Hunter Creek Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). This challenging hike has 1,836 feet of elevation gain. Wear comfortable hiking shoes, bring lunch and water, and be prepared for the weather. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the Visitor Center in Gold Beach, in the center parking section, or at 7:45 a.m. at Dr. Larsson's office in Brookings, 414 Alder St. to carpool. Expect to return to Gold Beach by about 5:30 p.m. For more information, contact Al at dewbobal@gmail.com. *Sponsored by Muscle Busters.*

May 12, Sunday, 8:30 to 11:30 a.m., Coastal Birds Spring Migration, Crescent City

Celebrate Global Migratory Bird Day by touring different habitats in Del Norte County with seabird researcher and biologist Craig Strong. This car-caravan field trip starts with viewing seabirds in Crescent City Harbor, then heads north along the coast in search of shorebirds. There will be several stops *en route* and minimal walking. Bring binoculars. Meet at 8:30 a.m. behind the Chartroom Restaurant on Anchor Way in Crescent City Harbor. For more information, call 707-465-6191. *Sponsored by Tolowa Dunes Stewards and Redwoods Parks Conservancy.*



May 19, Sunday, 1 p.m., Kalmiopsis Audubon Highway Litter Clean-Up at Lookout Rock

Join with fellow KAS members to help keep our beautiful north county highway mile (312) looking good. Peg Reagan is captain for this project so PLEASE RSVP to her (reagan.peg@gmail.com) by Thursday, May 16, so she can get enough gear, and so she can contact you if there's any last-minute need to change plans. We hope you can join us for this community service project! *Sponsored by Kalmiopsis Audubon.*



June 6, Thursday, 5:30 to 8 p.m., Curry County Wildflower ID for Fun, Curry Public Library, Gold Beach

Wildflower enthusiast Al Collinet will teach this evening program on the fun of looking for local wildflowers and learning their common names. The program will provide a high-quality plant list and other helpful resources that will give you what you need for your own flower adventures. (The class will be followed by a series of optional Saturday field trips on June 8, June 22, and July 20.) For more information, contact Al at dewbobal@gmail.com. *Sponsored by Curry Public Library.*

Upcoming Outings and Events, continued on page 4

From the President's Desk

Kalmiopsis Audubon members, friends, and visitors, Happy Spring to all! One of the surest signs of springtime is the cackling of thousands of geese flying over my house in Port Orford. It's just about impossible to not run outside to watch the birds in their characteristic vees flying *en masse*. They are a sign of hope, because these birds were literally recovered from the brink of extinction. After being decimated by non-native foxes introduced to the Aleutian Islands where they breed, the geese were not seen at all for about 40 years, until a vestigial population on a remote island was re-discovered in the early 1960s and became the basis for recovery.

*I find it inspiring to
keep in mind success stories
from the past.*

The Aleutian Goose became one of the first species officially listed under the ESA in 1973. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service removed the non-native foxes and relocated breeding birds to islands from which they'd been extirpated, while also working in cooperation with state wildlife agencies and private landowners in the lower 48 to provide for wintering and stopover habitat. Local ranches in Langlois are some of the last places the geese rest before flying nonstop to their Aleutian breeding grounds. Long-time KAS members recall observing and calling in numbers of geese they saw flying up the Curry County coast to help biologists track the migration. When the main threats to their breeding abated, the geese rebounded and were officially "delisted" in 2001. Populations have continued to grow into the awesome flocks we see today.

Though we always must be forward-thinking in our conservation efforts, I find it inspiring to keep in mind success stories from the past. Sometimes it takes a long time to achieve aims. Yet we know, when local people care about the nature of their place and come together to take meaningful actions, we can definitely get positive things done. In this issue of the *Storm Petrel*, you'll read about some recent successes and many efforts at various stages in the pipeline. To be effective as stewards of our very special corner of Oregon, we must learn about what makes our place so special, be vigilant about what's happening, get out into nature to nourish our spirits,

stay committed for the long term, and pull together as needed to protect what's important. That's what Kalmiopsis Audubon seeks to do.

I am very excited about Membership Chair Sara Lovendahl's news that Kalmiopsis Audubon now has more than 400 members. We've also started work to implement our KAS strategic plan, which includes a number of initiatives to develop our group's capacity to better address local conservation issues. Some of these include upgrading our fundamentals, such as our website and email communications. We are also developing a new logo that will help us to update the appearance of our newsletter and other publications. You can look forward to these positive changes coming later this year.

We remain committed to publishing our quarterly *Storm Petrel* newsletter, which gets mailed to all members. It's also provided free at certain locations in the county, for visitors and others interested in nature who have not yet decided to join our group. However, with the ever-evolving media environment, I find I am sharing more timely information by email, so I encourage you to sign up for our semimonthly HOOT OUT if you've not yet had a chance. Please send me your email at annvil@earthlink.net so I can

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	332-0261
<i>Vice President</i>	Al Geiser	332-6720
<i>Secretary</i>	Al Geiser	332-6720
<i>Treasurer</i>	Joan Geiser	332-6720

Coordinators

<i>Conservation Chair</i>	Ann Vileisis	332-0261
<i>The Storm Petrel</i>	Penny Suess	332-3017
<i>Membership</i>	Sara Lovendahl	(541) 366-2063
<i>Bird Count/ Bird Notes</i>	Jim Rogers	332-2555
<i>Dark Skies</i>	Al Geiser	332-6720
<i>Let's Go Birding</i>	Gary Maschmeyer	(541) 412-0806

Directors

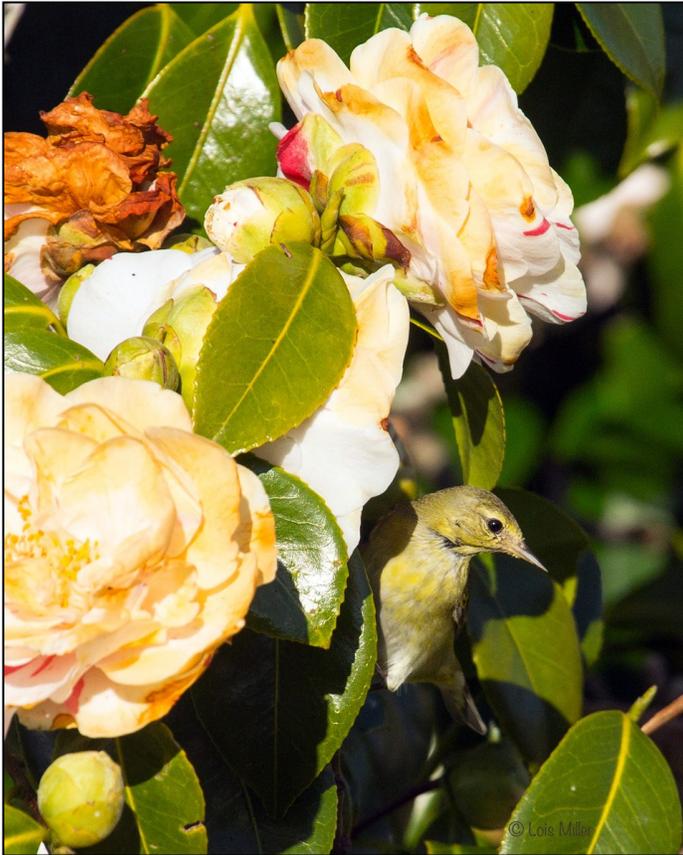
Max Beeken	2018 - 2022	maxbeeken@gmail.com
Deborah Buitron	2016 - 2020	grebes@frontier.com
Al Geiser	2018 - 2022	oneocean@frontier.com
Joan Geiser	2018 - 2022	oneocean@frontier.com
Sara Lovendahl	2017 - 2021	sjlovendahl@charter.net
Gary Nuechterlein	2016 - 2020	grebes@frontier.com
Tim Palmer	2019 - 2023	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	2016 - 2020	annvil@earthlink.net

KAS Website

<http://www.kalmiopsisaudubon.org>

keep you in our loop. Teresa Bird is also managing our KAS Facebook page — another way we're reaching out. Please let us know your ideas for keeping our KAS family engaged and connected.

In this issue you'll find lots of opportunities to participate in field trips, citizen science projects, service



Tennessee Warbler with Camellias
Photo by Lois Miller

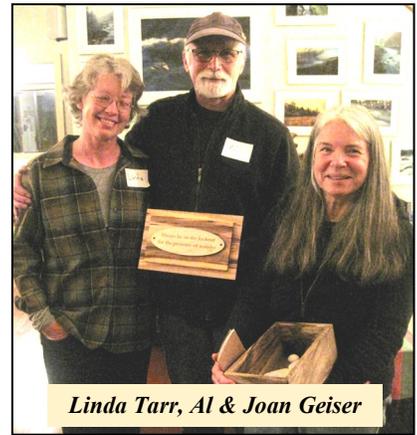
projects, and conservation advocacy. We welcome summer visitors to join our outings and use resources on the Kalmiopsis Audubon website to learn more to explore nature and birds in our remarkable corner of Oregon. Thanks to everyone who pitches in to help! Onward and upward to a terrific spring and summer!

— Ann Vileisis

KAS Annual Meeting Success

Thanks to all who attended our KAS annual meeting this year. We had a terrific time, though we missed members from Brookings, cut off by the massive Hooskenaden landslide that closed Hwy. 101. Members voted to re-elect Foncy Prescott, Linda Tarr, and Tim Palmer to serve four-year terms on the Kalmiopsis Audubon board, and we enjoyed a delicious dinner, great company, and photos from our recent nature adventures.

We also honored two longtime KAS officers who will step down from their officer roles (but not their board membership) at the end of June: Al and Joan Geiser. Al and Joan have been instrumental at KAS for decades, spearheading the P.O.



Dark Sky program, running our old Christmas bazaar table, and of most fundamental importance, keeping track of our minutes, our banking, and our financial reports, and generally keeping us in good standing as a 501(c)(3). These behind-the-scenes jobs have been essential to our organization's success. Linda Tarr presented the Geisers with a special handmade wooden box, inscribed with the timeless words of E.B. White: "Always be on the lookout for the presence of wonder" — words that can inspire us all.

Membership Update

We welcome the sunny, breezy days of late spring, and our 14 new Kalmiopsis Audubon Society members: Melissa Bishop, Zoe Bradbury, Todd Confer, Guy Dietel, Lynn and Jeff Jackson, Erin and Eddie Kessler, Hattie Kugler and Roger Rasmussen, Mark Lankton and Deirdre Satorius, and Kevin Miller and Dolores Porch.

KAS has finally broken the 400 member mark — we're now 402 members strong! A big shout out to all who gave gift memberships to friends and relatives this past quarter.

A reminder: I can accept and deposit membership dues only for Kalmiopsis Audubon. All National Audubon Society dues must be sent directly to them. Membership questions? Contact me at 541-366-2063 or sjlovendahl@charter.net. — Sara Lovendahl

Honoring Jim Auburn's Conservation Legacy

Former Port Orford Mayor Jim Auburn died in April. Obituaries in local newspapers acclaimed his many accomplishments and his years of public service as a community leader, but I'd like to note his contributions as a conservationist, too. Mayor Jim was a key supporter in designating the Copper Salmon Wilderness, and his support helped launch efforts that led to additional protections for Elk River tributaries. He helped pass Port Orford's bird protection ordinance. On the marine conservation front, ►

◀ he was a crucial supporter of establishing the Redfish Rocks Marine Reserve. This adds up to quite a respectable legacy! Let's remember Mayor Jim with deep appreciation for his important contributions to local conservation.

Organize to Win, A Series of Books by Jim Britell

Some KAS members may remember former KAS president Jim Britell, a remarkable activist who worked hard to protect our region's forests in the 1990s. Jim knew the value and power of grassroots activism, studying past campaigns to learn strategies that worked. In 2002, Jim and his wife left Oregon to move back east, where he has been doing political organizing for the past decade. Most recently, Jim has written a series of how-to books about organizing and activism, with the aim of empowering more activists for the future.

Jim is a good writer with an irreverent sense of humor, and the books are filled with case studies/stories about how activists have succeeded — and so it's fundamentally inspiring. As he writes in Chapter 1 of the first volume: *This book was written to provide a flashlight to illuminate the shadows between concern and action in the hope that you won't have to blindly feel your way across them as I did. Anyone can stop a bad project or become an activist or an organizer. The great activists are indistinguishable from people like you; the only difference is that many people see wrongs but only a very few ever act to solve them.*

This is the closest thing I've seen to a textbook on activism, and I think some of you may find it to be interesting and valuable. To download your free copy, go to britell.com and click on *Organize to Win*.

CONSERVATION NEWS

by Ann Vileisis

Urgent: Floras Lake Land Swap at Risk — Your Help Needed on June 5

The Curry Board of Commissioners (BOC) will be considering a land swap with State Parks (Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, OPRD) on Wednesday, June 5. We'll need all hands on deck for this critical meeting. The proposed Floras Lake land swap is the culmination of years of work by previous BOCs, county committees and staff, Kalmiopsis Audubon, and other local citizens engaged in putting forth positive solutions to a decades-long conundrum.

However, our newest county commissioner, Chris Paasch, has questioned the effort, saying the deal is not a good enough financial value for Curry County and that he wants to look instead to big corporations to buy the entire property "for millions" for mitigation to offset damages they have caused elsewhere. At a workshop on April 17, he told citizens that he'd already put in calls to Jordan Cove, Shell Oil, and General Electric to investigate the possibilities. He also stated that he wanted more time to work with realtors to better "market" the property to elevate its value.

His approach would sink the straightforward deal currently on the table to trade the 90 westernmost acres of the county's Floras Lake lands for 33 acres of forested land right on Hwy. 101, at the intersection of Airport Road, long owned by State Parks. These properties were chosen by staff as approximately equivalent and appraised by a certified appraiser last fall at the direction of the previous BOC. Owing to a disparity in values (the county's 70-acre lake parcel with no access and minimal timber appraised at

UPCOMING OUTINGS AND EVENTS (continued from page 1)

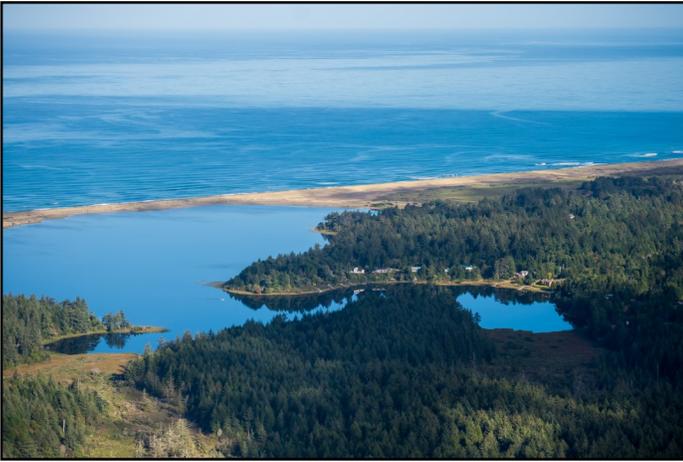
June 8, Saturday, 8 a.m., Wildflowers for Fun, Loop Hike in the Signal Buttes Area

Join trip leader Al Collinet for this four-mile loop hike, including a trip to the scenic top of Signal Butte and a trip to the historic McKinley Mine. (KAS members know this area as the proposed Veve Stansell Botanical Area.) The main purpose of this trip will be enjoying flowers, so if the group is having too much fun botanizing, some parts of the hike may be cut. A stop at the Hunter Creek Bog is planned at the end of the day. Wear comfortable hiking shoes, be prepared for the weather, and bring hiking poles, lunch, and lots of water. Meet at 8 a.m. in the center parking section of the Visitor Center in Gold Beach, or at 7:15 a.m. at Dr. Larsson's office, 414 Alder St. in Brookings, to carpool. Expect to return to Gold Beach by about 5 p.m. For more information, contact Al at dewbobal@gmail.com. Sponsored by Muscle Busters.



June 15, Saturday, 6:30 a.m., Let's Go Birding: Gasquet-Orleans (G.O.) Road

Join trip leader Gary Maschmeyer for this field trip to look for higher-elevation forest birds, including Mountain Quail, Dusky Flycatcher, Townsend's Solitaire, Nashville Warbler, Hermit Warbler, Lazuli Bunting, and more. Meet at the Azalea Middle School in Brookings to carpool. Bring a jacket or sweater (it might be chilly), plus a snack and drink, because the return will probably not be until 2 p.m. There will be little walking on this trip; most birding will be done standing by your car at various locations on the way up G.O. Road. For more information, contact Gary at 541-412-0806 or gmasch44@gmail.com. Sponsored by Kalmiopsis Audubon. ■



karladivine.com

\$150,000, while OPRD's Hwy. 101 frontage, with ready access and saleable timber, appraised at \$200,000), an adjustment was recommended to add 20 acres of county property to make for a more equivalent swap.

Although KAS and other Floras Lake enthusiasts would like to see the entire 500 acres of lake property move into State Parks ownership, OPRD has said it will not take on management of that much additional land, owing to its own budgetary constraints. Nevertheless, we see the current swap as a feasible, fair, and important step towards conservation. OPRD has also indicated that this deal can serve as a trial to see if the county and state can work together, with the possibility of future transactions and collaborations if all goes well this time. Commissioner Boice pressed for OPRD to sweeten the deal by working on trails for the parcel, and State Parks readily agreed, adding the promise that the deal could lead to additional new planning and investment by State Parks in Curry County. Commissioner Sue Gold indicated her support for the deal stating simply, "A bird in hand is worth two in the bush."

But Commissioner Paasch has remained fixed on his idea for a big corporate solution. In an email, he asked local community members and KAS: Why would we want to settle for a small deal instead of working for a bigger deal? We sent a lengthy and informed reply that many of you on the HOOT OUT have already seen, but I urge others to read it on the KAS website under Conservation News. In short, we explained to Mr. Paasch that for more than 15 years, many different ideas had already been floated, investigated, and deemed infeasible by previous BOCs, and that we wanted to build on current efforts to avoid losing the practical, win-win deal. Still he remained unpersuaded.

We see his corporate buy-out proposal as an unlikely, ill-informed, and uncertain scenario that, at best,

would delay the land swap solution indefinitely. At worst, it could take us out of the frying pan into the fire, so to speak, as our effort to conserve Floras Lake might be transformed from past disagreements with our own county commissioners in a public forum into backroom dealings with a distant corporation with no local connection and a sordid record of causing environmental damage. Although Mr. Paasch has stated that his vision is for the property to be fully conserved, which we appreciate, we are concerned that his wishful thinking will torpedo the practical deal that's teed up and ready to go with a state agency that is fundamentally committed to the same outcome we seek.

We think Curry County should take the current deal with OPRD as an important step forward in solving the perennial problem of protecting Floras Lake while also gaining some direct financial benefit. Accomplishing that, we would be better prepared for the next step of seeking a conservation solution for the rest of the property, which may include finding a conservation buyer of some sort.

Despite Commissioner Boice's initial and repeated support for the popular land swap, he's also indicated his support for giving Mr. Paasch time to explore the new strategy. After years of seeing one new county commissioner after another misguidedly try to wring "riches" from the wet and inaccessible Floras lake lands, local citizens are beyond frustrated that the County might now walk away from this long-sought deal that's ready to go with State Parks.

It is critical that the commissioners know there is strong support for the current State Parks offer. Please mark your calendars to attend the June 5 meeting (time TBA). We will need a strong turnout. I will send more information as the time draws near via the HOOT OUT. If you don't already receive these updates, please subscribe by sending me an email (annvil@earthlink.net). A lot can happen between now and then, so the HOOT OUT is a good way to keep informed.

Oregon Wildlands Act Delivers Local Conservation Wins

I have some terrific news! In mid-March, President Trump signed into law the John D. Dingell Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act, a bipartisan public lands package that included the Oregon Wildlands Act. The act protects the Devil's Staircase Wilderness, near Reedsport (culmination of a 40-year campaign!), provides permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (which is extremely important for acquisition of public lands), and designates many Rogue River tributaries, upstream of Curry County, as wild and scenic. ►

◀ But we are especially excited about the local elements of the Oregon Wildlands Act: additional protections for the Chetco and Elk rivers that KAS has worked on for more than 10 years.

Some of you will remember that back in 2007, the Wild and Scenic Chetco was threatened with a proposal for in-stream suction dredge mining for 17 miles of its length, from within the Kalmiopsis Wilderness down to Nook Bar. We fended off that threat with the help of our elected officials. Representative DeFazio first introduced legislation for a “mineral withdrawal” back in 2009, and our senators did the same, triggering the Forest Service to temporarily withdraw the area to give Congress time to act. It’s taken 10 years, but with the new law, the National Wild and Scenic Chetco River corridor is now *permanently* protected from in-stream mining and the staking of new mining claims.

The Wild and Scenic Elk River has one of the most intact forested watersheds left in the Coast Range, and while its north side has been protected by two wilderness areas, critical coldwater tributaries flowing in from the south have remained vulnerable to logging. Much of that forest is already designated as late seral reserve (LSR) and as occupied habitat for threatened Marbled Murrelets, but Jim Rogers, who has spearheaded Elk River conservation efforts for four decades, knew firsthand that these administrative protections could be revoked all too easily by an anticonservation administration or Congress. He bitterly recalls a “salvage rider” in 1997 that directed the Forest Service to cut forests in upper Elk River with no public input. None of us wanted to see that happen in the southside tributaries.

For the past 10 years, KAS, together with Friends of Elk River and Trout Unlimited, has worked to increase protections for Elk River, aiming to create a Salmon Special Management Area that I’ve written about in the past in the *Storm Petrel*. Through the legislative process, it turned out that designating the Elk River’s tributaries as Wild and Scenic more efficiently accomplished most of the same aims by creating a quarter-mile riparian buffer on either side of each tributary.

There have been many, many steps in our work to protect both of these very special watersheds — meetings with county commissioners and district rangers, presentations to local fishing groups, public hearings, town halls, tours, and more. And along the way, so many KAS members have helped at critical times. I THANK EVERYONE who has helped make these increased protections possible!

In recent HOOT OUTS, I asked people to call and thank Representative DeFazio and Senators Wyden

and Merkley, our champions in Washington, D.C., so if you’ve not yet done it, *please do so*. See ACTION ITEM below.

New Public Lands Bill Includes Permanent Protection from Strip Mining!

On May 1, Senators Wyden and Merkley introduced a new bill, the Oregon Recreation Enhancement Act, featuring new public lands protections for southwest Oregon. It would enlarge the Rogue Wilderness and add a recreation area for lands in the Rogue River canyon, all upstream from Curry County (in the vicinity of the Gallice-to-Marial reach). It also includes the Southwest Oregon Watershed and Salmon Protection Act (SOWSPA) — the bill that would help permanently protect the headwaters of the North Fork Smith, Illinois, and Pistol rivers and Hunter Creek from strip mining. Representative DeFazio already reintroduced SOWSPA, earlier this year. Please help to keep our elected officials motivated to pass legislation to make our mineral withdrawal permanent, by calling to thank them for introducing this bill. Please see ACTION ITEM below.

ACTION ITEM— Big Thank-You Needed for River Protections!

At this point, we need to thank our members of Congress — our champions in Washington, D.C. — both for getting the Chetco and Elk bills passed and also for keeping the mineral withdrawal bill moving forward. Please send an email or make a phone call. (It takes only about two minutes to call and leave a message.) Here is a sample for what to say in your phone message or email. Remember to personalize with who you are and why you care (fill in your own X):

Sen. Wyden / Sen. Merkley / Rep. DeFazio,

Thanks for your leadership in passing the Oregon Wildlands Act to better protect the Wild and Scenic Chetco, Rogue, and Elk Rivers! Thanks also for introducing the Oregon Recreation Enhancement Act to protect the Rogue Canyon and the headwaters of the Smith, the Illinois, Hunter Creek, and Pistol River. All of these rivers are important to me because X / or to our communities because they provide clear water, salmon, scenic beauty, and recreation opportunities. I appreciate your dedication to protecting Oregon’s cherished wild rivers!

Sen Wyden: (541) 858-5122 MEDFORD
(202) 224-5244 WASHINGTON

Sen. Merkley: (541) 608-9102 MEDFORD
(202) 224-3753 WASHINGTON

Rep. DeFazio: (541) 269-2609 EUGENE
(202) 225-6416 WASHINGTON

When Senator Wyden and Representative DeFazio come for local town hall meetings later this spring or summer, we'll want to thank them in person, too. I'll keep you posted when that opportunity arises.

Conservation Briefs

Chetco Water Quality

Late last summer, I received complaints from Brookings KAS members about foul, discolored water in Brookings Harbor. It was so bad that it seemed to be repelling the usually abundant birdlife in the Chetco estuary. Evidence pointed to a local seafood processor discharging unsightly and stinky wastewater. In Oregon, such discharges are regulated under the federal Clean Water Act by the state Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). We learned that the "general permit" for seafood processing had expired, and the Brookings facility has been operating with only a "letter of discretion" until an official permit can be granted. This spring, DEQ took public comments on its new general seafood processing permit, so I submitted comments on behalf of KAS.

Although the Chetco estuary is heavily developed, it still plays an extremely important role for fisheries in the entire river system, because salmon need estuarine waters as they transition from fresh to salt water. In addition, marine fishes come and spawn in the estuary, attracting many seabirds. The Chetco and other coastal rivers are especially vulnerable during the late summer, when flows drop, temperatures rise, and dissolved oxygen levels sink, putting fish and other aquatic life at risk. I hope the new water quality permit will rectify the egregious conditions caused by wastewater discharge into the Chetco estuary. Let's keep watch on this.

Red Flat Nickel at Red Flat

Rogue River–Siskiyou National Forest (RR–SNF) is now in the process of preparing what's called a Surface Use Determination (SUD) for the 1,100 acres of existing mining claims at Red Flat, at the headwaters of Hunter Creek and the North Fork Pistol River. This is in response to an effort by Red Flat Nickel Company (RFNC) to move ahead with mining plans.

As KAS members may know, the Southwest Oregon Mineral Withdrawal established in 2016 precludes any new claims in this vicinity, to give Congress time to pass legislation to pass permanent protections. However, the withdrawal does not apply to "valid existing rights," which RFNC now claims it had before the date of withdrawal. The Forest Service will use the SUD to decide whether RFNC has proved — in the almost nine years it held the claims before the area was withdrawn — that it exposed a "valuable mineral deposit." If RFNC can demonstrate this, then

the company may be allowed to move forward with what is called "confirmation drilling." Completion of the SUD is expected to be in August of this year. We don't know yet if that determination will be made available to the public.

Veva's Botanical Area

As we enter wildflower season, I want to give everyone an update on the proposed Veva Stansell Botanical Area in the Signal Buttes vicinity. Longtime KAS members will remember that KAS joined with the Native Plant Society of Oregon



Giant Purple Wake Robin
Photo by Rowland K. Willis

to nominate an area near Signal Buttes as a botanical area to be named in honor of renowned and beloved local botanist Veva Stansell. To learn more about Veva, serpentine botany, and our proposal, please check out our campaign website at <http://vevasbotanicalarea.blogspot.com>. At this point, we have collected more than 700 signatures in support of the designation, but we are still waiting for a National Forest Plan update process to advance the proposal. (Five years ago, we were told it would begin in two years; now we are told it will begin in 2021.)

Meanwhile, I encourage KAS members to continue learning about our region's unique wildflowers by attending the wildflower class and field trips that will be taught this year by local wildflower enthusiast Al Collinet. Al was inspired by Veva to develop his own knowledge of wild plants and will be basing his outings on plant lists first compiled by Veva. We may arrange for an additional informal KAS outing if there is interest beyond Al's planned trip to the Signal Buttes area on June 8 (see Upcoming Events). Please let me know.

Birds and Bright Lights

One of the amazing but little-known wonders of Curry County is that we have some of the most important offshore seabird breeding colonies on the West Coast. In particular, offshore islands north of Brookings host hundreds of thousands of Leach's Storm Petrels that nest in burrows. During breeding season, they fly in and out almost every night, taking turns incubating eggs and then returning to the nest to feed babies — all under the cover of darkness, which is why most people don't even know they exist.

However, these birds are known to be attracted to bright lights. When disoriented birds fly toward the lights, they can strike an obstacle and get killed as a result. Or the birds can fly in circles, essentially trapped in the sphere of light until they exhaust

◀ themselves and drop to the ground, never returning to care for chicks in their nests. This has happened in other places where bright lights are close to the coast.

For this reason, when the city of Brookings announced plans to install a new lighting system for its athletic fields last year, I reached out to the city manager and parks director with information about how to proactively manage lights to minimize impacts to our seabirds. Former parks director Tony Baron told me that, fortunately, the lighting plan already included lights pointing down and an intended curfew of 11 p.m. during summer and 9 p.m. during winter and fall. And he was receptive to working together to minimize any possible harm.

Seabird experts who have dealt with problematic lighting elsewhere have advised me that the potential for problems would most likely be during petrel breeding season, from mid-May through July, beginning one to two hours after sunset. That means that the time period when there is greatest potential for harm is around the equinox (June 15 to July 1), when the sun sets at 9 p.m. and birds may begin to show up between 10 and 11 p.m., before the curfew. The risks can be amplified when there is fog.

We need to keep track of bird activity during this sensitive period. If many birds are drawn to the bright new lights, it could warrant making some adjustment to the curfew time. I need help from volunteers in Brookings. Please contact me if you are able to help keep an eye on these new lights.

Condors Coming

With a wingspan of over nine feet, condors once soared the skies from British Columbia to Baja. As America's largest flying bird, they were venerated by native peoples in our region and frequently documented by early naturalists who visited the Pacific Northwest.



However, by the early 1900s, these unique birds had disappeared from our region, likely as a result of indiscriminate shooting and secondary poisoning. (They are still afflicted by lead poisoning from bullets lodged in carcasses they eat.) By the 1980s populations dropped to the near-extinction level, necessitating a dramatic capture of all wild condors in 1987 for a captive propagation program. Since then, through active recovery efforts, the condor population has grown to more than 400, with 250 birds in the wild — all in the southern part of the bird's traditional range.

Meanwhile, the Yurok Tribe has been working to reintroduce condors within its ancestral territory in

northern California. For the past five years, the tribe has partnered with Redwood National Park, as well as state and federal wildlife agencies, and the effort is now progressing with a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process to evaluate alternatives and environmental effects of establishing a condor release facility in the Bald Hills region of Redwood National Park.

The Environmental Assessment (EA) considers the option to designate the reintroduced condors as an "experimental population." This means the birds would not gain full Endangered Species Act protections, but it would afford the tribe and managing agencies the flexibility to work closely with the birds toward the aim of recovery.

Comments on the EA are due on June 4. You can help by submitting supportive comments at the NPS project website, on this page: <https://bit.ly/2VrLdD3>. (I'll also put a link to the project home page on the KAS website, under Conservation News).

Sample comment: As a resident of the southern Oregon coast, I strongly support efforts to restore the California Condor as described in Alternative 1 of the Environmental Assessment. I applaud the collaborative leadership of the Yurok Tribe, the National Park Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to restore this magnificent bird to our region. Establishing a population in the Pacific Northwest would contribute to condor recovery by increasing the birds' numbers and geographic distribution, which will help this imperiled species survive into the future. I hope one day to see condors soaring overhead!

Shasta-Agness Project

The Rogue River–Siskiyou National Forest (RR–SNF) will soon be releasing details about its proposed Shasta-Agness Landscape Restoration/timber sale project, slated for the vicinity of Agness, including the Shasta Costa watershed. The idea is to conduct timber harvest in areas where it can also accomplish positive restoration aims, such as maintaining meadows and oak woodlands in places where fire suppression has led to forest encroachment. As with any logging project, the devil will be in the details. We know the RR–SNF has recently been directed to significantly ramp up its timber harvest, a mandate based on board feet and agency budgets, not ecosystem outcomes. The project also considers opening routes for motorized vehicles, decommissioning roads, and many recreation proposals. The comment period for this project will likely end before the next *Storm Petrel*. If so, I will keep you posted via HOOT OUTs. Citizens in Agness will especially want to review this proposal and offer input. ■

Spring into Citizen Science

Participating in citizen or community science projects is a great way to learn more about the birds and wildlife in our area, and it also can help build the science that is the basis for understanding and conservation. There are several opportunities this spring.

Black Oystercatcher Survey

Black Oystercatchers are some of the Oregon Coast's most charismatic shorebirds. This year's abundance survey window is from May 7 to 31. During this time, volunteers are needed to survey each route at least three times, ideally with five days between. If you want to help, attend a training at the OSU Field Station in Port Orford on Wednesday, May 8. If you are new to this survey, the training will teach you what's needed; if you are returning to do the survey again, it will help you brush up on protocol details and get excited about the project all over again. The Black Oystercatcher Survey is coordinated by the Audubon Society of Portland. For more information and to RSVP for the training, contact Joe Liebezeit, Staff Scientist and Avian Conservation Manager, at jliebezeit@audubonportland.org or 971-222-6121.

ODFW Grouse Surveys

Head out into Kalmiopsis country and listen for grouse vocalizations in order to help ODFW track populations of Sooty and Ruffed Grouse. These surveys take place in early mornings through the end of May. For more information, contact ODFW wildlife biologist Bree Surfee at 541-247-0202 (ext. 227).

COASST Surveys

The Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey Team (COASST) tracks mortality of seabirds on the North Pacific Coast, critical for understanding the status of these species. You can help by signing up to survey a particular beach on a regular basis. For more information about the COASST program, go to www.coasst.org or attend the special training on May 25, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., at Port Orford OSU Field Station. Beach surveys are best conducted in groups of two or more, so please come with a survey partner in mind or plan to join a team during training. RSVP to coasst@uw.edu or 206-221-6893.

Bioblitz at Port Orford Heads

On June 7, PISCO (Partnership for Interdisciplinary Studies of Coastal Oceans) will conduct a Sea Star Survey, and OSU will conduct a Juvenile Cabezon Survey. Five volunteers are needed to help. Contact Redfish Rocks Marine Reserve Volunteer Coordinator Maya Holiman (maya@redfishrocks.org or 541-332-9999) for more information. ■

POETRY CORNER



Golden-crowned Kinglet, *photo by Lois Miller*

Seasonal Residents

by Vicki Graham

Olive green tinged with yellow,
the kinglets hover,
gleaning at the firs' tips.

By May they will be gone.

No flare, here, of crown feathers
in courtship, no canopy nest
of moss and thistle down.

Only this: a flock
of tiny acrobats foraging,
white eye rings shining.



THANKS to all who helped with the Highway 101 litter pickup on Sunday, April 28: Laura Greathead, Mark Furler, Penny Suess, Dana Gurnee, Gary Maschmeyer, and Peg Reagan (who took the photo). It was a sunny, very windy day, but we got the Kalmiopsis Audubon Society's south mile, near Pistol River, cleaned up.

BIRD NOTES

Late Fall 2018 / Early Winter 2019

by Jim Rogers

January 1 – Tim Shelmerdine saw an **Ancient Murrelet** from Chetco Point in Brookings.

January 4 – Russ Namitz reported seeing a **Northern Shrike** at Pistol River.

January 5 – Terry Wahl sighted a **Turkey Vulture** over the Cape Blanco area.

January 14 – Tim Rodenkirk saw three **Orange-crowned Warblers**, a **Palm Warbler**, a **Northern Mockingbird**, and more than 40 **Cedar Waxwings** on Cushing Street in Brookings. He also sighted a **Say's Phoebe** behind Strahm Storage. At the blue silos on Floras Lake Road he spotted a **Say's Phoebe** and two **Palm Warblers**.

January 21 – Carrie Rogers observed a **Merlin** sunning in the top of a fir tree on the bank of Elk River.

January 27 – Tim Rodenkirk's visit to Floras Lake produced 10 **Pipits**, one silent **Swamp Sparrow**, and many singing **Meadowlarks**.

He also heard a **Sandhill Crane** calling from the same spot where Terry Wahl saw it on the Port Orford Christmas Bird Count in December. At the blue silos he saw a **Say's Phoebe**, two **Palm Warblers**, and a few **Western Bluebirds**.

February 2 – Terry Wahl reported a **Snow Goose** on the family ranch on Elk River.

February 20 – From the Illinois River trail, Tim Rodenkirk saw five **Acorn Woodpeckers** in four different locations. There are lots of large snags there from the 2002 Biscuit Fire. He also saw a male **Anna's Hummingbird** at about 600 feet in elevation.

February 22 – Terry Wahl reported seven **Turkey Vultures** over Langlois and a **Say's Phoebe** at the family ranch. Amy Duerfelt sighted a **Say's Phoebe** near the Battle Rock rest area in Port Orford.

February 23 – A male **Rufous Hummingbird** showed up in the yard at Ann Vileisis and Tim Palmer's house.

February 23 – Alice Pfand reported seeing a **Blue Jay** in her backyard on Garrison Lake. Though not common, these eastern jays do show up now and then in Curry County.

February 27 – Cold temperatures in the interior brought **Varied Thrushes** in mixed flocks with **American Robins** to lower elevations this week.

March 12 – Ann and Tim reported the first large flocks of **Aleutian Canada Geese** flying overhead in Port Orford.

March 14 – Peggy Alessio reported a **Bald Eagle** soaring on the north side of Coast Guard Hill in P.O.

March 16 – Paul Shallert reported that the dark phase **Red-tailed Hawk** is still at the Cedar Valley Golf Course, where it has been for about six months now.



Blue Jay, photo by Lois Miller

March 16 – Gary Maschmeyer and the Let's Go Birding field trip had an excellent view of a **Great Horned Owl** from the Rogue River Walk. The owl was perched in a snag at dusk. The group also heard a distant **Screech Owl**.

March 24 – Tim Rodenkirk saw a **Peregrine Falcon** at Cape Blanco and a **Pipit** flock below the cliffs. He also saw a "mile-long slick" of **Common Murres** off the tip of the Cape. At the big marsh he saw a **Swamp Sparrow**, which is difficult to find this time of year. There were many **Tree Swallows** and one **Barn Swallow** using the bird boxes there. Along Floras Creek Road there were singing **Purple**

Finches, a singing **Orange-crowned Warbler**, and some **Yellow-rumped Warblers** and **Ruby-crowned Kinglets**. He also heard some gobbling **Turkeys**.

March 28 – Terry Wahl had **Chipping Sparrows** on the family ranch. These are very early arrivals. The earliest Coos County record is April 8th.

March 29 – At Floras Lake, Tim Rodenkirk heard calling **Greater Yellowlegs** heading north. In the willows were a breeding-plumaged **Palm Warbler** and a bright, male **Common Yellowthroat**.

April 11 – Teresa Bird reports there has been an **American Kestrel** hunting in the lambing barn on the Wahl family ranch. And "Blondie," the white **Brewer's Blackbird**, is still around. Tim Rodenkirk was at Chetco Point and saw many **Yellow-rumped Warblers** flying about and singing, plus "tens" of **Orange-crowned Warblers**. He also spotted his first-of-the-year Oregon **Wilson's Warbler**.

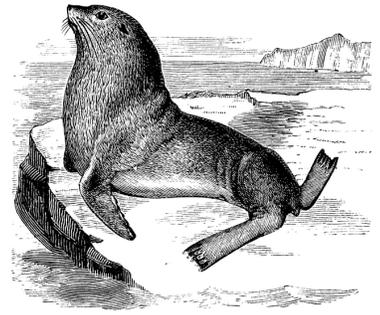
April 12 – Ann and Tim reported enormous flocks of **Aleutian Cackling Geese** flying over Port Orford.

April 18 – While working at Floras Lake, Tim Rodenkirk saw hundreds of **Aleutian Cackling Geese**

Curry Mammals I've Known by Jim Rogers

Steller Sea Lion – *Eumetopias Jubatus*

Shortly after moving to Curry County from Tillamook in 1968, I walked out to the north jetty of the Rogue, fishing pole in hand. I chose a nice flat jetty rock to sit on at the edge of the water and soon had several fat perch in my bucket. Suddenly, without warning, a monster from the deep emerged from the water and joined my lonely vigil at the end of the jetty! What was it, and what was it going to do?! Crawling about on the jetty rocks was slow going, and if the monster chose to, it could have its way with me. Fortunately, it slid back into the river and disappeared, showing little interest in a human dinner.



On my way home, I paid a visit to the Curry County Library to read up on the mystery critter. I concluded that this was a female Steller sea lion. I learned that the biggest sea lion was the Steller, *Eumetopias jubatus*, meaning, in Latin, “having a mane,” and in Greek, “with a high, broad forehead.” Locally, Steller sea lions dwell on the Rogue River reef and the Blanco and Orford reefs. The adult male is about 11 feet long, weighs over a ton, and possesses a thick fur mane. It is the largest member of the *Otariidae* family, the eared seals. The Steller is light tan or reddish brown in color. The much more common sea lion we see locally is the California, which is dark brown and less than 8 feet long. The sound of the Steller is a deep roar while the California’s is a bark.

The life expectancy of the female Steller sea lion is 30 years; for the male, only 20 years. These marine mammals are occasionally preyed upon by great white sharks and killer whales. Generally, the female has a pup every other year, and it is weaned by the end of the first year. The males usually don’t successfully breed until 11 to 13 years of age, but after that, they make up for lost time. The female is much smaller, at 580 pounds and nine feet long. It can be difficult to distinguish the female Steller from the male California, but the Steller has a boxy face, like a bear, while the California is much darker and has a more pointed, dog-like snout.

The Steller sea lion has been protected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act since 1972, and in 1990 it was additionally listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act. In 1997, NOAA Fisheries determined that there are two populations. The western Aleutians population has been in steep decline for the past 40 years, but the eastern Pacific population is doing okay. Sea lion critical habitat is now protected by a 20-mile buffer around all major haul-outs and rookeries, plus three large pelagic foraging areas.

Both populations remain threatened by global climate change, fishery interactions, ocean acidification, environmental contaminants, disease, entanglements, human disturbance, oil and gas activities, intentional killing, and harmful algal blooms.

Unlike bears and cougars, I’ve never seen a sea lion head mounted on a wall. ■

feeding in the local pastures. And flying north were **Caspian Terns, Semipalmated Plovers, Whimbrel, Western Sandpipers, Greater Yellowlegs, and American Pipits**. While in Port Orford, Carrie Rogers and all the shopkeepers and shoppers stopped to watch as many thousands of **Cackling Geese** flew north over the town.

April 21 – Alice Pfand reported the **Blue Jay** back in her yard on Garrison Lake.

April 22 – Ann saw the first **Brown Pelican** from Port Orford Heads State Park. Usually pelicans start to show up later in the year.

April 22 – Terry Wahl says there are three **Western Kingbirds** on the ranch.

April 23 – Carrie Rogers reported many more flocks of geese and some **Black Brant** flying over Port Orford in the afternoon and evening.

April 24 – This morning there were flocks of shorebirds using the shortcut over Port Orford instead of going around Port Orford Heads and north. This is a common sight during migration.

April 25 – Linda Bozack reported seeing a **Bobwhite** on Heather Lane in Brookings. Bobwhites are not native in our area but are sometimes raised and released by hunters to train bird-hunting dogs, legal only with a special ODFW permit. Linda’s Bobwhite is likely an escaped domestic.

April 26 – Jim and Carrie Rogers had the first **Black-headed Grosbeak** of the season at their feeder, a lone male. Terry Wahl observed lots of shorebirds flying by the ranch. The Wahls have been seeing a **Lark Bunting, some Palm Warblers, Wilson’s Warblers, Black-throated Grey Warblers, Common Yellow-throats, breeding Harris Sparrows, and a Say’s Phoebe** that is staying longer than usual.

April 26 – Dave Lauten and Cathy Castelein report that Coos and Curry County migration is in full swing: many groups of shorebirds are moving north along Floras Lake/New River. There are huge flocks of **Cackling Geese** and **Pacific Loons** flying north over the ocean.

If you have any bird sightings to report, please send me an email at chlparl@wildblue.net. ■

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