UPCOMING OUTINGS AND EVENTS

October 26, Saturday, Let’s Go Birding: Rogue River Walk (Jim Hunt Loop)
Join trip leader Gary Maschmeyer for this last bird-watching field trip of the year! Meet at the Gold Beach Visitor Center at 8:45 a.m. To carpool from Brookings, meet Gary at the Azalea Middle School parking lot, 505 Pacific Avenue in Brookings, at 8 a.m. Remember, rain cancels. It’s best to RSVP to Gary so he can let you know if there is any change. If you have questions, contact Gary at 541-254-1641.

November 2 and 3, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Wild Rivers Mushroom Festival, Brookings
This year’s festival will showcase over 200 varieties of mushrooms — all of which will be collected from within about 50 miles of Brookings. There will be opportunities to learn about how to hunt mushrooms and grow mushrooms, with samples for eating and vendors selling fungi-related products. The festival itself is free; workshops and identification hikes cost from $5 to $20 depending on the activity. The festival will be held at the Chetco Activity Center, 550 Chetco Lane, Brookings. To sign up for workshops ahead of time, and for more info, check out: www.wildriversmushroomfestival.org.

America’s Great Mountain Trails
Book Signing and Slide Presentations by Tim Palmer
▲▲▲ November 19, Port Orford Public Library, 7 p.m.
▲▲▲ December 4, Chetco Public Library, Brookings, 6 p.m.
▲▲▲ December 12, Curry Public Library, Gold Beach, 5:30 p.m.

Author and photographer Tim Palmer will be sharing stories and spectacular images from his latest book, America’s Great Mountain Trails. Enjoy a scenic journey of mountain grandeur as Tim shares some of the best among 100 mountain trails featured in his new book. Tim is the award-winning author of 28 books about the environment, outdoors, and adventure travel. He recently won the Sierra Club’s prestigious Ansel Adams Award for conservation photography, and he is also a KAS board member.

December 28, Saturday, Christmas Bird Count, Sixes
This annual bird count for our most serious birders helps track the birds that winter in the diverse habitats of the Sixes count circle, and it is always an adventure. Contact the Christmas Bird Count organizer, Tim Rodenkirk, for more information on this year’s count: timrodenkirk@gmail.com.

November through December 2019, KAS Annual Raffle
In late November, please keep an eye out for our annual KAS raffle and fundraising letter. We’ve got some terrific prizes on tap, and we’ll appreciate your abiding support!
From the President's Desk

With this issue of the Storm Petrel, I am excited that we are introducing our new newsletter header, designed by Petrel editor Penny Suess (with input from a helpful committee) with our new KAS logo. The previous newsletter header was designed back in the early 1990s by previous Petrel editor and longstanding membership chair Alice Pfand, and it served us well for nearly 30 years. This new header has a sharper look but still conveys the deep connection that Kalmiopsis Audubon has to our special South Coast environment.

The new logo and new header are part of our group’s broader “updating” project, which we hope will help make us more effective in our ongoing local conservation efforts. Soon, we’ll be launching a beautiful new mobile-friendly website that’s being designed and revamped by Teresa Bird. Meanwhile our new treasurer, Sara Lovendahl, and our new membership chair, Linda Tarr, are working to upgrade our systems there, too, and KAS board member Foncy Prescott has taken the lead on starting a new committee to develop a planned-giving program for KAS. We’ll be sharing more information with you soon. We’re excited to be envisioning how to ensure there will be a strong and effective group to work for conservation in Curry County into the future.

In this issue of the Storm Petrel, you’ll find some positive news about local conservation issues and successful recent projects and events, plus interesting information about local natural history. We appreciate having you as part of our KAS community, and if you are interested to get more involved, please give me a call.

— Ann Vileisis

Membership News

Greetings from the new membership chair!

If you have in the past enjoyed reading the Storm Petrel, it is partly because Sara Lovendahl, and before her, Alice Pfand, have done the crucial work of managing Kalmiopsis Audubon Society’s membership information, making sure that you receive a copy four times a year. I will be doing this task, now that Sara is moving over to the responsibility of treasurer. I am happy to report that we now have 402 members.

Thanks to our new members, John Brooks, Carol Hacherl, Charlie Johnson, and Cecil LaFever.

I was just visiting with one of my favorite wood-workers, who has a small engraving by his work-bench that says, “It’s all about the details.” That is indeed apt for this task. Please, if I make a mistake, let me know by email at KASBirdHerd@gmail.com.

— Linda Tarr

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.

Officials

President: Ann Vileisis (541) 332-0261
Vice President: Foncy Prescott (541) 332-1032
Secretary: Max Beeken (541) 373-1599
Treasurer: Sara Lovendahl (541) 366-2063

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The Storm Petrel: Penny Suess (541) 332-3017
Membership: Linda Tarr (541) 332-1032
Bird Count: Jim Rogers (541) 332-2555
Bird Notes: Al Geiser (541) 332-6720
Let’s Go Birding: Gary Maschmeyer (541) 412-0806

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Ann Vileisis 2016 - 2020 annvil@earthlink.net

KAS Website: http://www.kalmiopsisaudubon.org

Thanks to service-project captain Peg Reagan and the KAS volunteers who helped with our recent Highway 101 clean-up.
KAS Nature Camp

This summer, our nature camp for kids was co-led by me and Maya Holiman from Curry Watersheds Partnership, and had 11 participants from Langlois and Port Orford. The group focused on learning about plants, birds, and watersheds. Each day we took a nature walk, and our exciting discoveries included the many butterflies using Buffington Park’s butterfly garden, and both a great blue heron and a green heron near the Port Orford Wetland Interpretive Walkway. Our walk down the creek that flows from Garrison Lake to the ocean at Tseriadun State Recreation Site allowed us to observe watershed connections firsthand. We’re so grateful for Maya’s collaboration, and hope to continue this annual camp to get kids outdoors and learning from nature!

— Teresa Bird

English Ivy Is Killing Our Trees

by Cliff Stansell

English ivy is like a slow-moving boa constrictor. It will climb up a tree, wrap itself around it, and, over time, cut off the blood supply (sap), killing the tree. It looks pretty as it weaves its way up through the limbs, covering the trunk in a beautiful but deadly mass of green. This is what most people see, but look closely at the needles or leaves. If they are beginning to thin out, the tree is already in trouble. The tree is stressed and cannot fight off beetle attacks, fungal attacks, and other problems that may show up, such as root disturbances.

It does take years to kill a healthy tree, but once a tree dies, you have other issues to deal with. It may fall on your house or have limbs break off, or it may become a fire hazard. It’s way cheaper and a lot less hassle to clip the ivy at the base of the tree than to hire a tree service to remove an ivy-covered dead tree. They are harder to climb, very dusty, and sometimes home to critters that you really don’t want to meet when you are 90 feet off the ground. Therefore, they are more expensive to remove.

It’s actually pretty easy to control English ivy — it’s nothing like gorse. Clip it at the base and a few feet up; this way you can monitor for new growth. Chasing the vines and roots away from the tree is always good, if you can, but just getting a three- or four-foot section off the tree will save it, and, it’s easy to keep the ivy at bay. Control it mainly by keeping it trimmed to where you want it.

Some natural ways of actually killing it are: boiling water, white vinegar, and a salt, soap, and water mixture are said to be effective. I don’t mind a little ivy myself, as long as it doesn’t take over. I pull a little every year and keep it off the trees, and it’s fine. Like I say, nothing like gorse.

I’ve been thinking that maybe we could get some volunteers to gang up on the ivy in some of the public places around town, and maybe even help out homeowners who are having difficulty with it. I think Port Orford could be on top of the English ivy problem in a year or so. I know from my own experience that it costs way more money and labor to put off something that would have been way, way easier to take care of when I first noticed it.

Let me know if you’re interested. If we get enough volunteers we could organize some clipping days. Maybe make it socially fun, with a picnic and music. If you are interested in helping, please contact me at (208) 660-3334. ■

You may be missing out! Please join your fellow KAS members by signing up for our HOOT OUT alert list so that you can receive timely emails about programs, outings, and issues, in between issues of our usual print newsletter. Signing up is a way you can help us to become better organized! We promise, you won’t be barraged, your email address won’t be shared with others, and you can opt out at any time. You can sign up by sending an email to Ann at annvil@earthlink.net.
Conservation News
by Ann Vileisis

Floras Lake Land Exchange

I am very pleased to report two recent decisions that have moved the Floras Lake land swap to very near completion! On September 14, the Oregon Department of Parks and Recreation met in Brookings and unanimously approved the swap, and then the Curry County Board of Commissioners finally voted to adopt it at its October 2 meeting with a two-to-one vote. Commissioners Court Boice and Sue Gold voted in favor.

The County will receive 33 acres at the junction of Airport Road and Highway 101 in exchange for 90 land-locked acres adjacent to Floras Lake and Floras Lake State Natural Area. The swap will protect lake frontage for its scenic values but also its conservation values, helping to protect the lake’s water quality and habitat for birds, fish, and wildlife. It also buffers the Oregon Coast Trail and enlarges the Floras Lake State Natural Area.

As longstanding KAS members know, it’s been a long road to advocate for this land swap. The idea started as a proactive response to Curry County repeatedly proposing to develop its lands on the south side of the lake. Through it all, we’ve worked closely with people from Langlois, but KAS has brought critical knowledge, relationships, and support of our countywide membership to the table, again and again, and I know that without all of your support and help, we would not have succeeded.

So many of you have helped in all manner of ways: helping us to understand the unique soils and plants out in the greater Blacklock Point area; tromping around to get to know the county lands better; writing emails and letters; making phone calls; studying up on meeting law rules; showing up at meeting after meeting after meeting to provide support and excellent, heartfelt testimony!

At this point, before the transaction can close, the county needs to vacate road rights of way. Hopefully, that will proceed apace. When it’s all done, I’d like to celebrate the completion of this project with a hike and a party — so we’ll be announcing a time and place once we know that the closing is done. In the future, there will be more to work to do at Floras Lake, but completing this land exchange will be a very important conservation success!

Please give a call or send a brief email to Commissioners Boice and Gold to thank them for their support in this effort. Here are their email addresses: Court Boice (boicec@co.curry.or.us); and Sue Gold (golds@co.curry.or.us).

Red Flat, Hunter Creek Mining Update

Longtime KAS members know that one of our big recent successes was to secure a 20-year mineral withdrawal in 2017 for the headwaters of Hunter Creek/Pistol River, the North Fork Smith River, and the Illinois River. However, we’ve been aware that the mining company, Red Flat Nickel Company (RFNC), has persisted in trying to advance its project. First, RFNC has pressed the current administration in Washington to reverse the Southwest Oregon Mineral Withdrawal. RFNC has also asserted that 86 of the mining claims it held before the withdrawal took effect are “valid,” and that it should, therefore, be allowed to proceed with its mineral exploration on these claims, located in the Hunter Creek–Pistol Rivers headwaters area.

Over the past year, U.S. Forest Service minerals specialists have been reviewing evidence provided by RFNC to determine whether or not they pass muster, in a process called a Surface Use Determination (SUD). The SUD will inform a decision to be made by Rogue River–Siskiyou National Forest Supervisor
Merv George as to whether RFNC can proceed with more drilling to confirm the results of its earlier mineral sampling. We’ve been expecting information about the outcome of the SUD, but we recently learned that the company has just provided a docket of new information to the Forest Service to back up its claims, which will delay the determination.

Because the Hunter Creek–Pistol River area was administratively withdrawn in 2017 for a period of 20 years, the RFNC must show its claims are “valid” by providing evidence that it discovered a valuable mineral on or before the date of withdrawal before it can move ahead with mining any of these claims.

Meanwhile, the bill from Senator Wyden and Senator Merkley to make the Southwest Oregon Mineral Withdrawal permanent has been paired with a bill to extend the Wild Rogue Wilderness upstream into Josephine County, to help provide more watershed-level protection to that special wild and scenic reach of river.

In addition, the Trump administration has indicated that it intends to move forward with new rules to streamline mining regulations. Stay tuned.

**Sixes River and Pistol River Rock Extraction Updates**

In the last *Storm Petrel*, I reported on two proposals to extract rocks — big and small — from local watersheds, Sixes River and Pistol River. KAS provided testimony regarding these projects. Fortunately, we have good news. The Kiewit Company withdrew its proposal to extract giant quarry rocks from a butte at the headwaters of Edson Creek, on Sixes River, because the Army Corps of Engineers awarded the contract to supply quarry rock for the Columbia River jetties to another company.

With regard to the proposal to extract gravel from the Pistol River estuary, the Curry County Planning Department had initially recommended approval, contingent upon the applicant obtaining all state and federal permits. However, the applicant’s application was so lacking in detail, and there was so much public testimony demonstrating the need for more specific information, that the county attorney advised against approval, and the Curry County Planning Commission denied the permit. The applicant has decided not to appeal the decision at this time.

Edson Creek provides cold water and serves as habitat for salmon, including threatened Oregon Coast coho. Pistol River estuary provides stopover habitat for migrating shorebirds and waterfowl, and important rearing habitat for salmon, including SONCC coho.

**National Wild and Scenic Elk River County Campgrounds?**

Curry County is currently developing a proposal to “co-manage” the three Forest Service campgrounds up Elk River for a 20-year term. County Parks Director Josh Hopkins presented the idea at a community meeting in Port Orford, and Forest Service District Ranger Kathy Allen assured community members that the Forest Service would not relinquish oversight. The county sees it as an opportunity to provide better service to campers by having camp hosts and developing water sources, while also tapping revenues from the state and from campers. Apparently, the Forest Service doesn’t have adequate staff to properly take care of these campgrounds. The county, meanwhile, is working to build up and improve its Parks Department under Hopkins’s leadership and promises to be more eyes-on-the-ground.

The proposed arrangement could be positive or problematic, depending on the details, which are yet to be ironed out. I know some KAS members have expressed concern that the campgrounds could become more developed, that the arrangement could lead to more traffic on a very small road, or that this could lead to the county somehow taking over the land of the campgrounds. So far, the county and the USFS have assured us that the camp sites will stay rustic, as is called for in the National Wild and Scenic River management plan, and that the agreement will in no way convey any property rights to the county. It does not sound like...
this arrangement will lead to any improvement of Elk River Road.

With so much turnover of USFS staff in recent years, KAS has presented information to the agency about the critically important values of the National Wild and Scenic Elk River corridor that need to be considered as this plan is developed, including specific requirements in the Wild and Scenic River management plan. KAS has been engaged in stewardship of the Elk River corridor for decades, and, with regard to campgrounds in particular, in recent years has provided wildlife caps for all outhouse vents. We are particularly concerned that the change in campground management could lead to more dispersed camping with broader and more dispersed impacts in the corridor. We intend to continue providing input in this process.

New Audubon Study Projects

Climate Change Impacts to Birds

The National Audubon Society recently released a troubling report, “Survival by Degrees,” that again underscores the grim threat of climate change for birds. Using 140 million bird records (including observational data supplied via sources such as E-bird, the North American Breeding Bird Survey, and the Christmas Bird Count) and the latest climate modeling methods, Audubon researchers determined that 64 percent of North American bird species could be at risk of extinction by the end of the century (under a three-degree temperature rise scenario), owing to projected impacts to habitat, including sea level rise, urbanization, extreme weather, fire, heavy rain, drought, lake level changes, and “false springs.”

This study adds to the tidal wave of evidence suggesting that we must find a way to tackle the climate crisis. At this point, to hold warming steady we must reduce the amount of carbon released into the atmosphere. KAS has aimed to address climate change by opposing the Jordan Cove project, which would become our state’s largest greenhouse gas emitter, and also by working toward conservation of old-growth forest habitat for Marbled Murrelets, hoping to secure a stronghold for these imperiled seabirds and also to sequester carbon in one of the best ways possible — in big, old trees.

Connection Between Toilet Paper and Boreal Forest Bird Habitat

Earlier this year, the Natural Resources Defense Council published a report, “The Issue with Tissue,” detailing the connection between toilet paper (TP) and deforestation of vast acreages (28 million acres over the past 20 years) of the Canadian boreal forest, which provides breeding habitat for so many of our continent’s birds. More than 300 bird species breed in the boreal forest, and, of course, the forest is also home to indigenous peoples and wildlife such as caribou, marten, lynx, and moose.

Much of the forest has gone to supply the virgin softwood pulp that is favored in the manufacture of toilet paper. Americans use more TP per capita than citizens in any other country, and America’s largest toilet paper producers — Procter & Gamble, Kimberly-Clark, and Georgia Pacific — rely almost exclusively on this virgin pulp. However, there are
alternatives. Toilet paper made from recycled materials is far more sustainable because it doesn’t depend on clearcutting the boreal forest. In addition, manufacture of recycled TP emits a third of the greenhouse gases and substantially fewer pollutants.

The aim of the NRDC report was to empower consumers to wield their purchase power to choose sustainably produced TP — and thereby push these biggest manufacturing companies to transition away from fibers sourced from virgin boreal forests.

If you’d like to help with this project, here is the skinny. The worst offenders include some of the biggest brand names and “special soft” varieties: Charmin Ultra Soft, Angel Soft, Quilted Northern, Kirkland, Scott (both regular and comfort plus), and Cottonelle. The sustainable alternatives are those that use recycled fibers, including Natural Value, Green Forest, and Seventh Generation. The most important thing is to look for recycled fiber content. The Port Orford Community Coop carries Natural Value brand TP and can special order it for you in bulk.

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Marbled Murrelet Survey Project and Community Survey Day

by Teresa Bird

This survey season, Kalmiopsis Audubon Society sent two local individuals, Anthony Sigg and me, to become certified as professional Marbled Murrelet surveyors. We went to eight areas of old-growth forest in the Elk River and Sixes River watersheds, looking for activity at sites where signs of murrelet nesting behavior have never been observed before. At four different survey stations, we observed murrelets flying below the treetops, which indicates that the birds are using that stand of trees for nesting. Such findings result in that area being designated as “occupied” by murrelets for nesting, and therefore protected from management that would harm their nesting habitat. The murrelet sightings of this summer resulted in 1,545 acres of forest receiving new protection for old-growth habitat. This survey project is a continuation of many local efforts by Friends of Elk River, KAS, and others to enhance protections for the largely untouched old-growth in our national forest and the fascinating seabird that relies on them.

KAS hosted the Third Annual Marbled Murrelet Field Trip July 26 and 27, which included an educational program about Marbled Murrelets, followed by a survey the next morning. The event involved 14 participants from our local community. The program, held at Sunshine Bar Campground, enabled participants to learn about this unique seabird, how to recognize and survey for it, and the important role that murrelet surveying has had in Elk River conservation. It felt like a little celebration of our unique old-growth forests, and it facilitated some important discussions about how to understand and engage in forest policy.

The community survey took place on the morning of the 27th at Panther Creek, which has been monitored for murrelets for over 20 years. During the survey, experienced volunteers assisted in helping new participants spot murrelets flying overhead — not an easy task, as these small birds are very fast, are often silent, and fly in the low light of early morning. I also collected protocol data from this survey to add to our long-term monitoring data for Panther Creek. This enabled us to recognize significantly lower numbers than have been typical in years past; only four murrelets were seen during the entire survey (as opposed to over 20 last year). Comparison of these results with researchers, surveyors, and community science groups confirmed that low nesting numbers was a widespread trend resulting from poor ocean conditions (which also negatively impacted many other seabird species). These observations add to the list of compelling reasons why Marbled Murrelets should continue to receive protections by managing agencies.

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Jordan Cove Liquefied Natural Gas Threat

by Tim Palmer

As many Storm Petrel readers know, the Jordan Cove liquefied natural gas (LNG) pipeline, gas conversion facility, and shipping port proposed by a Canadian corporation for Coos Bay would transport gas fracked in the American and Canadian West and ship all of it for burning in Asia. Pipeline construction would require condemning Oregonians’ private property along the 229-mile route from Klamath Falls to Coos Bay. Extensive dredging would degrade the ecosystem of the bay and offshore areas. More than 16,000 people living within the “Hazardous Burn Zone” would be at risk if an accident were to occur. The water supply of 150,000 Oregonians could be endangered by the pipeline’s crossing at 485 stream and river sites, and construction and operation would create wildfire dangers along the forested route. Export of American gas to Asia would result in...
a 36 to 54 percent rise in the price of natural gas in the United States, according to Federal Department of Energy analysis. The site for the Coos Bay LNG facility is at ground-zero for risks of a massive earthquake and Fukushima-scale tsunami.

According to a recent Federal Energy Regulatory Commission summary statement, “constructing and operating the Project is likely to adversely affect 13 federally listed threatened and endangered species including Marbled Murrelets, Spotted Owls, and coho salmon.”

Perhaps most important, the LNG facility would become Oregon’s largest direct consumer of fossil fuel and would commit economic, corporate, government, and community resources to maximum burning of fossil fuels for decades to come. However, to address the climate crisis, we need to be doing just the opposite. The often-heard justification that it’s better to burn natural gas than coal or oil is simply not true, owing to gas facilities’ widespread leaking of methane, which is 80 times more potent as a greenhouse gas, causing global warming during the first years of the methane escape into the atmosphere.

In short, this project may be the worst ever proposed for the environment of our region and the worst approach possible in facing the climate crisis.

For all these reasons, I testified against the project at a September 24 Coos Bay City Planning Commission hearing. The staff report to the commission, prepared under contract by Lane County, prepared under contract by Lane County.
recommended approval of the eelgrass mitigation permit application based on an extremely narrow reading of the commission’s responsibilities, as articulated by the project sponsors.

Thanks to other KAS members who attended this meeting. More hearings and hurdles will be scheduled. Stay tuned, and we’ll keep you posted on future opportunities to show opposition to this misguided project that will damage local ecosystems and commit us to burning fossil fuel for decades to come.

Mushroom Hike in the Elliott State Forest

Hike with local mycologists from Coast Range Forest Watch and find some of our region’s important, and delicious, mushrooms in an old-growth grove in the Elliott State Forest. Meet at the Allegany Country Store at Milepost 14 on Highway 241. A carpool will leave from that point at 10 a.m. and return by 3 p.m. Space on this hike is limited. RSVP well in advance to CoastRangeForestWatch@gmail.com.

Anodyne
by Vicki Graham

Ectopistes migratorius: all we have left: museum specimens and a Latin name meaning “wandering migrant.” From a billion passenger pigeons to none.

But listen: one bird, one downy woodpecker’s tap tap tap in a willow thicket. Sun on leaves, a tangle of branches, a slender bill slipping in and out of crevices—

and ghosts: three billion birds of North America lost since 1970 …

Shhhhh. Listen: behind the downy’s tapping, a medley — kingfisher, osprey, water ouzel, Steller’s jay — each note telling us: love what is here, now.

But never forget.

Membership Application

Membership in Kalmiopsis Audubon Society is $15.00 per year and includes the The Storm Petrel.

Mail your check to:

Kalmiopsis Audubon Society
P.O. Box 1265
Port Orford, OR 97465

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

Thank you!

Illustration from Portraits and Habits of Our Birds, National Association of Audubon Societies, 1925
BIRD NOTES

Late Summer / Early Fall 2019

by Jim Rogers (with help this time from Tim Rodenkirk)


July 19 – Curry’s third Gray Catbird was found singing away at Arizona Beach State Park by Jim Johnson. This bird remained 15 days and was heard singing most mornings while present. The previous two records were fall birds.

August 20 – Tim Rodenkirk reported two female Townsend’s Warblers in the mountains northeast of Brookings, much earlier than usual.

August 20 – Marion Hadden saw a White-breasted Nuthatch on the Vulcan Lake Trail. This is an uncommon sighting in Curry. Red-breasted Nuthatches, with their distinct black eye stripes and cinnamon breasts, are far more common.

September 6 – Courtney Kelly Jett and Caleb Centanni reported seeing a Western Kingbird about a mile up the Winchuck River in the pasturelands there. On September 7, the pair observed an Orchard Oriole, typically an eastern bird, on the South Bank of the Chetco River. This is a very rare sighting for Oregon.

September 21 – Tim Rodenkirk and the Shorebird Festival group also reported seeing a two-mile-long slick of Surf Scoters in the ocean off Floras Lake that had at least 3,000 individuals.

September 24 – Terry Wahl observed a rare Lark Bunting on his family ranch. He also spotted a very early Rough-legged Hawk (usually not seen until mid-October; photo on page 6).

September 27 – Tim Shelmerdine reported seeing a South Polar Skua and also a Scripp’s Murrelet (formerly called Xantus’s Murrelet) from a cruise ship. Considered an unusual sighting for our area, Scripp’s Murrelets nest on offshore islands in southern California and Baja, then disperse north up the coast, generally feeding at sea on larval fishes. It is a deepwater pelagic species normally found only far offshore and not reported every year from Oregon.

September 29 – Tim Rodenkirk reported a White-throated Sparrow at Pistol River — on the early side for this species.

October 2 – Paul Shallert observed the dark phase Red-tailed Hawk that keeps returning to Cedar Valley each year.

October 11 – Tim Rodenkirk reported four (!) Say’s Phoebes in Brookings — one up the Winchuck River and three along Ocean View Drive. Say’s have overwintered at both locations in recent years. He also saw a “river” of Yellow-rumped Warblers flying south at the Winchuck River mouth in the morning.

If you have any bird sightings to report, please send me an email at chlaparl@wildblue.net.
The Storm Petrel

Curry Mammals I Have Known
by Jim Rogers

Last summer my friend Nate was bicycling daily along Elk River. On many of those days, when he rode past a certain spot, he observed a weasel crossing the road. Nate checked his mammal book and discovered that there are two species of weasel in Curry County, the short-tailed and the long-tailed.

Short-Tailed Weasel – Mustela erminea

Long-tailed weasel is considerably larger than the short-tailed. The short-tailed weighs about two to five ounces and is about seven to 13 inches long. The long-tailed weighs about seven ounces and is about 20 inches long. The above lengths include the tail. The tail of the short-tailed is two to four inches long; that of the long-tailed is four to eight inches. It is considerably smaller than a mink.

Both species possess small, cylindrical, slender, lithe bodies, short legs, and relatively short, bushy tails. The head is relatively small, flat, and triangular. Both species possess powerful glands. Both are uniformly brown with white or buff undersides. The tip of the tail is black.

When in motion, the weasel has a bounding gait. Their preferred habitat is thick brush and slash of the red alder, alder/salmonberry type. They are usually active only at night, but are sometimes about in the day, especially when there is a tasty squirrel to be had. Their ears are large and furry.

They occupy all of the habitat available to them except the beach and foredunes. They mate in midsummer, with implantation occurring in March. The male will defend several territories and all the females included. The male may father several litters, but takes no part in raising kits. Sometimes a female is pregnant before being weaned. They are sexually mature within three weeks of being born.

Once while I was marking trees in Montana in the winter, I had the good fortune of shooting a grouse, which I left in the snow to take home for dinner. When I returned to my truck, I was puzzled to see the dead grouse moving along away from where I had left it. Then I discovered the source of power pulling my dinner over the snow — a weasel in its white winter coat, that is, an ermine — something we never see here in Curry County! (And NO — I didn’t shoot it!) □
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