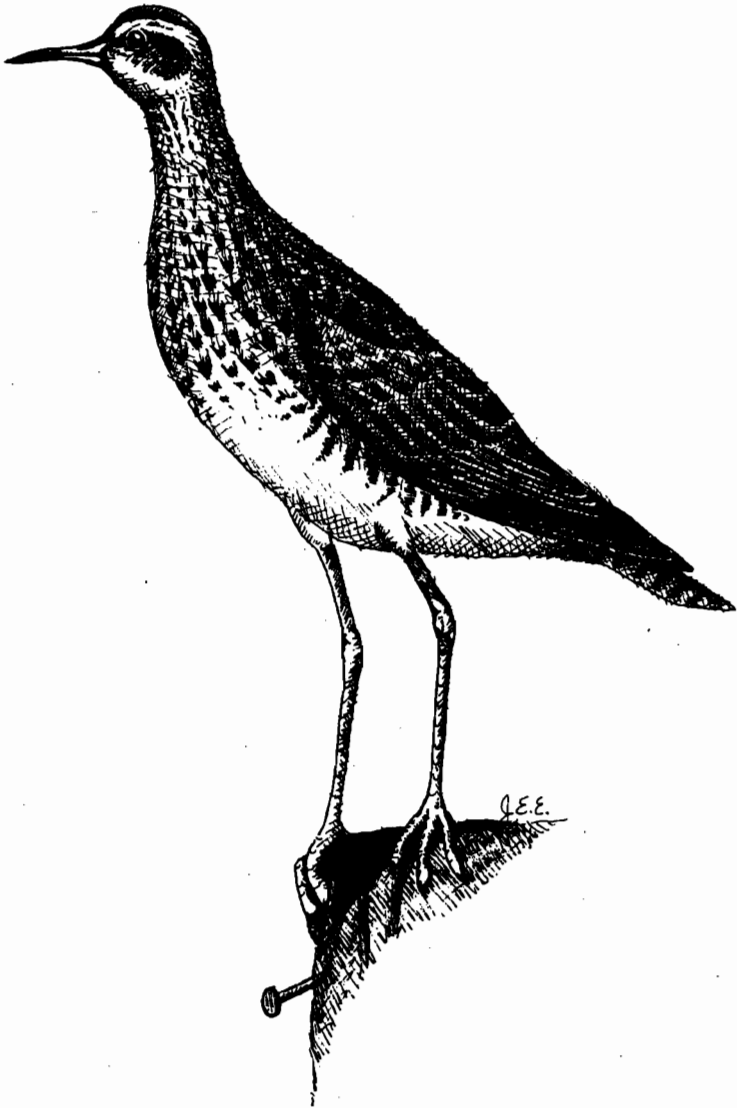


Oregon Birds

Vol. 5, No. 4 — 1979



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Ghosts of the Lost Mariners

Dan Matthews

The third Sunday of July at 10:00 p.m. I received a phone call from Bob Pitman at the University of Oregon Institute of Marine Biology. Bob wanted to know if I was interested in accompanying Mike Graybill and him to a local offshore island to band Leach's Storm Petrels. Mike and Bob were leaving within hours to take advantage of a minus tide, one of the few times the island is accessible. The plan was to sleep on the beach and venture out to the island early in the morning.

From a distance, at sunup, the island appeared to offer little in the way of birds. A few Western Gulls were sitting on the island but no petrels were in sight. Down the beach hundreds of Western and Heermann's Gulls and several Brown Pelicans were busy feeding.

We climbed the steep eastern basaltic face of the island and walked to the northern end. Small clumps of cow parsnip and Oregon grape grew in the grass, and at the very top of the island, blue and yellow succulents and a patch of wild strawberries were blossoming. At the roots of the grass on the north face were several burrows. I asked if these were the Leach's burrows. The holes were about 3 or 4 feet long. By using a flashlight a young bird could be seen at the end of one burrow. Mike and Bob identified it as a young Rhinoceros Auklet. The auklet parents had supplied the young one with a nice supply of four salmon smolts.

We walked carefully over the grass as we approached the southern side of the island. The tall grass was bent and matted. The ground was riddled with holes. After a brief rest we went to work banding.

Starting at the top of the island we worked a strip about 8 feet wide. By parting the grass we found burrows 1 to 2 feet apart. The subterranean homes were 10 to 24 inches deep and roughly horizontal with many curving to the right or left. Near the top of the island the density of the burrows increased. About 70% of the burrows contained a young Leach's Storm Petrel.

The young birds were some of the most appealing chicks I have ever seen. These small birds of ashy gray fluff stared at us with sparkling black eyes and a look of total unconcern as we removed them from the nest to measure, weigh and band them. The combination of skinny dark legs, webbed toes, hooked bills and crest of down on the forehead gave them a lofty, noble countenance, almost ridiculous for a bird that young and small.

After banding 94 birds during the day, our hands were left smelling like Leach's Storm Petrels. Words cannot describe this distinctive odor. The young feed almost exclusively on regurgitated shrimp in the form of a thick, cloudy orange oil.

Adult birds weigh 35 to 40 grams. Some of the young birds are so well fed that they weigh in at 80 grams! When they are fully fledged, the adults leave the young to slim down before leaving the burrow.

We found birds in all stages of development, suggesting a prolonged nesting period. Three adult birds were still sitting on single eggs and the weight of the young we checked varied from 6 to 80 grams. A few were found fully fledged, but still in the nest.

We were fortunate to be able to observe other animals during our visit to the island. Harbor Seals fed in kelp beds below the island, and we counted 50 seals on a hauling-out rock.

Mike is presently studying the Harbor Seal so he was very interested in obtaining more information on their behavior.

Toward sunset, Bob and Mike set up their tent and I rolled out my sleeping bag on the grass. From the top of the island we enjoyed the scenery and sunset. We saw several Gray Whales blow, and watched an amazing raft (approximately 5,000) of Common Murres and Western and Heermann's Gulls feeding at dusk. Just as the sun dropped past the horizon a flock of Brown Pelicans took off from south of the island and headed north. Possibly they saw us because they wheeled around and made a second pass over the island. From our lookout we watched the 30 or more birds passing close enough to see the sunlight glinting in their eyes.

I awoke about 10:30 p.m. to a sound difficult to describe. From overhead, thousands of voices screamed in a high-pitched insane laughter. From my sleeping bag I could make out hundreds of bat-like figures flying erratically against the deep blue night sky. The adult Leach's Storm Petrels had come in from the sea to feed their young. The sky was thick with birds and some flew so low that their wing tips brushed my sleeping bag. After flying and calling, the adults began to land and burrow into the grass with a scratching noise. From the burrows nearest to my location I could hear the young, faintly peeping underground.

The noises continued all night. By 4:00 a.m. things quieted down. At 4:30 a.m., with only a hint of approaching day in the east, the petrels began heading back to sea. Within minutes all the adults were gone, leaving their young secure in the burrows. The island resumed its daytime look of near desertion.

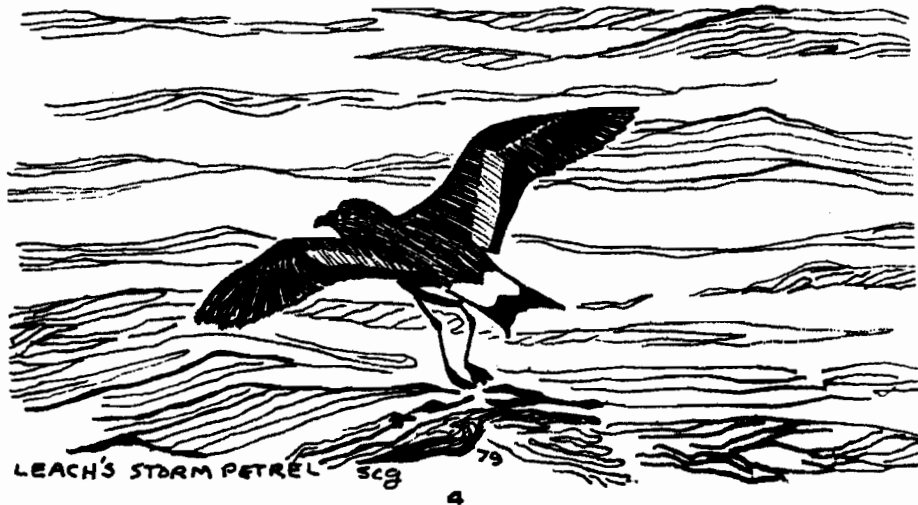
The flight of the storm petrel is so bat-like that the family name, Hydrobatidae, meaning water bat, is most fitting. The unearthly laughing call and erratic flight helped me understand why old sailor's tales describe the storm petrels as the ghosts of lost mariners.

The Leach's Storm Petrel spends its life far at sea. I have been 35 miles offshore and still not found a Leach's Storm Petrel. During the breeding season, thousands of the birds return to their breeding sites to bring off their young, returning to the burrows only in the dead of night.

We packed and left the island during the morning low tide. Thinking over the previous day, I couldn't help asking myself a couple of questions. How do the parents, in the dark of night, locate their chick in their burrow with so many burrows beneath the dense grass? If the parents go 50 miles offshore during the day and fly about above the island at night, when do they rest?

I was grateful for the opportunity to learn a little about these fascinating birds and to get to help with the banding. Just spending a night on the nesting site was a thrill. It was an experience I won't forget and a marvelous opportunity to learn natural history firsthand.

Reprinted from the October 1979 Cape Arago Tattler with permission of the author.



A 1979 Big Day (Long Day) in Klamath County

Steve Gordon

For the third consecutive year a BIG DAY in Klamath County was organized and for the third consecutive year, a new Oregon single county BIG DAY record was established. This year a team of Jim and Judy Carlson, Mark Egger, Steve Gordon, and Priscilla and Steve Summers set a new record of 146 species for Klamath County under American Birding Association (ABA) rules. We actually saw one additional species, Western Sandpiper, in California for a grand total of 147.

A BIG DAY is an attempt to "observe" by sight or sound as many species of birds as possible within a 24-hour calendar day. While the count surpassed the magic BIG DAY mark of 100 species for the third consecutive year (1977 - 109 and 1978 - 140), the term BIG DAY is considered a misnomer by many. The term LONG DAY more closely described our day which began at 4:35 a.m. and ended at 9:05 p.m. A 16-1/2 hour marathon is a test for even the hardest birder.

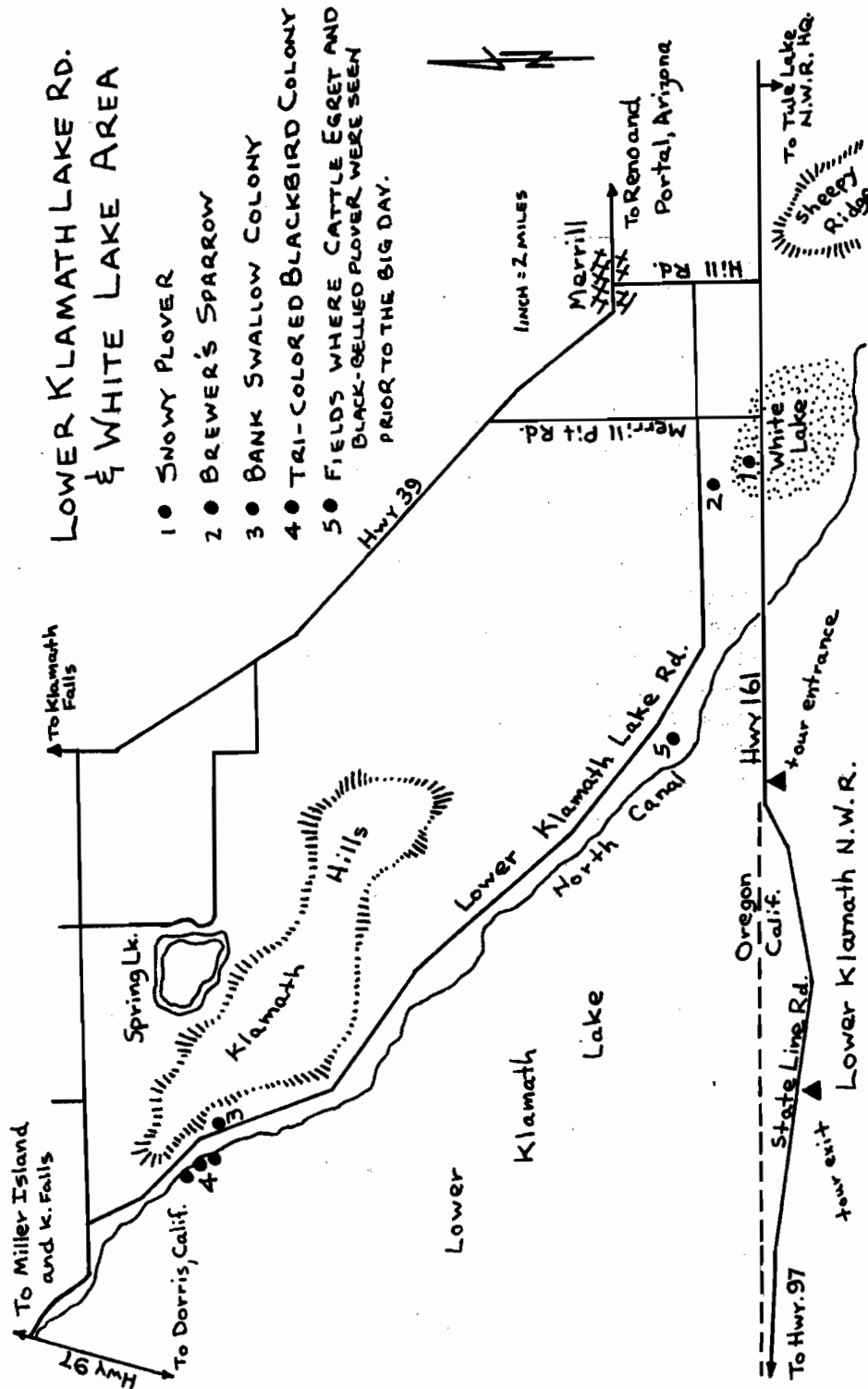
Before dawn on Saturday, May 12, we were peering through the darkness and mist covering Spring Lake to identify Eared and Western Grebes, Great Egret, White Pelicans, Black-crowned Night Heron, Canada Goose, Ruddy Duck, Sandhill Crane (heard by only a few participants), Common Snipe, Great Horned Owl and Marsh Wren. Please understand that starting at 4:35 a.m. implies waking (or at least getting out of bed) at about 3:30 a.m. The "crack of dawn" was replaced by the "cracking of eyelids" as dark bird shadows swam through the mists above the lake at distances as far away as ten feet. Sound played a large role in identifying the early birds (I was the one snoring). We all strained in the early morning darkness to pick up a new bird note. Slowly the strain took

its toll and most of us awakened. As daylight began creeping into the western sky (at 4:35 a.m. I don't even try keeping east and west straight . . . and I was driving!) we were headed toward White Lake on the Oregon/California border (see map). The drive netted us one, lone White-fronted Goose--our only one of the day.

At White Lake we tallied several species of waterfowl and shorebirds; Black-necked Stilt, Gadwall and Northern Shoveler were seen nowhere else on the BIG DAY. One of the highlights of the day was two Snowy Plovers at White Lake; they are rare on the Oregon side within the Klamath Basin.

The drive back to Klamath Falls along Lower Klamath Lake Road was productive. The fields along the road had dried up during the previous week and we couldn't find the Cattle Egret, Black-bellied Plover and numerous shorebirds the Summers had located earlier in the week. We did find Tri-colored Blackbirds and Bank Swallows at colonies (see map) previously pinpointed by the Summers. We also found Brewer's Sparrows singing (see map) and both Rock and Canyon Wrens obliged us by calling from the rocky slopes of the Klamath Hills.

By the time we reached Miller Island State Wildlife Management Area, our day's list was 45 (plus the one in California for a total of 46). At Miller Island, Sora, Virginia Rail, Marsh Hawk, Bonaparte's Gull, White-crowned and Golden-crowned Sparrows, and additional waterfowl were added to our list. An excellent, vocal imitation of an American Bittern prompted an immediate response. After close scrutiny and careful deliberation (and a # ! * of a chase) we added a Western Flycatcher to our list. A lone, straggling Ross' Goose was an unexpected bonus, but for the second year we failed to find a Greater Yellowlegs for our tally.



We next visited Lake Ewauna (Common Golden-eye) and the nature trail along the Link River (Common Mergansers, Cedar Waxwings, and Lesser Goldfinch). Some members got a glimpse of a MacGillivray's Warbler in thick hillside brush. In Moore Park we found Bald Eagle and several woodpeckers and our only Pigmy Nuthatches, Olive-sided Flycatchers, Townsend's Solitaire, and Western Tanagers of the day. An Anna's Hummingbird was perched in the same bush as the previous year's BIG DAY. Along the south end of Upper Klamath Lake, some team members added our only Belted Kingfisher of the day. This bird mysteriously disappeared; thus escaping the list of two team members.

In the Algoma-Barkley Springs-Hagelstein Park-Nalox Ridge area the birding was very productive (Prairie Falcon, California Quail, Lewis' Woodpecker, Gray Flycatcher, Western Bluebird, Nashville Warbler, and Green-tailed Towhee). We found a Calliope Hummingbird perched on the same bush as each of the two previous years. While watching the hummingbird, Priscilla Summers found a Golden Eagle soaring over Nalox Ridge. She was excited to have one of North America's largest and one of North America's smallest birds within the scope of her binoculars at the same time. As we left Algoma, our Klamath County day's list was 122.

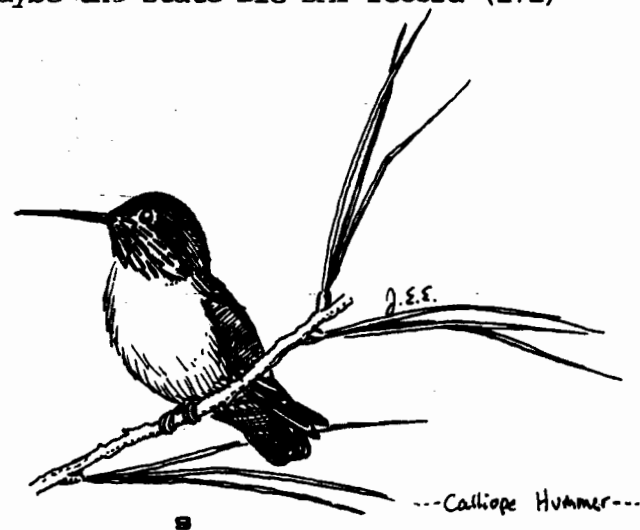
In Chiloquin we found a Purple Martin at one of Tom Lund's Martin houses (thanks, Tom). A walk along the road to the Crooked Creek State Fish Hatchery near Fort Klamath resulted in the addition of White-headed Woodpecker, Brown Creeper, and Fox Sparrow. At the dump near Fort Klamath we added Warbling Vireo and three members heard Evening Grosbeak. No members found Great Gray Owl, one of the highlights of the 1978 BIG DAY.

By 6:00 p.m. we were travelling along the west side of Upper Klamath Lake. At Crystal

Spring we all heard Golden-crowned Kinglets and a Blue Grouse. Pileated Woodpecker, Pygmy Owl and Vaux's Swift were all added by sound, but no team member heard all three. Three Wood Ducks were found in a grassy pond, and at Malone Spring a Ruffed Grouse and a Black-capped Chickadee (very uncommon in the Basin) were found. At Rocky Point, we found at least four Red-necked Grebes and three Canvasbacks, our first of the day.

As we headed back to Klamath Falls, Sandhill Crane was added to all lists when two flew over the marsh. A MacGillivray's Warbler was also added by those who missed the Link River bird. At dark with a Klamath County BIG DAY list of 145, we headed back to Klamath Falls and an Italian dinner (Mark thought the lights of Klamath Falls looked just like a plate of spaghetti). As we approached a highway underpass, Steve Summers' sharp eyes spotted a Barn Owl (I wish he could have barned a Spotted Owl for my life list) and we rolled happily into town with a LONG DAY Klamath County BIG DAY total of 146 species; 141 species seen by every member (that's 97% for any ABA BIG DAY freaks keeping track).

Next year we plan to add a new stop on our carefully planned tour in an attempt to reach the 150 plateau. Who knows, with between 190 and 200 species probably present in the county in mid-May, maybe the state BIG DAY record (171) is possible?



Spring 1979 Records Committee Report

Alan Contreras

The Oregon Bird Records Committee met on Saturday, May 26, 1979 at the Malheur Environmental Field Station, and considered a number of interesting records.

The Committee subsequently accepted the resignation of C. D. Littlefield, who will be returning to Arizona, and has since elected David Fix, a Portland-area native, now working in Washington and "wintering" in Eugene, to fill the vacancy.

The present Committee, with the year that each position expires, is listed below:

| | | |
|---------------|---------------|------|
| David Fix | Eugene | 1979 |
| Jeff Gilligan | Portland | 1980 |
| Robert Lucas | Salem | 1980 |
| Alan McGie | North Bend | 1980 |
| Larry McQueen | Eugene | 1981 |
| Harry Nehls | Portland | 1981 |
| Eleanor Pugh | Wolf Creek | 1981 |
| Steve Summers | Klamath Falls | 1979 |
| Otis Swisher | Medford | 1979 |

The Committee was informed in June of the resignation of Alan Contreras of Eugene as Secretary, and has not yet appointed a successor. Anyone interested in the position should contact Contreras. The job involves maintaining the official state slide, photo and description collection, organizing and mailing details of unusual records to members and organizing a meeting of the Committee once or twice annually. The Secretary is now a voting member of the Committee, as well.

Nominations for the 1980 Committee and Alternates List (who vote in the absence of

of Members, and on certain records submitted by Members) should be submitted to Alan Contreras, Bird Records Committee, P. O. Box 3082, Eugene, Oregon 97403, by December 1, 1979. Any person receiving at least three nominations will be placed on the ballot for consideration by the present Committee, which makes the selections.

The Committee made the following decisions at its meeting. Assistance in preparation and record keeping at the meeting was provided by Dennis Rogers of Port Orford. The Committee gratefully acknowledges the access to facilities provided by Dr. Denzel Ferguson of the Malheur Environmental Station.

The Committee permits no more than one dissenting vote in accepting a record. (The Oregon Bird Records Committee reviews records for all birds seen four or less times each year in Oregon. A general guide for the birds which will be reviewed are all birds indicated as extremely rare, accidental or hypothetical in every region of Oregon in Bertrand and Scott's Checklist of the Birds of Oregon or those birds which are not listed - Ed.)

In attendance: Gilligan, Lucas, McGie, Nehls, Pugh, Summers and Swisher.

Absent: Littlefield and McQueen.

Alternates voting on various records: Tom Crabtree, David Irons, Mark Koninendyke and David Fix.

ACCEPTED RECORDS

| | |
|---|------|
| Least Tern, 8/19/73, Siuslaw River, by Jim and Judy Carlson | 10-0 |
| H Magnolia Warbler, 5/6/79, Salem, by Crabtree; Lucas abstain | 9-0 |

- Semipalmated Sandpiper, Tillamook, by Gilligan 10-0
- 1st Short-tailed Albatross, 9/30/78, Newport pelagic, by Crabtree 10-0
- 1st Black-headed Gull, 6/27/77, Sunset Beach, by Joe Gnagey; Lucas abstain 9-0
- 1st Hudsonian Godwit, 9/19/78, Bandon, by Crabtree; Lucas dissent, Crabtree abstain 8-1
- 1st Parakeet Auklet, 12/3/77, Tillamook, by Nehls 10-0
- H Cape May Warbler, 6/3/78, Malheur, by John Gatchet; Irons dissent 9-1
- H Wilson's Storm Petrel, 5/31/76, South Jetty Columbia River, by Gilligan; Gilligan abstain 9-0
- H McCown's Longspur, 8/8/76, Harney Co., by Clarice Watson 10-0
- H Golden-winged X Blue-winged Warbler, hybrid, 6/14/77, Indian Ford Campground, by Derb Carter 10-0
- 1st Long-toed Stint, 9/3/78, Tillamook, by Gilligan; Fix dissent, Gilligan abstain 8-1

H = Hypothetical (no confirmed state record as yet)

1st = First confirmed Oregon record by photo or specimen

NOT ACCEPTED

- Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, 8/26/78, South Jetty Columbia River; Pugh and Summers abstain 0-8

- King Eider, 3/10/76, Tillamook; voting to accept: Pugh and Gilligan; voting not to accept: Summers, Swisher, McGie, Irons, Crabtree, Lucas and Nehls; Fix abstain 2-7

- Flesh-footed Shearwater, 9/30/78, pelagic; voting to accept: Irons, Gilligan and Fix; voting not to accept: Summers, Swisher, Pugh, McGie, Lucas and Nehls 3-6

- Laughing Gull, 5/26/78, Malheur NWR; voting to accept: Swisher, Pugh, McGie, Crabtree, Irons, Nehls and Gilligan; voting not to accept: Lucas and Fix 7-2

- Manx Shearwater, 9/10/77, pelagic; voting to accept: Summers, Swisher, Pugh, Crabtree, Nehls, Gilligan and Fix; voting not to accept: McGie and Lucas 7-2

OTHER RECORDS

Immature Rose-breasted Grosbeak - referred to authorities in the east

Smith's Longspur - still under consideration by Colorado Records Committee

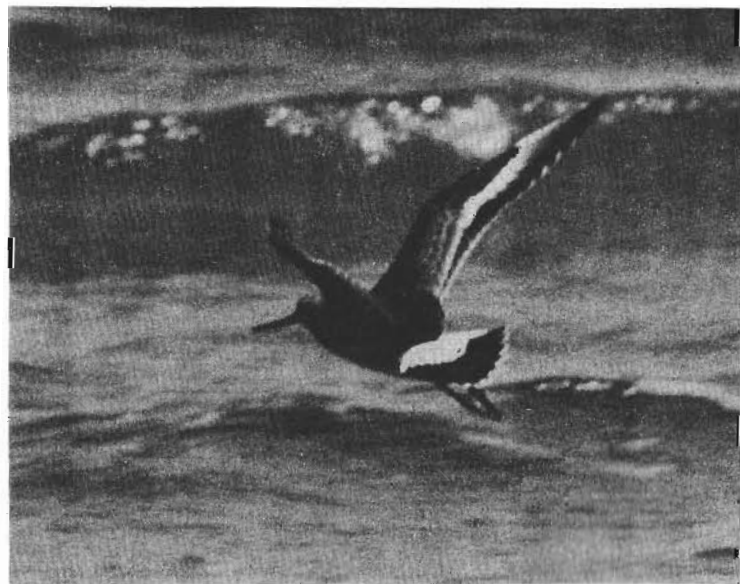
Xantus' Murrelet - referred to California observers for comments

[On pages 14 and 15, photographs of the first accepted records for four new species on the Oregon list are presented. We plan to publish more of these significant photographs in future issues - Ed.]

FIRST OREGON RECORDS



Black-headed Gull (photo: Joe Gnagey)

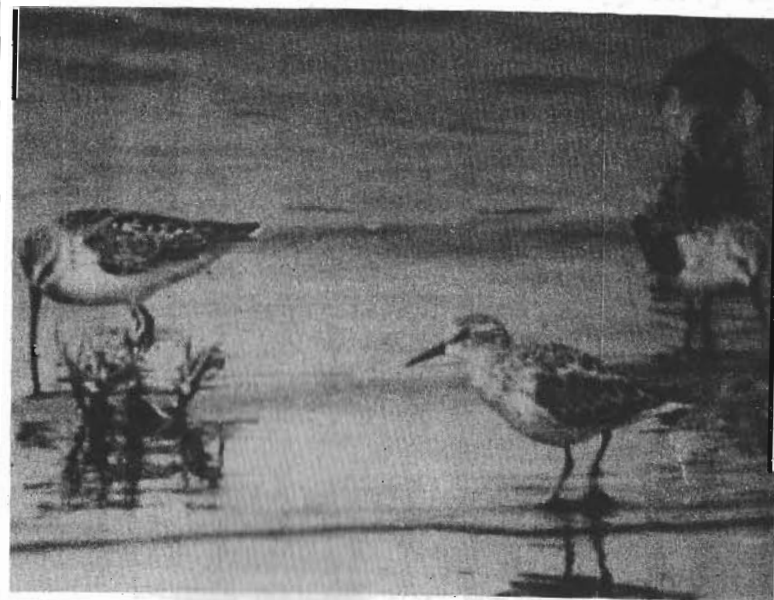


Hudsonian Godwit (photo: Tom Crabtree)

FIRST OREGON RECORDS



Parakeet Auklet (photo: Harry Nehls)



Long-toed Stint (photo: Harry Nehls)

The Dipper-Salmon Egg Phenomenon

Jim Rogers

On several occasions near my home on Anvil Creek, I have noticed an apparently ritualistic act performed by a Dipper or Water Ouzel (Cinclus mexicanus). This singular performance takes place in the dead of winter when the creek is raging and the salmon (Oncorhynchus tshawytscha) are spawning.

A lone Dipper will perch on a rock or salmon carcass in the water, and holding a salmon egg in its beak, will sing a long, complex dipper-song, full of all subtle nuances meaningful only to his kind. Perhaps I should digress at this point for those readers who are unfamiliar with the Dipper's repertoire, and quote John Muir, who described it much better than I could in his essay "The Water-Ouzel", to wit:

"What may be regarded as the separate songs of the Ouzel are exceedingly difficult of description, because they are so variable and at the same time so confluent. Though I have been acquainted with my favorite ten years, and during most of this time have heard him sing nearly every day, I still detect notes and strains that seem new to me. Nearly all of his music is sweet and tender, lapsing from his round breast like water over the smooth lip of a pool, then breaking farther on into a sparkling foam of melodious notes, which glow with subdued enthusiasm, yet without expressing much of the strong, gushing ecstasy of the bobolink or skylark.

"The more striking strains are perfect arabesques of melody, composed of a few full, round, mellow notes, embroidered with delicate trills which fade and melt in long slender cadences. In a general way his music is that

of the streams refined and spiritualized. The deep booming notes of the falls are in it, the trills of rapids, the gurgling of margin eddies, the low whispering of level reaches, and the sweet tinkle of separate drops oozing from the ends of mosses and falling into tranquil pools."

Let us return now to the Dipper perched on his little island, with his head tipped back and salmon egg firmly in bill. He sings the above described song for perhaps a minute or two, then suddenly throws the egg down into the rushing water at his feet. He flies into the water, disappearing beneath the surface for a few seconds, only to reappear a few feet downstream, salmon egg firmly grasped in beak. He flies back to the same perch, sings for another minute or two, plunks the egg into the water, retrieves it again, and repeats the process. He goes through this routine perhaps a half dozen times. Finally he sings a last refrain and the egg disappears down his throat. Then off he flies and the show is over.

I assume that it is the same egg every time as the bird always successfully returns with his prize. Why does he do it? There never seems to be another Dipper in sight, which apparently precludes mating connotations. He doesn't appear to be tenderizing the egg to make it easier to swallow. It seems totally unconnected to the survival of the species. Why would the Dipper have evolved to perform this act? I like to think of it as a sort of welcome to the returning salmon, "Cinclus' Ode to Oncorhynchus".



Shorebirding

Harry Nehls

One of the most exciting aspects of bird-watching on the West Coast in recent years has been the increased interest in shorebirds. This dynamic and ever changing group brings more surprises each year as birders become more confident and experienced. Of the 40 species of shorebirds listed by Bertrand and Scott in their 1973 Checklist of the Birds of Oregon, four were considered hypothetical because of inadequate verification. Today all four have been photographed, observed, studied, looked for and found almost every year. In addition, five new species have been added to the list plus three new hypotheticals. The state shorebird list now stands at 48.

Although shorebirding is a highly exciting and enjoyable sport, a great number of people seem to shy away from it as being too difficult; they would rather attempt to identify fall warblers than tackle this complicated group. This is unfortunate because a little experience and some patient field work would prove to them that most of the birds are easy to identify, and the harder ones become easier as they become more confident. There is a knack to it, however, and firsthand experience is needed to become proficient.

The two most important points in studying shorebirds is identification--what to look for, and getting close to enough birds to use your knowledge on identification. The field guides and other literature are a great help on learning the field points to look for in each species, but firsthand field observation is better. Too much reliance on the field guide has ruined many a potential good birder. Gain what knowledge you need from the books, then get out and use it to

learn more than the authors have told you. The first step most birders take before going out for shorebirds is to acquire a scope and a higher powered pair of binoculars. They are a great help, of course, but getting close to the birds is more important. Contrary to general belief, scopes are best at close range for detailed study of plumages, not for long-range scouting of the flats, although they are good for that also. The ability to closely approach large numbers of shorebirds gathered in close flocks so that plumages can be compared and identification made takes some knowledge of the birds' habits and migration timing.

In tidal areas, shorebirds feed during the low tide periods, scattering over the flats and into areas difficult to penetrate. As the tide rises and floods these feeding areas the birds are pushed higher and higher up the shorelines until they are grouped onto the highest spots. Shorebirders visit these areas as the tide is still rising and before it gets so high as to force the birds into grassy cover or out to the open beaches to scatter out again. Knowledge of these gathering, or staging areas, is important for outstanding shorebirding. At the South Jetty of the Columbia River the birds gather on the shorebird flats behind the jetty as the tide rises. If this area is visited at the low end of the tide, the flats are often barren. However, almost all of the shorebirds in the area drop in as the tide floods out nearby feeding areas. At Tillamook the shorebird flats in the bay near the Bayocean parking lot are often outstanding, and have provided many new shorebirds to the state list. The flats behind the Marine Science Center at Newport are renowned for the fine collection of shorebirds that can be found there at mid and high tides. Pony Slough in Coos Bay at North Bend is another famous spot. For large numbers of the larger shorebirds, the Bandon high tide sand bar is hard to beat. Here the feeding area is extensive, and hard to penetrate but as the

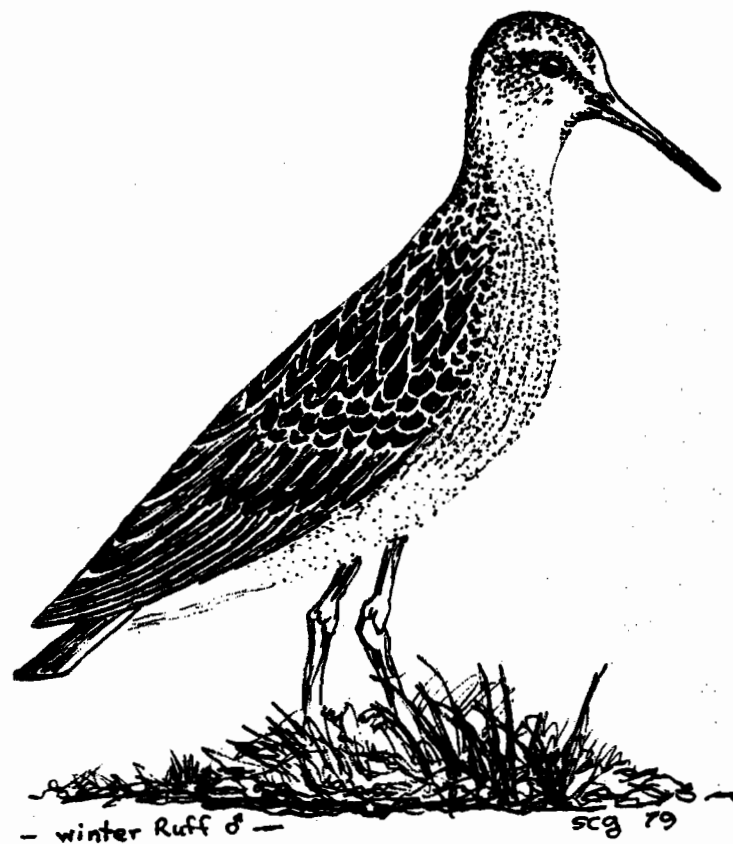
flats flood, very high numbers of these birds gather on the point about a mile east of the lighthouse. The gathering spots in other estuaries have been studied but more is yet to be learned. We are still missing more than we are finding.

Inland, where the water is more stable, shorebirds find their proper habitat about lakes and pools that are drying up. Often extensive flats are found but usually it is just a rim about the standing water. The birds are not rounded up by the tides but remain scattered but most often they can be approached from nearby dry land. Shorebirds tend to be jumpy creatures; wind, predators, migration anxiety, a large bird flying over, anything seems to set them off. Close approach is often successful only after a calculated plan of attack. Seldom does it do much good to sneak up on shorebirds. A direct approach is best, stopping when they appear nervous. Avoid approaching them from the direction of the sun. A huge dark, moving object would make anything jumpy. If they are feeding, watch which direction they are moving and stand in their path. Often, if they are not alarmed, they will walk right up to and around your feet. If the flock is agitated and jumpy, hang around a bit, approach and drop back several times until they are used to you. After you are accepted there is little problem with a close approach for study or even photography.

Fall is the best time of year for the shorebirds. Not only is it rather quiet birding for other species but the weather is great along the coast and it offers a good excuse to visit what available water there is inland. The local breeding species are interesting enough but the surge of migrants from further north, plus a sprinkling of birds from distant lands, bring great birding and high excitement. Along the coast, each tide seems to bring in something that wasn't about earlier and inland, there is often

a noticeable change as these night migrants come and go under cover of darkness. From late June to December, they fly over, drift in, linger, move about, then pass on to the south. Each species has a different timetable and stray birds usually join the species best suited for their feeding habits and timetable.

Reprinted from the October 1979 Portland Audubon Warbler with permission of the author.



Gray Catbird on the Grande Ronde River — A Mini-Site Guide

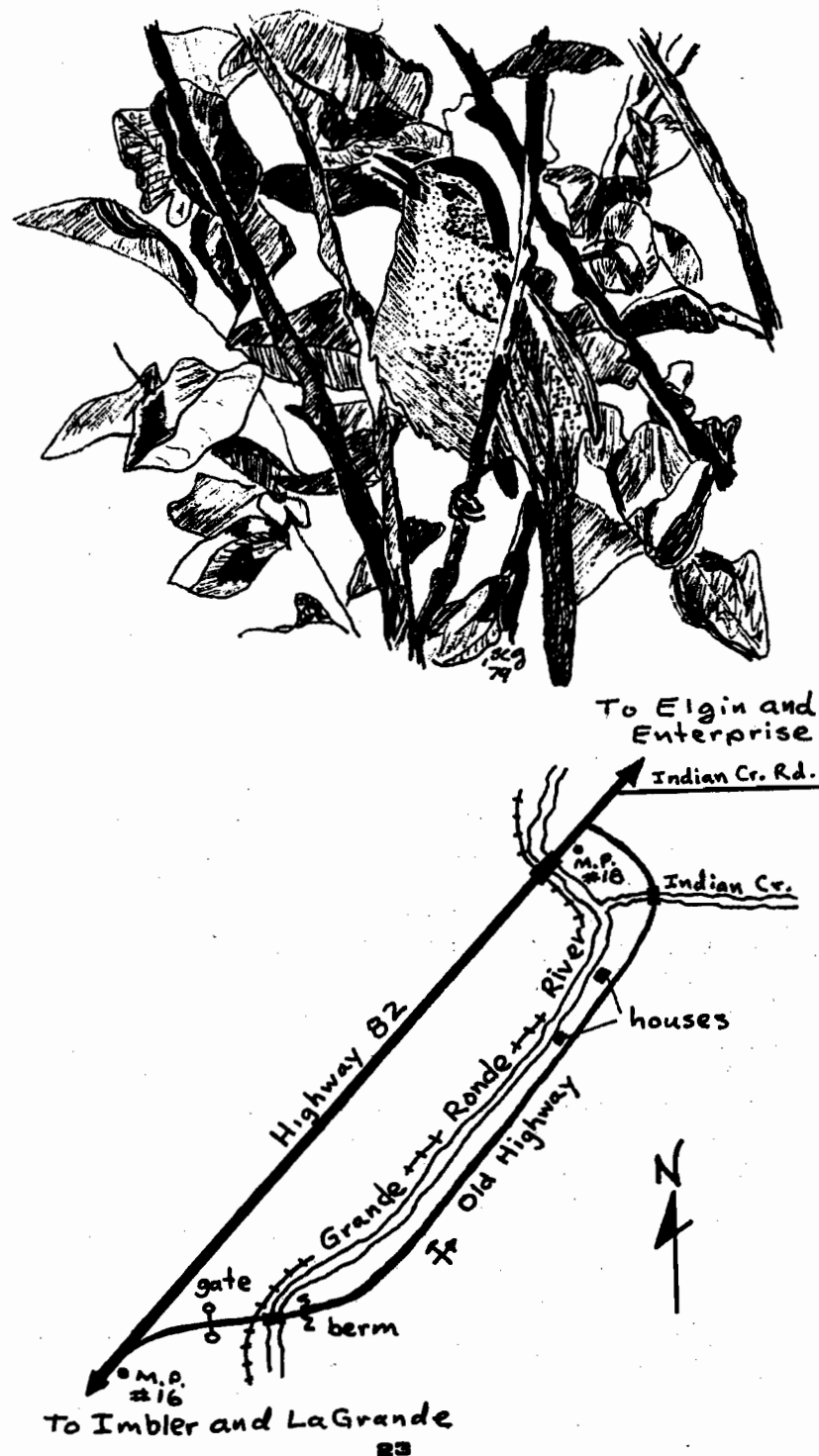
Steve Gordon

While I was on vacation in northeastern Oregon, Ron Rohweder shared a tip on a good birding spot in Union County. For those who want to see a Gray Catbird in Oregon, this stretch of the Grande Ronde River is highly recommended. The area is one of dry, rocky hillsides with some scattered Ponderosa Pine among the brush. Thick riparian vegetation hugs both banks of the river.

To reach this two mile stretch of the Grande Ronde, travel northeast on Highway 82 from La Grande. After passing through Imbler, continue past mile post no. 16. At this point, as you begin to climb a grade look southeast, you will see the river, railroad and old highway below in a pretty little gorge. Continue until you cross the river and turn east onto the old highway at a point 0.1 mile past mile post no. 18. If you travel too far on Highway 82, you should find Indian Creek Road. There are two houses on the old highway; continue past them and then walk along the road and enjoy the birding and scenery.

At 2:00 on a warm, sunny July 2nd afternoon, Gray Catbird (6), Veery (5) and Yellow-breasted Chat (6) were all active and vocal. Rock and Canyon Wrens were both present and Lazuli Buntings were abundant. The variety of habitats, the accessibility and the birds combine to make this part of the Grande Ronde an exciting place to visit.

Good birding and thanks, Ron.



Chasing the Birds of John Day

Jim Carlson

With Wheatear and Kittlitz's Murrelet still lingering in our minds, my wife, Judy, and I returned to Eugene June 29, 1979 after spending four weeks in Alaska. While our trip to the North country was very productive, including sidetrips to Nome, the Pribilofs and Mt. McKinley, we were ready to come back to the pleasures and excitement of our own state. This was especially true since we had left shortly after a phenomenal Memorial Day weekend at Malheur. Black-throated Sparrows, Black-chinned Hummingbird and White-throated Swifts had all been new Oregon birds for us. Saturday we were able to see the Magnolia Warbler at headquarters, while the trip home gave us a male Rose-breasted Grosbeak at Indian Ford Campground. After missing the June birding in Oregon we were anxious to find out what had been seen.

My first action the night we got home was to call Tad Finnell who would be sure to have a good idea of what was happening throughout the state. Although we were sorry to hear we had missed the state's first Scarlet Tanager, we did find out that the center of recent activity seemed to be in the John Day area where Upland Sandpipers appeared to be in good numbers in Bear and Logan Valleys and Long-eared and Flammulated Owls had been found. The two owls would both be life birds for us and we had missed the Upland Sandpipers twice in 1978. The Fourth of July unfortunately came on a Wednesday so we decided to rest up for a week before heading towards Grant County. Just to see how our luck was running, we did go out to Jasper Park near Eugene on the Fourth and found a Red-eyed Vireo. We heard it before getting out of the car. With such an auspicious sign we prepared to head for Central Oregon.

Friday night, July 6, we drove the 265 miles to Clyde Holliday Wayside, arriving at 11:30 p.m. The only item of note on the trip was that no gas stations were open. The gas situation certainly hadn't improved since May. The small campground was nearly full when we got in but we were greeted by a Yellow-breasted Chat singing his heart out in the dark. Spotted Sandpipers, Common Nighthawks, House Wrens, Yellow Warblers and Northern Orioles greeted us in the morning. We couldn't find the Gray Catbirds which had been reported here in previous years.

After gassing up in John Day Saturday morning, we headed out to look for the Long-eared Owls. They had been found in late June about five miles west of Suplee on the Izee Road (about 50 miles west of Highway 395). There are two clumps of large old growth willows along a small flowing stream. We found the owls in one of the clumps after an Ash-throated Fly-catcher tipped us off as to their location. There were four Long-eareds altogether. Although they were all able to fly, we assumed that at least two of them were juveniles. The habitat surrounding this area is all sagebrush with the normal compliments of Sage Thrashers and Brewer's Sparrows. After spending some time watching the owls fly from willow to juniper to willow, we left them and the steer with which they shared the area.

On to the Upland Sandpipers. We had looked in Bear Valley as we went out for the owls but hadn't seen any sandpipers, so we decided to head for Logan Valley where they had been last reported. Logan Valley is a beautiful spot just to the south of the Strawberry Mountain Wilderness and about 25 miles east of Seneca. It is a high (5,080') meadow that appears in a relatively natural state after an extensive amount of Forest Service restoration. The birding class from the Malheur Environmental Field

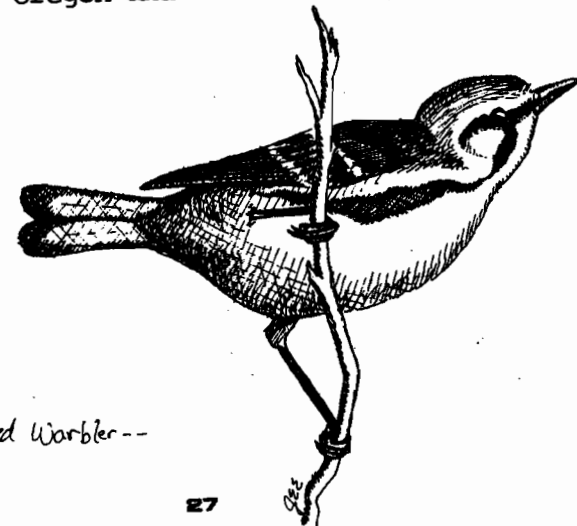
Station was also in the area and they found one of the Upland Sandpipers in a rocky field on the north side of the road about halfway between the forested edges of the valley. The bird was probably defending its nest or young since it didn't appear anxious to go very far. Everyone got good looks at this relatively rare Oregon bird. Horned Larks and Savannah Sparrows were also nesting in the area.

We camped at Starr Campground, south of John Day, where the Flammulated Owls had been reported. In the short time before dark we found Williamson's Sapsucker, MacGillivray's Warbler, Red Crossbills and Lincoln's Sparrow as well as the regular mountain species. At the same time, Dan Hyerly found us (Tad told him where we would be). We had a lot to tell Dan, but he started off by telling us of the singing Chestnut-sided Warbler he had found at Ochoco Creek Ranger Station that morning. It was already near dark so we decided to try for that one the next morning hoping it would stick around. Dan stayed to try for the Flammulated Owls with us. Just at dusk we heard one hooting from the upper end of the campground. It called every 3-4 seconds, a very low pitched single note. It seemed to be quite a ways off and we couldn't bring it closer. It called again after a pause of about 15 minutes, but by that time it was dark and the bird was even further away. It is always eerie to hear an owl hooting from some unknown limb and it was great to hear this elusive little owl. A more familiar Great Horned Owl hooted at us as we went to sleep that night.

Sunday we were off to Ochoco Creek for the warbler. On another tip from Dan, we stopped at Picture Gorge and saw the White-throated Swifts flying low overhead. We went in the back way to Ochoco Creek from Ochoco Summit through the beautiful open Ponderosa Pine forest with numerous meadows that makes the Ochocos one of

the most beautiful mountain areas in the state. We got to the Ranger Station at 10:00 a.m. and surprisingly there was no one around, a good sign. We rolled down the window as we drove into the first campsite on the right. Immediately, we could hear the song of the Chestnut-sided Warbler. As we got out of the car, the warbler was singing from a branch not more than 20 feet away, a beautiful male in full breeding plumage. The warbler was perched about 20 feet above the ground in a Ponderosa Pine. We watched it for 45 minutes. During that time we could always find it within one or two minutes, as it sang. It used higher perches, 15-30 feet, usually pines but also willows near the creek and cottonwoods near the entry road. At the same time Veeries were singing constantly. We saw 6 or 8 during the short time we were there. The colony seemed to be doing very well compared to 1978.

On the way home to Eugene, we stopped at the Little Deschutes River site to see if we could find the American Redstart and Northern Water-thrush which had been reported in the middle of June. Alas, our luck couldn't overcome the high winds and muggy heat and we couldn't find these birds. We were far from disappointed with our weekend trip, though, as we had seen our share of excellent birds along with the beautiful country in Central Oregon. We were happy indeed to be back in Oregon and able to chase the birds of John Day.



--Chestnut-sided Warbler--

Editor's Note

We hope you enjoy the interesting potpourri of articles in this issue. The focus of most of them is the late spring to early summer season . . . remember those warmer days? As we move into the winter birding season, we will be featuring more articles from the breeding season and fall and we will be looking forward to the Christmas Bird Counts (CBC's). Our next issue will contain a proposal for creating an Oregon birding organization to formally take responsibility for the state-wide functions currently being handled by SWOC. We plan to publish two more issues of Oregon Birds before the end of this calendar year and to begin the 1980 year with an issue containing the 1979 CBC results.

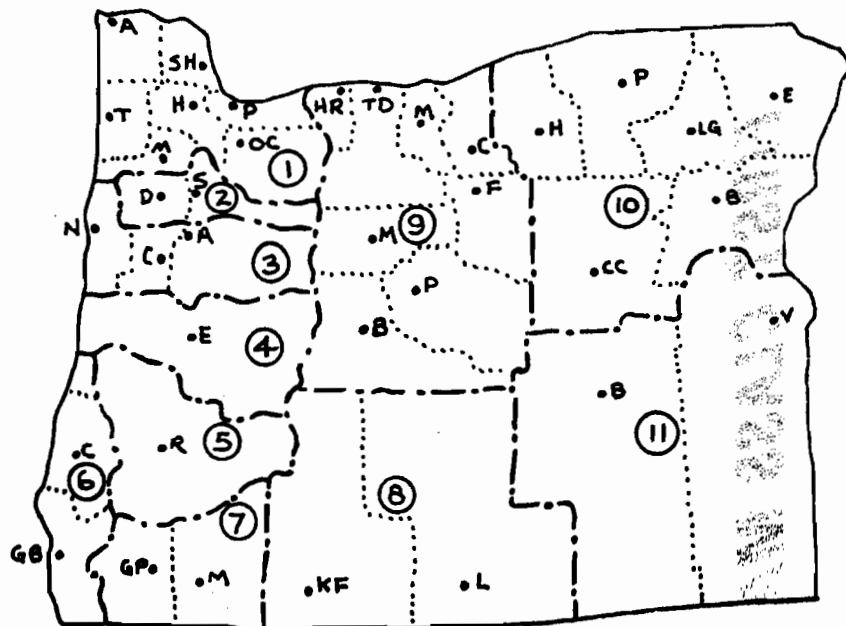
We continue to seek new ideas and contributions from the membership. Articles and artwork are welcomed. If you have ideas for topics you would like to see in future issues, communicate them to us. We have the capability to help with editing, typing, mapping and pen and ink illustration; but we need your written material. Contribution of articles from a broad spectrum of authors serves to strengthen the publication by providing variety and by presenting different perspectives on Oregon's birds. We have over 100 members again this year--we would like to hear from more of you.

Two of the articles in this issue are reprints from Audubon newsletters. As Clarice Watson scours the newsletters for field notes, she has been looking for articles of interest to Oregon birders. If you know of other sources of information, please share them with Oregon Birds.

"Send Field Notes To..."

When afield in Oregon, please share your unusual or exciting finds with others. Cooperative communication with the individuals and groups listed below will help promote a better understanding of Oregon's birds. Many of the eleven reporting areas are generally represented by Audubon groups or other bird clubs who regularly publish field notes and are interested in observations "close to home".

1. Harry Nehls, 2736 S.E. 20th, Portland 97202
2. Salem Audubon Society, Box 2013, Salem 97308
3. Fred Ramsey, 2504 N.W. Mulkey, Corvallis 97330
4. Tad Finnell, 2412 Alder, Eugene 97405
5. Fred Parker, 313 W. Hickory, Roseburg 97470
6. Alan McGie, 3603 Edgewood Dr., North Bend 97459
7. Vince Zauskey, 945 E. Main, Ashland 97520
8. Steve Summers, 1009 Merryman, Klamath Falls 97601
9. Adele Rodriguez, 630 6th St., Madras 97741
10. Grande Ronde Bird Club, Box 29, La Grande 97850
11. C. D. Littlefield and Steve Thompson, Malheur N.W.R., Box 113, Burns 97720



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