

# SWOC TALK

March - April, 1975

Newsletter of the Southern Willamette Ornithological Club

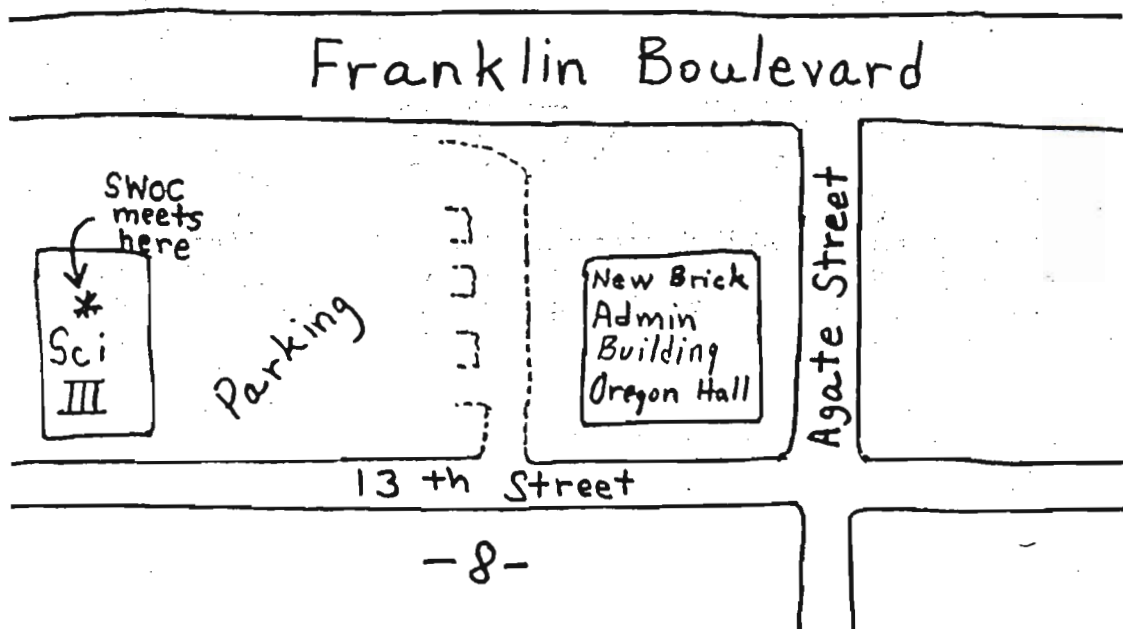
Volume 1, Number 2

## MEETINGS

The ninth meeting of SWOC will be held at 7:30 PM, April 7, 1975. Our meeting place is the conference room on the third floor of Science III, University of Oregon campus, Eugene. There is no definite agenda as of yet, but discussion will probably cover the mapping project, computerized field notes, and the organization of a SWOC ornithological collection.

The tenth meeting of SWOC is scheduled for 7:30 PM, May 5, 1975. Meeting place will be the same as for the ninth meeting. No agenda yet.

These two paragraphs will be the only announcement to members of the meetings. Hopefully, no more evenings will be spent notifying people of an upcoming meeting.



# PAST MEETINGS

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The seventh meeting of SWOC was held on February 3, 1975. Ellen McMahon presented an excellent talk on the student-initiated Great Blue Heron Rookery Survey on the Oregon coast accompanied with slides and movies taken at one of the rookeries. Following this, brief discussion was held on the computerized field notes idea. Also at this meeting, Charles Thomas requested members' help in locating areas within Bureau of Land Management property having significant wildlife importance. Twenty-six people attended.

On March 3, 1975, twenty people attended the eighth meeting of SWOC. To begin the meeting, Claire Watson handed out and discussed preliminary lists of arrival and departure dates of winter visitors. The rest of the meeting was taken up with a very active discussion of the bird distribution mapping project. See page 10 elsewhere in this issue for more information on this project.

## MEMBERS

As of March 26, 1975, the Southern Willamette Ornithological Club has twenty-eight paid memberships. The following list is of members, arranged alphabetically.

Bob Bumstead	Larry McQueen
Steve Carroll	Harry Nehls
Alan Contreras	Don Payne
Elina Curtis	Al Prigge
Larry Daggett	Martha Schmitt
Ron Finne	Aaron Skirvin
Randy Floyd	Dorris Swanson
Ina Foss	Colleen Sweeney
Dan Gleason	Charlie Thomas
Chip Jobanek	Carol Tyler
Alelia Linscott	Helen Tyler
Wes Loder	Steve Tyler
Tom Lund	Claire Watson
Helen Mancl	Herb Wisner

## BUSINESS

SWOC now has an established bank account. \$140 has been collected as dues for memberships, printing and mailing of vol. 1, no. 1 of SWOC TALK cost \$19.84 (1) and \$10.00 was given to Ellen McMahon to help defray expenses incurred in transportation to present her talk at the seventh meeting, leaving a present balance of \$110.16. Dues are \$5.00 yearly. Please make checks out to "SWOC". Mail should be addressed to "SWOC, c/o Chip Jobanek, 10600 McKenzie Highway, Springfield, Oregon, 97477."

# MAPPING

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The response to the Bird Distribution Mapping Project, proposed at the eighth meeting of SWOC, March 3, 1975, was overwhelming. The instructions, briefly, are that the species in the following list are ones that some members have a particular interest in and all sightings of these species should be reported to the respective person. We are primarily interested in sightings in the southern Willamette Valley. At the next SWOC meeting, members who desire more detailed information on sightings will present more specific instructions. For convenience, two lists are given, one alphabetical in regard to the member and the other phylogenetic.

Linton von Beroldingen - American Kestrel	Green Heron - Helen Mancl
Alan Contreras - Screech Owl	American Kestrel - Linton
Saw-whet Owl	von Beroldingen
Randy Floyd - Hutton's Vireo	Yellow Rail - Larry McQueen
Dan Gleason - Horned Lark	Screech Owl - Alan Contreras
Chip Jobanek - Pileated Woodpecker	Pygmy Owl - Chip Jobanek
Acorn Woodpecker	Short-eared Owl - Larry McQueen
Wrentit Also, Pygmy Owl	Saw-whet Owl - Alan Contreras
Tom Lund - all swallows (See below)	Anna's Hummingbird - Martha Schmitt
Purple Martin	Pileated Woodpecker - Chip Jobanek
Helen Mancl - Green Heron	Acorn Woodpecker - Chip Jobanek
Larry McQueen - Yellow Rail	Western Kingbird - Al Prigge
Short-eared Owl	Horned Lark - Dan Gleason
Grasshopper Sparrow	swallows - Tom Lund (See below)
Don Payne - Northern Oriole	Purple Martin - Tom Lund
American Goldfinch	Wrentit - Chip Jobanek
Lesser Goldfinch	House Wren - Claire Watson
Pine Siskin	Western Bluebird - Aaron Skirvin
Al Prigge - Western Kingbird	Hutton's Vireo - Randy Floyd
Martha Schmitt - Anna's Hummingbird	Northern Oriole - Don Payne
Aaron Skirvin - Western Bluebird	Pine Siskin - Don Payne
Claire Watson - House Wren	American Goldfinch - Don Payne
	Lesser Goldfinch - Don Payne
	Grasshopper Sparrow - Larry
	McQueen

Tom is beginning a comparative study of the swallows, in particular studying the sympatry between Tree and Violet-green Swallows. Any sighting that would contribute to an understanding of this sympatry is greatly desired. Examples would be sightings showing foraging differences, differences in nesting biology, differences in migratory patterns, and so forth. (Or perhaps similarities in these things). Tom will be able to provide more explicit instructions at the next SWOC meeting. Keeping these just-mentioned desires in mind, the following summarizes the types of sightings Tom is interested in.

- Need all sightings of Purple Martins
  - Bank Swallows
  - Rough-winged Swallows
- Only sightings of nesting attempts by
  - Tree Swallows
  - Violet-green Swallows
  - Cliff Swallows
  - Barn Swallows

## Some Data for a Species Index

Donald E. Payne

One of the popular Pacific Flyways extends from Southwest British Columbia through Western Washington, Western Oregon to the headwaters of the Willamette River here in Lane County where it originates. Gullion has described this southern terminus. This valley is the end of anything like a direct course running north and south.

The Coast Range casts a shadow over the flyway, and the Cascades form the eastern border. There are numerous "Ox-bow and Yazoo" type bodies of water that form good resting and foraging sites. To the east of us there are passes in the 5,000-foot range and this barrier effectively dries out the prevailing westerly winds to form a divided Transitional Zone with humid and arid components.

The climate is mild. Water is abundant; in winter it is seldom iced over for very long at a time, so that we have a sizeable inventory of birds at any season.

I have banding stations on both sides of the Cascades; at the present time the District Ranger's Office in the Deschutes National Forest has asked for a list of the birds that I have encountered while banding east of the summit. I am happy to pass this information along. Over a number of years the following data have been in process of being gathered to form part of a Species Index for West Central Oregon.

The weights were taken on a triple beam balance to the nearest tenth of a gram. Wing lengths are the cords of the unflattened wing measured on a centimeter scale. I have included the extremes of the weights and wing lengths, and the average taken. After the method of E.J. Berger in the *E.B.B.A. Workshop Manual*, I have computed the Standard Deviation. Some of the figures do not represent enough individual measurements to be significant, but hopefully they may assist some other investigator.

Most of the birds were taken in mist nets or the McCamey Chickadee Trap. They include HY birds that were on the wing, as well as adults. This, too, may affect the data.

For what it is worth, these figures represent the work of a small station, but it may form a base for some other workers interested in weights and wing lengths.

### Bibliography

- Gabrielson, I.N., and S.G. Jewett. *Birds of Oregon*.  
 Berger, E.J. Jr., *Eastern Bird Banding News Workshop Manual*.  
 Gullion, G.W. *The Condor*. Vol. 53, May-June 1951.  
 Pettingill, O.S. Jr. *Ornithology in Laboratory and Field*. 4th Ed.  
 Route 7, Box 159A, Eugene, Oregon 97405.

Weights and Wing Lengths for Birds of Western Oregon

Species	AOU	Sample No.	Avg. Wt. (gm.)	Min-Max	Std. Dev.	Avg. Lngth.	Min-Max	Std. Dev.
Am. Kestrel — M	360	16	110	90-120	2.60	195	185-199	1.62
Am. Kestrel — F	360	17	120	105-145	1.95	200	190-215	1.22
Wh.-hd. Woodpkr.	399	15	59	56-64	2.61	129	127-131	1.14
Vaux's Swift	424	43	19	16-22	1.74	113	110-120	2.53
Steller's Jay	478	35	124	112-140	1.81	146	138-160	2.32
Br.-hd. Cowbird	495	25	36.3	42-50	3.52	99	106-110	4.46
Brewer's Blckbd.	510	59	65.5	50-80	1.62	120	110-135	1.35
Ev. Grosbeak	514	42	55.1	45-64	2.41	109	100-117	3.53
Less. Goldfinch	530	43	10.0	7-12	1.03	63	59-67	1.02
Pine Siskin	533	101	12.1	10-14	.93	73	67-78	2.10
Wt.-crn. Sparrow	554	24	29.7	26-32	2.13	76	70-84	3.57
Gld.-crn. Sparrow	557	33	33.2	27-39	1.02	82	72-84	2.26
Fox Sparrow	585	47	28.8	22-36	3.04	80	74-87	2.83
R.-s. Towhee	588	43	41.7	34-46	3.08	81	71-88	3.20
Orng.-crn. Warb.	646	20	9.0	6-11	1.37	58	54-62	2.20
Y.-r.(Aud.) Warbler	656	55	12.0	10-16	.97	76	70-82	3.40
Bl.-thr. Gr. Warb.	665	10	10.0	9-12	.90	62	60-65	1.70
Hermit Warbler	669	5	9.7	8-11	.90	65	62-69	.97
Pygmy Nuthatch	730	10	9.9	9-12	.95	62	59-66	1.83
Bl.-cap Chickadee	735	51	11.0	8-13	1.33	61	54-68	2.74
Mtn. Chickadee	738	43	11.0	8-13	1.08	67	60-72	2.58
Am. Robin	761	79	83.2	71-98	1.75	130	118-140	2.65
Varied Thrush	763	25	83.0	66-94	1.90	127	121-134	2.80
West. Bluebird	767	57	27.0	22-32	1.97	107	101-112	3.63



Dan Gleason

The AOU Checklist (1957) identifies five subspecies of Pygmy Owl (Glaucidium gnoma). They are: Glaucidium gnoma grinnelli, G.g. californicum, G.g. swarthi, G.g. hoskinsii, G.g. gnoma. G.g. grinnelli (Coast Pygmy Owl) and G.g. californicum (California Pygmy Owl) are the only subspecies found in Oregon. Which subspecies resides in the southern Willamette Valley is very unclear. The AOU Checklist offers little help. Of G.g. grinnelli, it says "... western Oregon...inland to lower Willamette Valley, Oregon..." What is the "lower" Willamette Valley? Is it the valley floor from Eugene to Portland or is it only the northern most portion of the valley, from Corvallis north? G.g. californicum, according to the same checklist, is found in Oregon "...east of lower Willamette Valley, but including upper Rogue River Valley..."

In addition to G.g. grinnelli and G.g. californicum, some observers feel that there is a third subspecies of Pygmy Owl in Oregon called Glaucidium gnoma pinicola (Rocky Mountain Pygmy Owl). This subspecies is considered equivalent to G.g. californicum by the AOU Checklist. If you believe G.g. pinicola to be a separate subspecies, then it does not occur in the Willamette Valley at all but only in the northeast quarter of the state in the Blue and Wallowa Mountains (Gabrielson and Jewett, 1940).

Pygmy Owls in the Eugene area pose an interesting taxonomic problem. Are they G.g. grinnelli or G.g. californicum? According to the range map shown by Gabrielson and Jewett, they all belong to G.g. californicum. Observations of skins and live birds argues that this may not be entirely true. The Museum of Natural History, U of O, has eight Pygmy Owl skins collected in Oregon. Three of the birds were collected around Eugene. All three were originally labeled Coast Pygmy Owl (grinnelli) and were later changed to California Pygmy Owl (californicum). I don't yet know when the labels were changed or why. The plumage of these three birds is like that of Coast Pygmy Owls rather than California (G.g. grinnelli is browner and has fewer white spots on the back of the head than G.g. californicum) and I therefore wonder why the identification was changed. The average number of eggs per nest is three or four in californicum and five in grinnelli (Bent, 1938). I don't know of any nest records for the Willamette Valley which contains records of clutch size.

#### Literature Cited

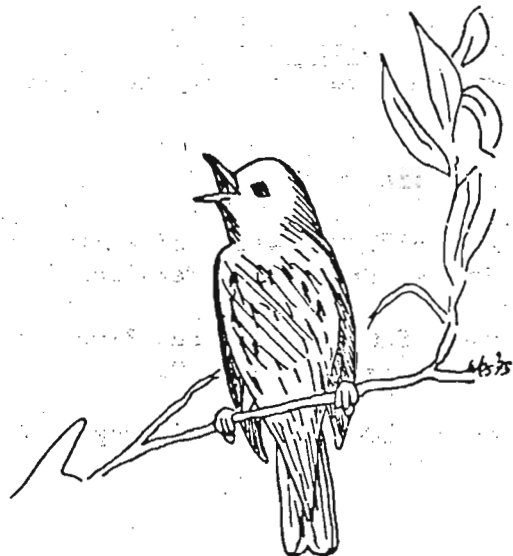
- American Ornithologist' Union. 1957. Checklist of North American Birds. Fifth Edition. Port City Press, Baltimore, Maryland.
- Bent, A.C. 1938. Life Histories of North American Birds of Prey. U.S. National Museum Bulletin 170. Washington, D.C.
- Gabrielson, I.N. and S.G. Jewett. 1940. Birds of Oregon. Oregon State College, Corvallis.

I'll briefly add a little to what Dan Gleason wrote on the previous page. Apparently, the critical region of these Pygmy Owl subspecies is the southern Willamette Valley almost in its entirety. Prill collected specimens in Scio he identified as grinnelli, two specimens from Corvallis are identified as californicum, and three Eugene skins, as Dan mentioned, were once considered grinnelli before being mysteriously changed to californicum. From this, it seems that there might be quite a bit of overlap, and perhaps interbreeding, between the subspecies throughout the southern Willamette Valley.

Not only is there confusion regarding the north-south distribution of subspecies, but also there is considerable confusion of the east-west distribution. If the Eugene skins (all collected at Spencer's Butte) are indeed representative of grinnelli, then what about Pygmy Owls in Walterville or Leaburg, on the other slope of the valley? Perhaps we have a situation of grinnelli breeding in the coast range and the western slope of the valley and californicum breeding in the foothills of the Cascades on the eastern slope.

In an attempt to solve this problem, Dan and I are planning to send the skins we have to a taxonomist at the U.S. National Museum in Washington, D.C. With his help we should be able to understand the situation in the past collecting localities of Pygmy Owls but we will still have little idea of the situation at other localities. This all leads up to a request: If at any time you should find a dead Pygmy Owl, please send it to us, no matter how bad the damage and no matter how decomposed the carcass. Only by examining birds from as varied a distribution as possible can we adequately understand the subspecific distribution.

Chip Jobanek



This issue of SWOC TALK was prepared by Chip Jobanek and was printed by the Quick Copy Center of the University of Oregon, Eugene.

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IN REVIEW  
Chip Jobanek

A Survey of Great Blue Heron Rookeries on the Oregon Coast. A Student Originated Studies Project Funded by the National Science Foundation. Student Director - Ellen McMahon. Charleston, Oregon.

This report is a fine example of what can be accomplished by a team of researchers. Biologists, surveyors, and cartographers combined to produce a report that should prove to be a valuable tool in the fight to prevent destruction of Great Blue Heron rookeries.

The plan of the work is well-organized. A four-page section on the life history of the Great Blue Heron, compiled from many sources, is followed by the project's stated objectives. Methods of research, a summary of results, a section including the tables and charts, and conclusions of what these results mean to the protection of the heronries concludes the first part of this work. I was especially impressed with the tables and charts. This section, however, was not mentioned in the table of contents.

The second part of the report concerns individual heronry write-ups. This, I am sure, will prove to be the most valuable section to the heronries. Each write-up includes information on physical features, biological findings, land use, and associated vegetation. Cross-section and topographic maps of the heronries and maps of nearby feeding areas accompany these sections.

A few of the minor mistakes that I found in this work includes punctuation and spelling errors. On page 3, grebes appears as greebes. On page v, Dr. Ben Fawver's last name is misspelled as Fauver. In the bibliography, S.G. Jewett becomes S.C. Jewett and Alexander Wetmore becomes Alexander Wentmore.

Generally, I have no complaint of the illustrations, but on page 32, a Great Blue Heron has legs certainly incapable of supporting his weight.

I was very disappointed with the bibliography and the text references to it - errors abound. Before I list these, let me say that I do not like to see references in a bibliography that were not mentioned in the text. If they had left these out, their bibliography would have been halved.

Although, on page 2, they mention Bent (1926), it appears in the bibliography as Bent (1963). On page 3, however, is where the errors really pile-up. I find six errors on this page alone. Jewett et al (1953) is mentioned in the text but is omitted from the bibliography. Gabrielson and Jewett (1940) appears in the text but in the bibliography is listed as Gabrielson and Jewett (1970). Robbins, Brown, and Zim (1966) not only contains a misspelling of Bertel Bruun's name but is omitted from the bibliography. We see references to Palmer (1961) and Palmer (1969), apparently referring to Palmer (1962), the only reference under this name in the bibliography. The Portland Audubon Society Survey of 1972 mentioned in the text is also mysteriously missing from the bibliography.

All of these bibliographical errors were inexcusable. Most occurred within the first five pages and should have been noticed, even if not much time was available for proof-reading. Despite these serious errors in an important section, the report still remains as a fine example of cooperative research. Its value will certainly increase as the need arises to defend the heronries from destruction. Its completion and publication has done the Great Blue Herons a big favor.

The American Goldfinch in the Upper Willamette Valley

Don Payne

There is probably no more spectacular dress change among birds than that which takes place in the pre-nuptial molt of the American Goldfinch. As a drab olive-green, small finch, in a flock of both sexes, and perhaps Siskins thrown in, he can hardly be distinguished from nearby females.

A good starting place for a description would logically be the bill - a stubby, heavy, conical finch type bill, so typical of the seed-eating fringillids. It is a pale yellow with a dusky tip. The nostrils are small and near the top of the beak.

The adult male begins plumage changes from the drab winter dress early in the year. As early as February and March a few of the 1000 to 1200 body feathers begin to be replaced. It is slow to start with and the majority are lated in late spring or early summer. By the summer solstice, he will have developed the full breeding plumage. The general body color is a clear, canary yellow. The forehead, part of the crown, lores, wings and tail are a jet black. The iris is brown in all ages. The greater coverts are tipped with white to form a single, conspicuous wing bar. There are nine primaries. The middle and lesser coverts are yellow, upper tail coverts white. The tail is black when folded, but reveals large white areas on the inner webs when spread. Legs and feet are brownish-flesh in color; the four toes are of equal length; the tarsi is scutellate.

The breeding female is much duller in color than the male. She has an overall brownish-olive look above with greenish-yellow on forehead and rump. She is clear greenish-yellow with buffy tinged feathers on sides and flank. Wings and tail are brownish-black. Two narrow wing bars, and the tail, when spread, reveals whiter inner webs similar to the male. The bill is dull flesh color; the legs are dusky and scutellate.

A post-breeding molt of body and head feathers takes place in both sexes in September and October. This plumage puts the similarity back on both sexes. Through the winter, then, they may be separated only with difficulty. The yellow is largely replaced with brownish-olive and deep buff. The male's wings and tail are more black and the white is whiter. In the female, these parts are more brown and the wing bars buffy.

The birds hatched this summer resemble the female until the post-juvenal molt. Pale yellow below, brightest on chin and throat, blending to deep buff on sides and flanks. Wings and tail are a dull black. Broad wing bars are buffy. Coverts are a dull yellow, with creamy margins. The pre-nuptial molt brings the bright yellow body, black crown, wings and tail. This second year male is like any AHY male except for the brown shoulder patches, which change to yellow with the post-nuptial molt. Here, too, the body feathers are molted. So, the male hatched one summer will develop full adult plumage by the second fall.

The American Goldfinch is not a quarrelsome bird. The flocking instinct is very well developed. Territories are developed and defended only at nesting time. Several nesting pairs may share a common feeding area of weed seeds and thistle down. Pair formation begins early, though the flock will stay together and may number up to forty individuals.

Nesting is late in the season by some standards. The dates in this area are from the middle of June to mid-July. In view of their nesting and feeding requirements, this late date seems appropriate. Thistle down is apparently a must for nesting material. One may pilfer his neighbor's nest for the coveted material if the supply is limited. The nest, a neat, substantial cup of plant fibers, grasses, small straws and down, is



located 3-5 feet from the ground. Tall weeds, low brush or small trees are the favored nesting sites. It is so well constructed that a deer mouse may, with a little revamping, use it for a winter home following the nesting season. It may take as long as a fortnight to build the first cup. A second may be built in as few as 5-6 days. They usually nest only once a season.

The eggs, 3-5 plain blue or bluish-white, hatch in 11-13 days. Parasitism by Cowbirds is not as frequent as with some other victims.

The young are altricial and are naked except for scattered areas of natal down. Usually, newly hatched birds are fed soft bodied worms, larvae, and insects the first few days of life; not so the young of the American Goldfinch. At approximately half-hour intervals they are fed a regurgitated mast from either parent. Seeds form the basis for this food and are the main item of their diet throughout life.

Nest sanitation in this species is not exemplary. There is little or no fecal sac, apparently; consequently, the nest rim and cup are untidy. Fledging is in 10-12 days and the troop of young and parents may be seen flitting about in an overgrown weed patch until late in summer.

The characteristic Goldfinch described in the field books is that of Spinus tristis tristis. This is the eastern form that reaches to the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. S.t. pallidus is paler, especially in winter, and is the form found in the deserts of the west, from central Washington, Oregon to Arizona. S.t. jewetti is a little darker and is found west of the Cascades from British Columbia to southern Oregon. S.t. salicamans is similar but is found from northern California south. The habitat of all the Goldfinches is weed and thistle patches, with the smaller seed-bearing trees a second choice.

	male	female	
Lengths	115 - 121 mm	102 - 106 mm	
Wing	66 - 73	66 - 70	avg. 67 mm, S.D. 1.65
Tail	43 - 45	43 - 45	
Weights	avg. 12 g	12 g	S.D. 1.35

The Southern Willamette Ornithological Club, or SWOC, is an organization representing the interests of bird students in the southern Willamette Valley. The goals of SWOC include:

- Conduct monthly meetings of ornithological interest
- Act as the coordinating body for local projects
- Participate actively in local governmental planning
- Act as a "sounding board" for new ideas and information pertinent to the study of Willamette Valley birdlife
- Distribute this information through the form of a newsletter and papers

Quite simply, SWOC is an informal discussion group which deals with the problems of Willamette Valley birds. We need your participation. Please consider joining SWOC and playing an active role in any of these stated goals. Address all letters to "SWOC, c/o Chip Jobanek, 10600 McKenzie Highway, Springfield, Oregon, 97477."