



# THE KESTREL

Salem Audubon Society

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## Wildlife Emergencies

Contact: Chintimini Wildlife Center  
(541) 745-5324 [chintiminiwildlife.org](http://chintiminiwildlife.org)

## The Pleasure and Excitement Of Home Bird Watching

By Tim Johnson

Salem Audubon Society President

Like many of you, I love visiting new places to see amazing birds I've only previously seen in books or guides. Sometimes, I travel internationally, but mostly, I bird within the United States, to places such as southeastern Arizona, the Rio Grande Valley in Texas, or the Black Swamp Observatory in Ohio. However, my favorite place to bird is in my yard.

I never tire of watching the regular visitors to our yard or feeders, birds such as Black-capped Chickadees, Red-breasted Nuthatches, White-throated Sparrows (in winter), or House Finches. It was the House Finch that initially got me interested in birds. Shortly after Carol and I moved into our new place in Mountain View, California, I hung a tube seed feeder. It wasn't long before these colorful finches started coming regularly to the feeder. It took me a while to figure out that they were House Finches. I loved hearing their cheery song.

For a few decades, I recorded the birds visiting our yard and feeder in a notebook. It wasn't until we moved to Salem and discovered eBird that I started recording my yard bird observations in an electronic database. The eBird database made it easier to track which birds I had seen in the yard and for the migrants when they typically arrive and leave. I also liked the thought that my observations could provide data for scientific research to help improve our understanding of our birds.

Eight years ago, I also started entering my yard and feeder bird observations into the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Project FeederWatch database. I liked the idea that the data could help provide information specifically about birds supported by feeders, water features, and other backyard habitat improvements during winter. The protocol made it pretty easy to collect and record my bird observations. It also made recording weather



Tim Johnson

## President's Message

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conditions and other issues such as finches with eye disease possible.

This year, Project FeederWatch has expanded the scope of data collected in one's yard. It is now possible to include mammals, such as free-roaming cats. It is also now possible to report yard birds even if one doesn't have feeders!

The PFW count started on November 1, but it's not too late to begin in December. You can get more information about Project FeederWatch at <https://feederwatch.org>.

Tim Johnson [Tim.The.Fisherman@gmail.com](mailto:Tim.The.Fisherman@gmail.com)



Photo by Tim Johnson

House Finch

## Ankeny Hill Nature Center Volunteer Report Volunteer Group Makes Center Sparkle!



Families and individuals from the Crosscreek Community Church gathered at the Ankeny Hill Nature Center to weed, sweep, and clean Gehlar Hall. Many are regular visitors to the Center and the Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge.

More than 30 volunteers from the Crosscreek Community Church came to the Center in November to help with maintenance and weeding projects! They made the inside of Gehlar Hall sparkle just in time for several upcoming groups who reserved it for nature education.

Are you part of a group that would like to volunteer? Please contact us at [volunteers@ankenyhillnaturecenter.org](mailto:volunteers@ankenyhillnaturecenter.org).

Individual volunteers are welcome at Ankeny Hill Nature Center. Come to a free, no-commitment orientation for a guided tour of the Center and learn more! The next volunteer orientation is scheduled for Saturday, January 27, 2024, starting at 10 am. Pre-registration is required.

For more information or to register, contact Pat (he/him/his) and Bobbie (she/her/hers) Allaire, Volunteer Coordinators at [volunteers@ankenyhillnaturecenter.org](mailto:volunteers@ankenyhillnaturecenter.org) or call (541) 760-3700.



### SAS Membership Renewal Reminder

February 1 marks the annual renewal of your SAS membership. To renew your membership (or become a new member), complete the membership form on the back of this newsletter, then mail or use a credit card or PayPal account on Salem Audubon Society's website under the "Support Us" tab at [salemaudubon.org](http://salemaudubon.org).

Consider changing your membership to the E-Kestrel. It saves you some money, and, as a bonus, the E-Kestrel usually arrives a little earlier than the printed version of the monthly newsletter. It also includes full-color pictures. All that you will need to do is indicate 'eKestrel' on your renewal/membership form.



California Condor

Photo contributed by Harry Fuller

# Yurok's Condor Restoration Succeeding

By Harry Fuller

Salem Audubon Society Member

California Condors are remarkable. Their nine-foot wingspan is the largest of any North American bird. Once nearly extinct, they remain among the rarest native bird species in North America, along with the Whooping Crane and Kirtland's Warbler. Breeding couples produce only one offspring, which may not occur yearly. Population growth is slow, but their lifespan may extend to sixty years. Condors are highly social: young condors must learn life skills from their elders.

This bird was driven nearly to extinction by people. We took away much of their food – fewer large sea mammal corpses on shore. People used to shoot condors as trophies. Later, our poisons killed them: DDT and, worst of all, fragments of lead bullets in the animal carcasses they ate. Lead shot is still a problem. Copper bullets would be harmless to scavengers.

The California Condor was listed as endangered in 1967, but by 1982, the number of condors in the wild had shrunk to twenty-two. Those were all captured and placed in an intense, carefully managed breeding program. The effort required was immense, as was the expense. And the program is not a matter of years but of decades. Only in 1992 was the breeding program able to

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California Condors

Photo contributed by Gary Joe

release condors back into the wild, and that continues. Much of that work still depends on a mix of dedicated people and their employers: Peregrine Fund, Ventana Wildlife Society, and federal and state agencies here and in Mexico. Zoos in Los Angeles, Oakland, and Portland are deeply involved. Of significant importance to the California Condor now, indeed, is the program launched by the Yurok tribe.

Before colonization, condors ranged from Baja California to British Columbia. Since the earliest times, the condor has been crucial to Yurok culture and many other tribes along the Pacific Coast. In 2003, the Yurok tribe decided to try to bring condors back to Yurok territory, the lands along the lower Klamath River in Northern California. Years of preparation work and negotiation with several partners have led to a successful program.

The Yuroks have built a training-and-release facility where young birds meet and learn from older birds that know the training routines and are familiar with the local territory. When the first young condors were released, an adult bird trained them beforehand. The Yuroks regularly feed the free birds, so they willingly return to the release center and can be recaptured for medical exams.

One of the goals of the Yuroks' program is to get the lead out of the territory where the condors scavenge. Their efforts

have encouraged many hunters to give up lead shot and use non-toxic shells. Still, just this year, one bird had to have its blood cleansed of lead.

Condors have been released by the Yuroks three times so far. All the birds released have been bred in captivity because the wild birds' death rate exceeds the free birds' birth rate. It's lead poisoning again. Still, more than ten wild condors are soaring and hunting the Klamath River Basin and surrounding lands. Altogether, about 400 wild condors are now in the U.S. and Mexico.

While no evidence exists that condors ever nested in Oregon, there were early sightings in all seasons. In November 1805, one of the Lewis & Clark Expedition killed a condor near the Columbia River's mouth. It had a 9.5-foot wingspan.

Those great wings carry the birds far and wide. An adult condor can soar up to 200 miles in a single day. From the Lower Klamath to Brookings is less than 40 miles; to Ashland, less than 140 miles. The last recorded condor sighting in Oregon was in 1904. How long before some lucky person in Oregon records our first sighting of a condor this century?

Yurok condor program website: <https://www.yuroktribe.org/yurok-condor-restoration-program>

# Salem Audubon Society Field Trips

Compiled by Cynthia Donald

Salem Audubon Society (SAS) field trips are open to the public, and we have a mix of experienced and new birders. Our field trips are an excellent way to familiarize with Oregon birds, experience new places, and meet new friends. We don't charge for our trips, but a small fee may be involved, such as a parking pass, depending on our destination. We encourage participants to be vaccinated. Some leaders request participants carpool to reduce our carbon footprint, so please contribute to your driver to help cover costs. Masking when inside the vehicle is up to individual drivers.

SAS field trips vary in both driving distance and walking length. Specific field trip descriptions will note trail conditions (uneven, paved, etc.), meeting places, and times, often including anticipated species to be encountered and directions for carpooling (if applicable). Please let your leader know if you need to leave the trip earlier than the scheduled time!

If you read this field trip intro, you may notice it differs from earlier versions. Beginning in 2024, all field trips will be listed as SAS Monthly Field Trips in order by date. Best wishes for a safe and happy holiday season!

## SAS MONTHLY FIELD TRIPS

### Wednesday, December 13, 2023, at 8:00 AM – Minto-Brown Island Park

*(Upcoming – Wednesday, January 3, 2024 at 9:00 AM.)*

Leaders: Mike Unger (503) 930-8998, Tim Johnson (503) 507-8552

This is the first of three winter months for the bird census and the signature time for the Christmas Bird Count. This specific date and Minto-Brown Field Trip is a day of effort to canvas the species just before the Count Day this year, to be held on Saturday, December 16.

Minto-Brown is Sector #4 of our Salem Audubon Circle, which has 10 Sectors in and around Salem with the State Capitol as the center. This Field Trip date begins what is termed Count Week, a window of time beginning three days before the Count (Wednesday, December 13) and ending three days following the Count (Tuesday, December 19). It is an important event, as it begins the census identification of species present in the winter months and is relevant for the defined Salem Circle of the Salem Christmas Count.

It is a snapshot of the population, weather, and habitat that birds seek and a time for teams to count each bird. It is essential because Minto-Brown is an area of 1200 plus acres substantially in Sector #4 that is usually accessible. The access and the number of loops to be walked make it a remarkable park for birders. Plan to join this Field Trip to count our feathered friends for the upcoming Count. Expect a wide variety of resident and wintering migrant species.

Meet at 8:00 AM at Parking Lot #3 (the last parking lot in the park). Dress for the weather. Bring water, snacks, and binoculars! Trails may be uneven, so wear appropriate footwear and plan for considerable walking. We plan to be finished around noon. Loaner binoculars are available.

Directions: From River Road South, turn west at the signal at Minto Island Road and proceed to the last parking lot. Please do not leave valuables in your vehicle, and confirm anything inside is out of sight.

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## Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge – NO FIELD TRIP IN DECEMBER

(Upcoming – Sunday, January 14, 2024 at 9:00 AM.)

## SAS Christmas Bird Count - SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2023

SAS Christmas Bird Count! Please volunteer to help in any of the 10 Sectors in the Salem area. You are welcome to participate any amount of time, from an hour to all day.

## UPCOMING BIRDING FESTIVALS

### WILLAMETTE VALLEY BIRD SYMPOSIUM – Saturday, February 3, 2024, 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Website: <https://www.willamettevalleybirds.org>. Registration opens in December 2023. Please check for updates.

The symposium is an annual, day-long event bringing together professionals, students, and amateurs from the Willamette Valley to celebrate birds.

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## Birder's Night - December 12, 6:30 - 8:00 PM (Doors open at 6:00 PM – Scottish Rite Center)

# The Challenges of Birding in Harney County

Harney County has many birds not found where most birders live. From Bobolink to Common Nighthawk. From Ferruginous Hawk to Franklin's Gull. From White Pelican to Wilson's Phalarope, this area is a birder's challenge, and this presentation will help sort out what to look for, when, and where. Harney is larger than the three smallest states combined yet has fewer than 8000 residents. Lots of open space to explore...or get lost in. Presenter Harry Fuller will have copies his book, BIRDING HARNEY COUNTY for sale (\$25). All proceeds go to the Malheur Field Station.

Harry Fuller is a member of SAS and a field trip leader. He has written four natural history books, including Great Gray Owls of California, Oregon, and Washington. He also contributes bird stories to the Salem Reporter website.



© Albert Ryckman

Attend the session virutally on Zoom  
<https://bit.ly/Dec-Birders-Night-2023>

Prairie Falcons above Harney County.

Photo by Albert Ryckman

# Salem Christmas Bird Count is December 16th

Co-compiled by Tim Johnson,  
Mike Unger, and Gretchen Johnson

The 2023 Salem Christmas Bird Count (CBC) occurs on Saturday, December 16. The Salem CBC area is a 15-mile diameter circle centered near the Oregon State Capitol building. There are about 2,500 count circles throughout the Americas and 53 in Oregon. This event will be the 61st consecutive count for Salem.

Information from the annual count improves our understanding of the long-term trends of bird populations and the effects of climate change. Find out more about the CBC at

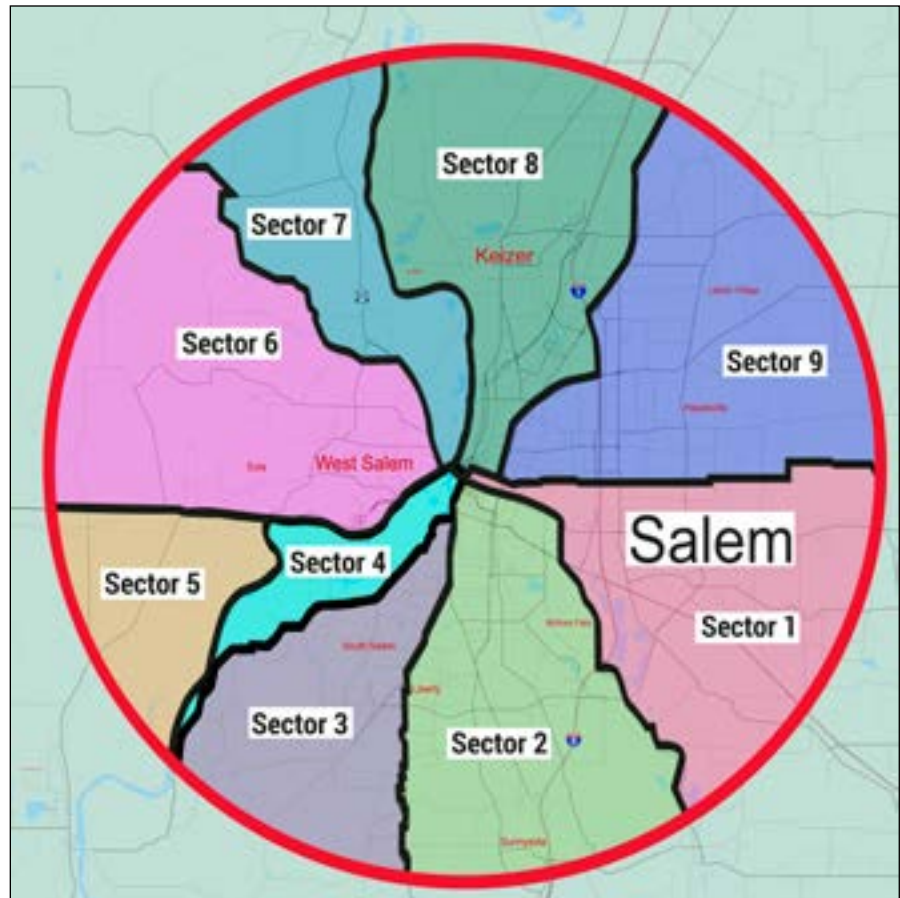
<https://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count>.

The Salem CBC's goal is to count all the birds in the circle without counting any bird twice, to the extent possible. We attempt to accomplish this by having as many feeder counts and field teams as possible, organized for thorough coverage of as much of the circle as possible without duplication. Last year, we had 43 feeder counts and 63 field participants on 40 teams. You can participate in the Salem CBC in a couple of ways:

## • Count birds at your feeder

Your feeders must be inside the Salem CBC circle. You can spend as much time as you have. You can include your yard birds or birds that fly over your yard in the day's count. To participate, please email Tim your name, phone number, and physical address of your property. He will respond with a form for recording the birds you see. The document includes the count protocol.

Note: If you submitted a feeder count last year, you will automatically receive a form for this year's count. For information contact: [tim.the.fisherman@gmail.com](mailto:tim.the.fisherman@gmail.com).



## • Join a field team

Field teams cover assigned areas inside the Salem CBC circle. That area can be a nearby park, a favorite birding hotspot, or a usual walking route. But check with sector leader to be sure it is not an area covered by another team.

You will work with Gretchen or a sector leader to ensure your location is unique. A team can consist of one or several people. We hope you can join us this year. Please contact Gretchen with questions regarding participation on a field team at [gahjohn27@icloud.com](mailto:gahjohn27@icloud.com).

CBC Forms and Sector Maps may be downloaded from the SAS website - <https://salemaudubon.org/home/#cbcform-maps>

For additional information watch our CBC presentation on our YouTube channel at - <https://bit.ly/sas-cbc-techniques-2022>.

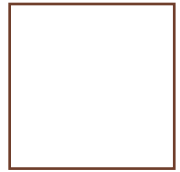
## CBC Participants' Guide

What data to collect during your Count

- Try to cover your assigned route as thoroughly as possible during daylight hours.
- Record every bird seen or heard in your assigned area, between midnight and 11:59 pm on your count date.
- Nocturnal birding or "owling" is optional.
- Record all hours spent watching or listening for birds.
- Record all miles traveled while watching or listening for birds.
- Record each mode of transportation (by foot, by car, etc), and match the mode with # hours and miles for each type.
- Record hours watching at feeders separately from any birding in the field.
- Record hours and miles of "owling" (nocturnal birding) separately from any birding in the field during count day.
- Give these to your sector leader by the end of your count day.



Salem Audubon Society  
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### Salem Audubon Society Committees & Special Project Chairs

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Vacant                                      Mary Ritter

**Birder's Night**                      **SAS Nature Reserve**  
Harry Fuller                              Lee Slattum

**Field Trips**                              **SAS Woodshop**  
Cynthia Donald                              John Jorgenson

**Bluebird Project**                      **Birding Workshops**  
Vacant                                      Mike Unger

**Kestrel and Web Editor**              **Christmas Bird Count**  
Mike Williams                              Tim Johnson, Mike Unger,  
Gretchen Johnson

**Conservation**                              **Chapter Meetings**  
David Harrison                              Vacant

### SAS MEMBERSHIP FORM

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