



THE KESTREL

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Seeing Your Way Into Birding Through Photography



Juvenile Red-necked Phalarope

Photograph by Tim Johnson

By Tim Johnson

Salem Audubon Society President



Tim Johnson

President's Message

I first became interested in birds shortly after Carol and I moved to Mountain View, California, located at the south end of the San Francisco peninsula. I moved to Silicon Valley in 1988 from Los Angeles to start a new job developing an engineering continuing education program for the University of California.

For reasons I don't remember, I hung a birdseed feeder in the backyard shortly after moving into our new place. I started going on bird walks offered by the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society. I also discovered that one of the engineering instructors I had hired was a serious birder. He invited me to go birding with him to places like Elkhorn Slough, a tidal slough and estuary on Monterey Bay. I did my first Christmas Bird Count on the slough. The next thing I knew, I was a birder. It can happen that quickly.

Usually, a dozen or so people were on the Santa Clara Valley Audubon bird walks. We mostly birded the South Bay marshes and mudflats. All the participants

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had binoculars, and some carried spotting scopes, but no one brought a camera. Occasionally, someone in the group would sketch a bird we had seen, but photographing birds wasn't something these birders did.

It wasn't until I moved to Salem in 2007 and started going on Salem Audubon bird walks that I noticed people were carrying cameras. I think John Matthews was the first, followed by Stephanie Hazen. I was amazed at how Stephanie used her camera instead of binoculars or a spotting scope. What a concept! And it worked well for her.

I carried a point-and-shoot camera on bird walks, inspired by John and Stephanie. I soon learned that a camera perfectly complements birding in so many ways. It helps with bird identification. It helps with documenting rare or uncommon birds. It's a great way to share bird sightings with others, both while in the field and afterward, through social media.

Photography has become a major part of birding for me. I have rarely gone birding without a camera for the past twelve years. I started photographing birds with a Canon Powershot 870 IS, an 8-megapixel camera with 3.8x zoom and image stabilization. It was state-of-the-art from my limited experience with photography. It worked pretty well for taking close bird photos but was somewhat limited to taking pictures of birds further away.

So, I upgraded to a Nikon Cool Pix, a 12-MP camera with an 18x optical zoom. Many upgrades followed. It turns out there are almost always opportunities for upgrading. For the past four years, I've been birding with a Nikon D500, a Tamron 150-600mm 2nd generation lens, and occasionally with my iPhone.

Photography has dramatically enhanced my enjoyment of birding. I can't recommend it highly enough. One doesn't need



Photograph by Tim Johnson

Black-capped Chickadee

to spend much to get an effective birding camera. Like other optical equipment, you do somewhat get what you pay for. But many good birding cameras won't break the bank. I think the Nikon Coolpix P series is a good example. Recently, I've seen several birders with this camera or something similar taking terrific bird photos. These new "bridge" cameras have good image quality with an unbelievable zoom range.

January 2024 is Birder's Night Photo Sharing

Regarding bird photography, our chapter's annual photo-sharing Birder's Night is scheduled for Tuesday, January 9. Harry Fuller, the Birder's Night Committee Chair, has asked me to recruit the presenters.

The presentations are limited to ten minutes, so putting together a presentation isn't a significant commitment. If this interests you, please contact me with questions or for details.

Tim Johnson - tim.the.fisherman@gmail.com

Salem Audubon Loses Longtime Member

Sadly, long-time Salem Audubon member Wes Craven passed away on November 13. Glen Lindeman tells me he passed with family by his side.

Many of you knew Wes well. He was a crucial leader in Salem Audubon for many decades. I first met Wes shortly after Carol (my wife) and I moved to Salem in 2007. Wes led or co-led most of SAS's field trips then, including trips to hot spots on the Oregon coast, eastern Oregon, and various other places in the Willamette Valley. He also co-led the development and instruction of the popular SAS Beginning Bird Class for many years.

Wes had a gentle nature, a friendly smile, and a kind heart that endeared us to him. He will be greatly missed. — *Tim Johnson*

Birder's Night - November 14, 6:30 - 8:00 PM (Doors open at 6:00 PM – Scottish Rite Center)



Multi-Banded Arakari

Birding in Ecuador

Photographer Albert Ryckman takes us on a birding trip to northeast Ecuador. That area has some of the highest avian diversity, with habitats ranging from near sea level to over 20,000 feet in elevation. Ecuador has more bird species (1600) than North America and four dozen endemics.



Blue and Gold Macaw

All photographs are courtesy of Albert Ryckman

We shall meet some of the region's unique species, from Hoatzin to Cock-of-the-Rock. And we likely will get a peek at the Western Hemisphere's largest wingspan—Andean Condor!

Dr. Albert Ryckman is an expert bird photographer whose travels have taken him to Iceland, Alaska, the Antarctic, the Mideast, Ecuador, and Malheur in Eastern Oregon.

Attend the session virutally on Zoom at https://bit.ly/november_birders_night

Ankeny Hill Nature Center Volunteer Report

Nature Center Volunteers Prepare for Winter!

Science is alive and well at the Ankeny Hill Nature Center. Mike Williams, the Ankeny Hill Nature Center webmaster, recently added a new science page to the website!

You can see the flight paths of birds detected by the MOTUS tower and follow the rainfall record at the Nature Center, all thanks to volunteers!

To volunteer contact Pat (he/him/his) and Bobbie (she/her/hers) Allaire, Volunteer Coordinators, at volunteers@ankenyhillnaturecenter.org or call (541) 760-3700.



Photograph courtesy Ankeny Hill Nature Center

Volunteers Rebekah Stalheim (left) and Rich Schramm (right) transfer potted native Columbines in the Pollinator Patch to a permanent home in the ground.

Salem Audubon Society Field Trips

Compiled by Cynthia Donald

Salem Audubon 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 and boosted.** Carpooling is encouraged to reduce our carbon footprint, and if you do carpool, please contribute to your driver to help cover costs. If you are carpooling, the driver may require you to wear a mask inside the vehicle.

SAS-SHORTS are shortened local field trips, lasting up to 1.5 hours and covering about 1 mile on generally even surfaces. New and experienced birders are welcome! Please arrive before the start time as these trips will begin precisely at the listed time.

Many of our field trips meet at the **Airport Park and Ride** on the east side of Airport Road, between Mission and State streets, next to the State Motor Pool, and just south of the bridge over Mill Creek. Take Mission Street to Airport Road (the first signal light east of 25th Street), turn left, and proceed north one block to the park and ride. There are no facilities at this location.

SAS MONTHLY FIELD TRIPS

Sunday, November 5, 2023 at 9:00 AM – Minto-Brown Island Park

(Upcoming – Wednesday, December 13 at 8:00 AM. Please note the time change!)

Leaders: Tim Johnson (503) 507-8552

With winter approaching, many species return from colder northern and upslope habitats to find more comfortable temperatures and areas that provide food and shelter. These foods include the white berries of Red Osier Dogwood, while seeds from the grasses provide cover and warmth, such as the Tufted Hair Grass planted in restoration areas.

White-crowned, Golden-crowned, and Fox sparrows will join resident sparrows. Dark-eyed Junco migrants will join those that nest in the area. We always look for less common Chipping, Lincoln's, and White-throated sparrows and enjoy watching mixed flocks for these rarities. Raptor numbers increase now and during the coming months.

All these species join the woodlands with Brown Creeper, nuthatches, kinglets from upslope areas, winter warbler species, and our woodpeckers, including Pileated and Red-breasted Sapsucker. Waterfowl, including ducks, mergansers, and geese, will bring colorful plumages to the ponds and sloughs of the Willamette River.

Meet at 9:00 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.

Upcoming Events
November 2023

SUN 5	<p>SAS - FIELD TRIP Minto-Brown Island Park</p> <p>🕒 9:00 AM - Noon 📍 Minto-Brown Island Park</p>
TUES 14	<p>SAS - BIRDER'S NIGHT Birding In Ecuador</p> <p>🕒 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM 📍 Scottish Rite Temple</p>
WED 15	<p>SAS - FIELD TRIP Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge</p> <p>🕒 9:00 AM - Noon 📍 Ankeny NWR</p>
MON 20	<p>HARRY FULLER SPECIAL TRIP Sauvie Island, Portland</p> <p>🕒 9:00 AM at Sauvie 📍 Sauvie Island</p>
MON 27	<p>SAS - SHORTS Willow Lake WWTP</p> <p>🕒 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM 📍 Willamette Mission SP</p>
EVERY WED	<p>VOLUNTEER ACTIVITY Audubon Nature Reserve Work Party <i>(All are welcome)</i></p> <p>🕒 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM 📍 Ankeny Nature Reserve</p>
FUTURE EVENTS	
DEC 16	<p>SALEM AUDUBON SOCIETY Christmas Bird Count</p>
FEB 16-19	<p>WINTER WINGS FESTIVAL Klamath Falls</p>

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Wednesday, November 15, 2023 at 9:00 AM – Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge

(No field trip in December)

Leaders: Tim Johnson (503) 507-8552

With rising waters in Pintail and Eagle marshes, this is a great time to visit the many perimeter pullouts around the refuge. We'll make frequent stops to scan for field and pond species. Cackling, Canada and Dusky geese, Tundra Swan, ducks, and other waterfowl will feed and gather for their winter stay. Diving ducks will be probing the pond bottoms for aquatic plants and invertebrates, while dabbling ducks will move surface water for marine food. Some ducks may be starting to pair up, and geese can be seen in family groups. Orange collars identify Dusky Canada geese, with identification numbers and letters linking to their natal place of origin.

We can expect an increased number of visiting raptors on snags and poles. Sandhill Cranes have been observed from Pintail Marsh on multiple occasions. Stands of oak and snags with cavities provide food and shelter for woodpeckers and nuthatches. Mistletoe berries attract Western Bluebirds and Yellow-rumped Warblers that move around in the oaks. We can expect identification challenges with sparrow flocks in shrubs and hedgerows along the roads and ditches. Plan to carpool as we travel, with stops that might include the Rail Trail boardwalk if time permits.

Meet at the Ankeny Hill Nature Center (AHNC) Parking Lot at 9:00 AM. There are facilities at this location, and the trails are now open! We will start here before visiting Pintail Marsh and other locations. Bring water, binoculars, and a snack. Trails can be uneven, so please wear appropriate footwear. We anticipate finishing around noon. Loaner binoculars are available.

Directions: From Salem, take I-5 south to the Ankeny Hill Road exit (Exit 243) and turn right (west). At the Ankeny Hill Road/Wintel Road intersection, bear right and continue on Ankeny Hill Road straight (west), approximately 2.2 miles to the AHNC Visitor Center entrance, which will be on your left. An alternate route from Salem is to take Liberty Road south to Ankeny Hill Road, then turn left and continue about 0.4 miles to the AHNC Visitor Center entrance, which will be on your right. Please do not leave valuables in your vehicle, and confirm anything inside is out of sight.

SAS-SHORTS

Monday, November 27 at 9:00 AM – Willow Lake WWTP

Leader: Dominic Valenti (503) 507-7008

This bird walk has so much to offer in a relatively small area: ducks (Mallard, Hooded Merganser, Green-winged Teal, and American Wigeon), Glaucous-winged and Short-billed gulls, sparrows (Song, Fox, Golden-crowned, White-crowned, White-throated, and Lincoln's), raptors (Red-tailed, Red-shouldered, Cooper's, and Sharp-shinned Hawks), and both Virginia Rail and Sora have all been seen taking up residence here during the fall and winter months. We will walk 1.32 miles on the gravel and dirt paths surrounding the ponds, and this trip should take about 1.5 hours to complete. Come and see for yourself what makes this often-overlooked birding hotspot so unique!

Meet at the public parking lot off Windsor Island Road in Keizer. This is about 1/3 mile north of the intersection of Windsor Island Road and Lockhaven Drive. Turn left off Windsor Island Road and, just before the main entrance to the treatment plant (which is closed to the public), turn right into the parking lot. There are no facilities, so please plan accordingly.

We hope to see you there!

Directions: From Salem, get on River Road N and proceed to Keizer. Continue north to Cummings Lane N and proceed west to Shoreline Drive N, which becomes Windsor Island Road N. Proceed north to the WWTP entry across the Street from the Willow Lake Golf Center.

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SAS SPECIAL TRIP

Monday, November 20 at 9:00 AM – Sauvie Island

Leader: Harry Fuller (791) 312-1735

Join confessed “obsessive craniac” Harry Fuller on this “No Hunt Day” on Sauvie Island to listen and look for Sandhill Cranes and Trumpeter Swans among the myriads of smaller, quieter birds from raptors to ducks to sparrows! Bring lunch and water. We will bird until 3 PM or so.

Meet in the Cracker Barrel Grocery parking lot, 15005 NW Sauvie Island Road, Portland, at 9:00 AM. A parking permit is required to park in all wildlife areas on the island. Daily permits are \$10.00, and annual permits are \$30.00. Permits can be purchased at the Cracker Barrel Grocery or online from ODFW at [Buying an ODFW Wildlife Area parking permit | Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife \(myodfw.com\)](https://www.oregon.gov/odfw/wildlife-areas/parking-permits).

Directions: Sauvie Island is slightly over 1.5 hours from Salem. Once you cross the bridge, stay on the main road, bear left, and the grocery will be on your left.

Salem Christmas Bird Count

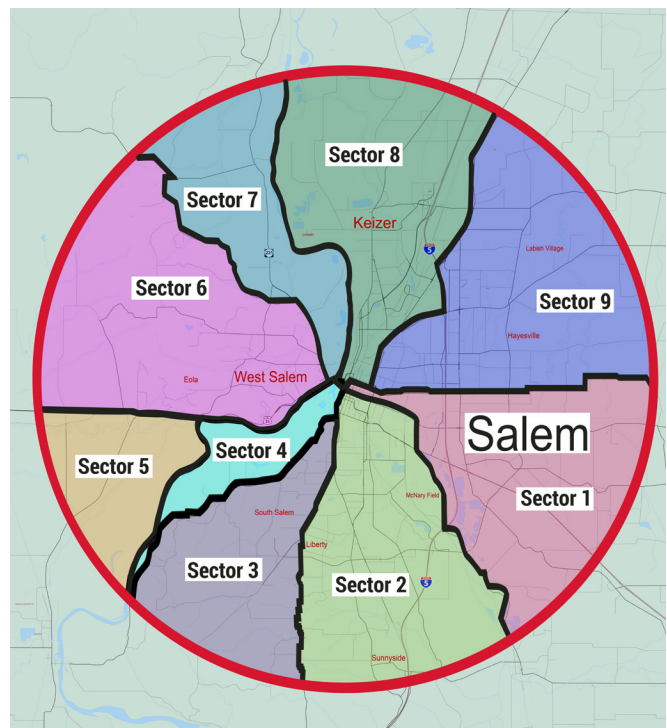
Mark Your Calendar – Saturday, December 16, 2023

By Tim Johnson, Mike Unger, and Gretchen Johnson

The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is conducted each year throughout the Americas, with a total of around 2,500 count circles. The Salem Christmas Bird Count is one of fifty-three count circles in Oregon. The Salem CBC began in 1963 so the upcoming bird count will be the 61st held in Salem! This past year we had 63 volunteers in the field and 43 feeder counters. We hope to increase those numbers this year.

Information gained from these bird censuses contributes significantly to our understanding of long-term trends in bird populations and the effects of climate change. In 2022, we had one new species for the count, a Clark’s Grebe. Another great sighting was a Northern Mockingbird that has been seen only three times in 60 years! We had six (6) record high totals including Black Phoebe. Several years ago, we never even saw one Black Phoebe during the count. In 2022, we also had low counts for two species i.e., Dusky Canada Goose and Eurasian-collared Dove. Who knows, in the future we could have neotropical migrants staying in Oregon during the winter.

If you participated in last year’s Salem Christmas Bird Count, you should be hearing from your sector leader in the next few weeks. If you have participated in past years by counting birds at your feeders, you will receive a packet with the current feeder count checklist. If this will be the first year you participate in the CBC, please contact Gretchen at gahjohn27@icloud.com. If it is your first time doing a feeder count please contact Tim at (503) 507-8552 or email him at tim@salemaudubon.org.



This year we will be offering an updated CBC workshop. The workshop will be held at the Ankeny Hill Nature Center on Sunday, November 19th at 2:00 PM. No pre-registration is necessary. The workshop will provide participants with a brief history of the CBC, how the Salem CBC is organized, how to get involved in the Salem CBC, how to complete the forms, and common issues that may arise during the count. We will also focus on some of the tough identifications of winter birds in the valley.

Migrants Traveling Ankeny Avenue Caught by Motus

Story by Harry Fuller and Rich Schramm

Kestrel Contributors

The Motus tower at Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge reached its first anniversary on October 24th. No other Motus signal sensor exists anywhere in the northern Willamette Valley or Portland Metro area. So far, three bird species were detected flying past or stopping at Ankeny during the year. All have come down from British Columbia. At least one bird began to travel from Alaska. The species are dunlin, robin, and a cousin of the robin, Swainson's thrush.

The first bird signal picked-up at Ankeny Motus was on October 27th, just three days after the tower began functioning. It was a Dunlin, a medium-sized shorebird, first tagged with a transmitter in January 2022 in California's Central Valley, where it over-wintered. Then, it headed north that spring. The first signal from it during the fall southbound migration, was at Ankeny. It returned to the Central Valley, revisiting the same places it had been the previous winter.

One tagged American Robin spent a month at Ankeny from Jan. 10th through Feb. 10th this year. Later, it headed north and was located at Discovery Island in British Columbia in April. September 20th, it turned up along the Stikine River in southern Alaska. We have no data as to where it may have nested during the summer.

In late April this year, four Dunlins were located over Ankeny. Each was headed north after wintering in California. Three were tagged in the Sacramento Valley, and after Ankeny, were picked up on the Alaskan Coast at Controller Bay. A fourth was tagged at Tomales Bay, passed here, but was not re-located after it left Vancouver Island.

Nine Swainson's Thrushes passed over Ankeny from September 5th through October 3rd, all headed south. Two had been in Guatemala last winter. One of the nine spent an entire day in the Ankeny area before heading out.

If you look through the flight maps and imagine the flight path WITHOUT Ankeny, you can instantly appreciate how important both Ankeny NWR and the Willamette River are. In almost every case, the detection at Ankeny indicates Willamette Valley is an important piece of the puzzle that each bird represents for its species. The detection of Swainson's at Ankeny is the only detection in the continental US for these birds traveling between Canada and Mexico.



In the map above, the left-hand line is the northbound route in spring, and the right-hand line is fall migration tracking.

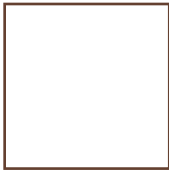


Map and photo courtesy the authors

Motus tower at Ankeny Hill Nature Center.

To check Ankeny Motus data and migration maps online visit: <https://www.ankenynaturecenter.org/motus>

To read more about how our system works, visit https://ahnc.shinyapps.io/AHNC_MOTUS_KIOSK/



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