The Klamath Bird

Newsletter of the Klamath Bird Observatory, Summer 2013

President's Perch

By Harry Fuller, *KBO Board President*

Klamath Bird Observatory's research and work in the avian world has long-lasting results in the lives of humans. Our internship program is easily seen as a rock thrown into still water. Each intern takes new expertise and knowledge back to his or her life and home, where they influence others and become leaders in conservation and related fields. Former interns continue to partner with KBO as they now run science-based bird conservation programs throughout the western hemisphere. As birds know no national boundaries, our science and mentorship programs must be the same.

KBO also works with private landowners to help them achieve their conservation goals for their land. Private lands are critical to the health and survival of many American bird species, especially those that live and breed in habitats easily converted for human use, such as grasslands, oak forests, and wetlands. Our science and staff once again made key contributions to the *United States' 2013 State of the Birds Report on Private Lands*—a valuable conservation tool that identifies conservation priorities and can generate funding for strategic conservation.

KBO has also been increasing our impact by "teaching teachers." A single teacher can reach a classroom or even a whole grade level, year after year. Significantly, KBO has created an online K-12 Curriculum Library where teachers and schools can freely download science-based lesson plans and other educational materials created by KBO over the past decade.

Lastly, I'm excited to announce that KBO will be hosting an Ashland-based Mountain Bird Festival during late spring in 2014 (read more below). It will center on having fun in the field and joining together as stewards of our region and supporters of the science that guides conservation. We hope to celebrate this festival with you (and your friends!) next summer. ✧

We look at *KBO's Human Impact* inside this Summer 2013 Issue:

Mountain Bird Festival: Citizens and Science Elevating Bird Conservation

By Brandon Breen, *KBO Science Communications and Outreach*

Mark your calendar, the first-ever Mountain Bird Festival is coming! Klamath Bird Observatory will host this community conservation event next spring from May 30th – June 1st in Ashland, Oregon. Our vision is to create a festival that combines a celebration of nature with the stewardship ethic needed to ensure thriving landscapes for humans and wildlife.

The idea for this festival began several years ago with KBO Board President Harry Fuller. Harry is a dedicated birder and indefatigable birdwatching guide. As Harry took clients on birding trips throughout the region, he noticed how impressed they were with the birdlife as well as the region's many other attractions, such as local wineries and the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Harry recognized how an Ashland-based Mountain Bird Festival that drew upon the star power of the region's bird specialties could advance a culture of conservation.

We hope you attend the festival for the guided bird walks and keynote presentations and stay for the destination lunches, fine art, music, and more. KBO will be working closely with the City of Ashland, the Chamber of Commerce, ScienceWorks Hands-On Museum, and many others. Come to observe Calliope's Hummingbird, White-headed Woodpecker, Mountain Quail, and Great Gray Owl in their serene natural habitats. Polish your binoculars. You'll want to see this!

Call for Volunteers

It takes a village to put on a bird festival, and we need your help! We're looking for contributions in a number of arenas. Contact Brandon at bmb@klamathbird.org ✧

The Dendritic Influence of the KBO Family

By John Alexander, *KBO Executive Director*

The Celtic Tree of Life speaks to the interconnectedness of all living things. Courtesy of Jen Delyth © 1989 www.celticartstudio.com

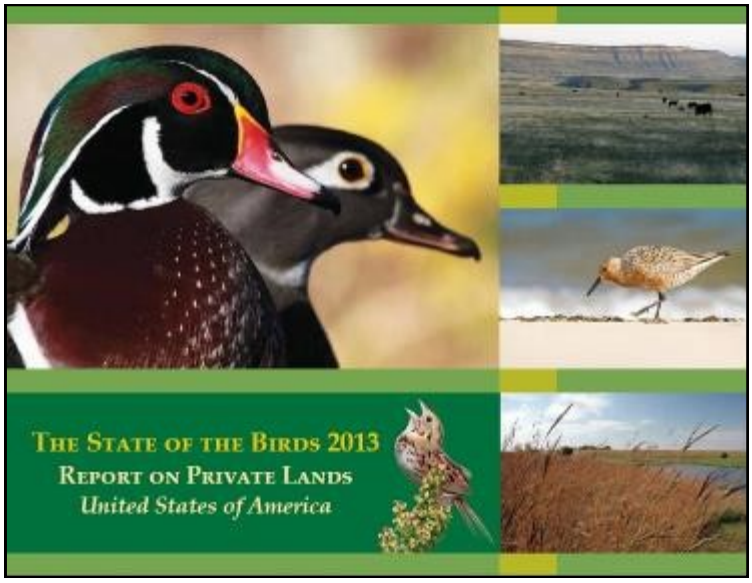
When reflecting upon the question "what is KBO?" I often drift beyond the more practical mission-based answer about KBO as an institute that advances bird and habitat conservation through science, education, and partnerships. I drift to a more intrinsic description about KBO's people—our staff and interns both current and former, our board, our supporters, our partners, our communities—the KBO Family.

We are fortunate in the people who are drawn to us. Working with KBO I find myself surrounded by people who are passionate about birds and nature. These passions often translate into a deep care for the health of our world, and an intention to influence change. This change begins with listening to the stories birds tell us about our ability to take care of the world. Our listening device? Rigorous scientific protocols. Then we use the data to tell the birds' stories. These stories show us where to direct our efforts and how to help each other adapt and better meet our stewardship responsibilities as global citizens.

Throughout this newsletter you will read about how the influence of the KBO Family spreads out like the branches of a tree. Our message is that birds are indicators of ecological health, and, ultimately, of human well-being. By studying birds and their habitats, and by engaging our communities, we are producing real benefits for people as we learn to better care for and restore the health of the world. ✧

Bird Populations Depend on Private Lands

By Brandon Breen, *KBO Science Communications and Outreach*



A new national report released this summer by the North American Bird Conservation Initiative, and contributed to the Klamath Bird Observatory, highlights the considerable extent to which native bird populations in the United States depend on private lands. Significantly, the *2013 State of the Birds Report on Private Lands* also demonstrates that conservation action on private lands is not just for the birds; landowners and the general public benefit from conservation actions that result in cleaner air and water and more resilient and productive landscapes.

Throughout our nation, some two million ranchers and farmers and about 10 million woodland owners look after 1.43 billion acres, or roughly 60% of the land area of the United States. These private lands support more than 300 forest-breeding bird species, and several grassland birds have more than 90% of their distribution on private lands. Waterfowl also depend heavily on private lands. The State of the Birds reports are valuable conservation tools that identify bird conservation priorities and opportunities. As an example, this most recent report recommends keeping conservation strong in the Farm Bill—the largest source of conservation dollars available to US landowners.

KBO has contributed to the high-profile annual State of the Birds reports since the initial report in 2009. Klamath Bird Observatory believes bird conservation is relevant to every American because the same landscapes that support diverse and abundant bird communities also provide vital services to humans. Read the full, visually stunning report to learn more about how private landowners are demonstrating America's famous land ethic: www.stateofthebirds.org ✧

Translating an Appreciation of Birds into Action on Private Lands

By Jaime Stephens, *KBO Science Director*

The stories that private landowners tell me often reflect a land ethic with diverse roots. These stories draw from their experiences with family, or from time spent gardening, farming, or hunting, and they nearly always reveal an appreciation of the natural world. Many first-time landowners develop new awareness of their surroundings. Owning land can facilitate an unintentional, yet intensive, self-study of a person's place, whether it is their yard in the city or 20 acres in the country. Quite often this awareness includes the birds that are singing melodies in the early hours of the day, and it directs attention to the seasons, marked by the arrival of brightly colored birds and then marked again by their all too sudden departure. The combination of understanding and appreciating a piece of land can lead to conservation actions, both small and large.

By incorporating habitat features that directly benefit birds (e.g., shrub cover or standing dead trees) into restoration planning, KBO works with partners to apply an ecological approach to restoration that builds on traditional vegetation management. We use bird and vegetation monitoring to evaluate and demonstrate the return of ecological integrity at private lands restoration sites.

Klamath Bird Observatory works with private landowners to encourage bird-friendly practices. Working with our partners, we also guide and assess restoration on private lands. We use birds as indicators of the health of the environment because they are diverse and individual species represent specific ecological conditions. Similarly to each individual landowner, each bird species has its own story to tell. By listening to those stories we can learn about the quality of the habitats that birds inhabit and identify restoration actions that can improve the health of the land.

For private landowners considering restoration of their land, understanding the existing and potential future bird community is a good way to grasp the ecological changes that are possible through restoration. Recently, KBO has been working with a number of landowners who are implementing oak restoration. When we visit lands prior to restoration, the bird community we hear tells us about the current habitat characteristics. For example, in a mixed-conifer forest with an oak component we will detect a mixture of birds that prefer both conifers and oaks, or sometimes only conifer-associated birds, such as Red-breasted Nuthatch, Spotted Towhee, Hermit Warbler, and Pacific-slope Flycatcher. If a landowner's goal is to restore the historic oak woodland, we would expect to see a dramatic shift in the bird community after restoration, to bird species such as White-breasted Nuthatch, California Towhee, Black-throated Gray Warbler, and Ash-throated Flycatcher. After learning to identify some of the common birds, landowners begin to see the links between birds and their habitats, and also the possibilities for their land. ✧

Making Science Count

By Brandon Breen, *KBO Science Communications and Outreach*

Klamath Bird Observatory is deeply involved in the practice of science, so much so that eight out of ten full-time staff members are scientists. We invest this heavily in science because bird and habitat conservation relies on science as its guide. Are regional bird populations decreasing? Science can provide a definitive answer. Science can help us understand which land management practices harm—and which support—the production of nature's benefits, like clean air and water, so we can manage our landscapes according to the best possible information. A real challenge in making science count is delivering the right information to the right people.

KBO strives to maximize the impact of our science through focused communications. We create special documents that summarize our key scientific findings in light of the broader scientific literature, and we deliver these documents to land managers and other partners who are best situated to use the information to benefit birds. These documents (a.k.a. Decision Support Tools) are available on our website (klamathbird.org/resources/support-tools) and recent products offer conservation guidance to individuals working in meadows or riverside habitats. This autumn we'll produce a new document for private landowners interested in oak habitat conservation. Decision Support Tools play a vital role in translating our science into the actual bird and habitat conservation that benefits wildlife and people. ✧

Workshops Promote Eco-Literacy

By Jeanine Moy, *KBO Education Programs Lead*

This past spring, Klamath Bird Observatory conducted several workshops for educators. Our workshops introduce teachers to our educational materials and impart scientific concepts, new skills, fresh ideas, and outdoor teaching techniques for educators to use in the classroom and in the field. Providing opportunities for teachers to continue their education advances their expertise and fuels innovation. During a recent workshop, educators practiced group problem-solving to understand scientific diagrams about bird-habitat relationships. They also learned how to use cutting edge online teaching resources such as Google Earth and the international citizen science project, eBird. Finally, participants shared and considered multiple perspectives regarding the value of learning about the local environment.

The overarching goal for our teacher workshops is to promote ecological literacy in our society through the wide dissemination of our education materials. Teaching is a demanding job, and our resources provide immense support to teachers who have little spare time. Our workshops also provide a number of indirect benefits to participant teachers. The workshops create a forum for teachers to network with each other while learning how local organizations and resources can support them in the classroom. Workshops also support career and personal validation for teachers, who may experience isolation in their work environment.

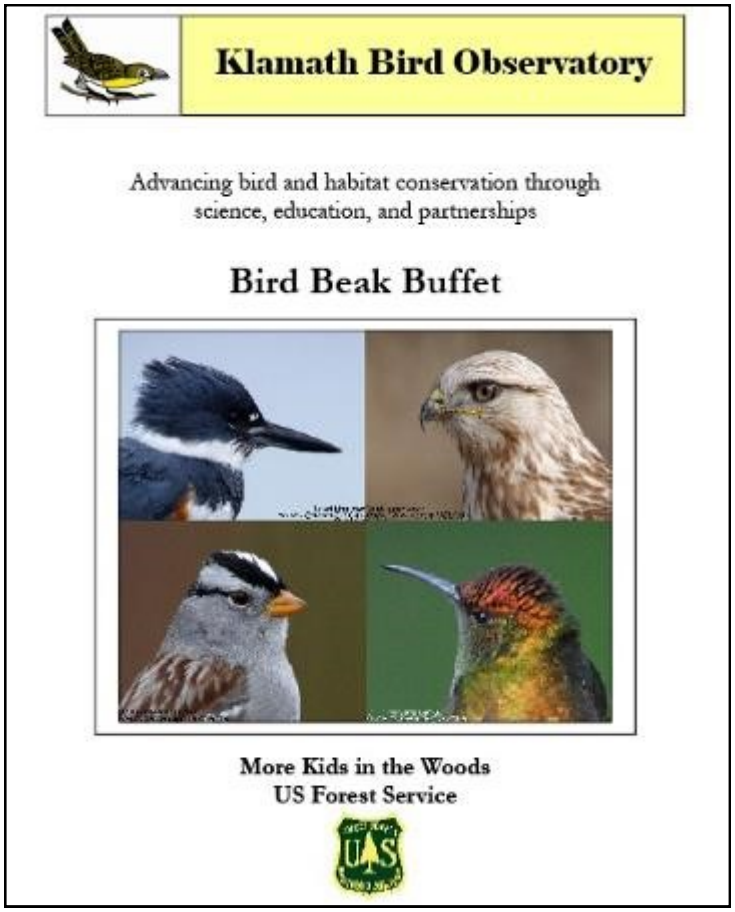
By focusing our efforts on increasing the capacity of educators to increase environmental education capacities, we hope to maximize the benefits for current and future students. The curriculum we share with educators can enrich multiple school subjects, enable students to become self-directed learners, expose students to future career paths and real-world environmental issues, and foster leadership qualities, critical thinking, and relationship skills through a variety of teaching styles. ✧

Introducing the Klamath Bird Observatory Curriculum Library

By Jeanine Moy, *KBO Education Programs Lead*

We are pleased to announce that Klamath Bird Observatory's entire curriculum, including lesson plans, classroom presentations, and other K-12 education materials, is now freely available on the KBO website in a searchable database. This is a huge achievement that connects educators to over a decade's worth of high quality, science-based educational materials, and it is one of the foremost accomplishments of the KBO Education Program. The curriculum library features an easy to search format that allows educators to search lessons by grade, keyword, academic standard, subject, and more. This resource is unique for the region, if not the country. Teachers can download numerous lesson plans and even build their own personalized curriculum packages. Additionally, the freely available resources will serve as a model for other educational organizations that strive to increase eco-literacy and the impact of environmental education. The creation of this curriculum library was made possible with support from the US Forest Service More Kids in the Woods grant and the Anna May Family Foundation.

Check out our K-12 Curriculum Library and recommend it to a friend: klamathbird.org/education/k12-education ✧



Right: Bird Beak Buffet teaches 2nd—4th graders about bird beak adaptations and scientific inquiry, and it is just one of dozens of lesson plans available on the KBO website

Our Interns' Success

By Bob Frey, *KBO Research Biologist*

Klamath Bird Observatory has enjoyed and benefitted from the efforts of a long string of volunteer student interns since our very beginnings in 1996. Over 170 individuals, representing 18 different countries, have participated as interns in various KBO projects. Very often, our interns are early in their careers, many just recently completing their undergraduate studies. They come to KBO for practical professional experience in preparation for graduate studies or for taking on leadership roles on various projects, mostly involving Conservation Biology.

A maxim we impart to interns from the outset is this: if they succeed, KBO succeeds. Thus, we are deeply invested in their achievements following their time with KBO. One way we measure our interns' success is to watch as they seek higher academic degrees. More than 35 former Klamath Bird Observatory interns have earned or are now pursuing advanced degrees in the natural sciences. Specifically, 22 have earned Master of Science degrees, four hold doctorates, and nine are currently enrolled in graduate programs.

Another exciting way we measure success is to follow the accomplishments of our international interns, many of whom have gone on to make significant contributions to bird conservation outside of the United States. To date, we have hosted student interns from Argentina, Australia, Belize, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ethiopia, Holland, Hungary, Jamaica, Mexico, New Zealand, Perú, Spain, Trinidad & Tobago, and United Kingdom. Of the 36 international interns we have hosted, 18 are active banding trainers internationally and most are working with increased responsibility and impact for conservation organizations. Some have even established their own bird monitoring and research programs in their home countries.

We endeavor to impart a positive learning experience for every intern, and for their part, our interns oblige us through their considerable and wonderful contributions that help us advance bird and habitat conservation. As we follow the developing careers of these dynamic scientists and educators, their success is truly our success as well. ✧

Saturday Bird Walks

By Teresa "Bird" Wicks, *KBO Education Intern*

As an education intern at Klamath Bird Observatory, I had the privilege of leading two KBO Community Bird Walks. KBO offers monthly bird walks through the Northwest Nature Shop in Ashland and Wild Birds Unlimited in Medford. These bird walks meet on Saturday mornings and the meeting location alternates between Ashland and Medford to reach a greater number of people.

I had a great turn out for my first bird walk, which I led to Roxy Anne Peak in Medford. Roxy Anne Peak is a wonderful place to see migrants and breeding birds alike, as the birds are drawn here by the diverse oak woodlands and mixed conifer habitats. On this particularly sunny Saturday in March, many of the participants were novice or intermediate birders. This being my first bird walk, I was nervous. What if we didn't see many birds? What if the participants didn't get what they had hoped for out of the walk? My fears were alleviated soon after the walk began. The more experienced birders took the time to help others find and identify birds. One participant brought along his scope and this allowed several people to get good first looks at several species. A Pileated Woodpecker had been reported in the area recently. After a brief discussion we decided to attempt to find this bird. Shortly after starting up a hill, we heard a Pileated Woodpecker calling. Half of the group had never seen this species before. Determined, we crept along, listening intently. After about twenty to thirty minutes of listening to the woodpeckers calling to each other, the woodpeckers simply faded into the woods. After a laugh about how elusive Pileated Woodpeckers can be, we headed back down the mountain toward the cars. On the way back, participants who had never been birding before talked excitedly about the birds they saw and the adventure of searching for a new bird. Back at the cars, e-mails and phone numbers were exchanged, and the conversation drifted to future birding trips. The new birdwatchers had definitely caught the birding "bug."

The KBO Community Bird Walk program is one of the many ways that Klamath Bird Observatory benefits people's lives. The bird walks allow individuals with an interest in birds to meet up with other birders. These walks also provide opportunities for making friends and sharing experiences in nature. My first KBO bird walk was also my first time leading a non-school group hike. From this walk, I gained confidence in my ability to talk to adults about birds. I also learned that Pileated Woodpeckers can be more elusive than I previously realized! Finally, as a mostly solitary and self-taught birder who spends a good deal of time alone in nature, I sometimes forget how pleasant it is to bird with, and learn from, other enthusiastic adults. ✧

Bird Bio: American Dipper

By Teresa "Bird" Wicks, *KBO Education Intern*

American Dippers (*Cinclus mexicanus*), sometimes called Water Ouzels, are one of five species worldwide in the family CINCLIDAE, and the only cinclid found in North America. Dippers are the only truly aquatic species of songbird. As such, they spend a majority of their lives in or near water. Typically, American Dippers are found in fast-flowing mountain streams of the western United States, Canada, and Mexico, although they can occasionally be found along coastal and desert streams.

American Dipper © Jim Livaudais

Unlike most aquatic birds, dippers do not have webbed feet. Instead, they have short, rounded wings built for "flying" underwater and strong feet that can grip rocks and pebbles as they forage along streambeds. Additionally, dippers have evolved a flap of skin attached to their nostrils that aids underwater life; when a Dipper sticks its head in the water and faces upstream, the water's movement closes the flap, preventing water from entering the dipper's nostrils. American Dippers, like ducks and other waterfowl, are densely feathered and possess an enlarged europygeal gland (i.e., a gland that produces oil used to waterproof feathers during preening). Also like ducks, American Dippers only molt once per year. Finally, Dippers have extra hemoglobin in their blood, allowing their blood to be more oxygenated. These adaptations make dippers well-suited to life in rushing streams, where they forage underwater for aquatic macroinvertebrates (e.g., snails, insects, insect larvae), small fish, and fish eggs.

The nests of American Dippers are constructed in two layers; the outer layer consists of a sphere made of moss, and the inner layer is a cup made of grasses, leaves, and bark. Nests are built primarily by the females and they are usually located on in-stream rocks, water-side cliff faces, or behind waterfalls, to avoid flooding and predation. Suitable nesting habitat appears to be a common limiting factor for dipper reproduction. The introduction of nest boxes, bridges, and other man-made structure with ledges near water has greatly increased the number of dipper nests in some parts of their range.

Dippers have an extraordinary and exuberant song, which explains in part the famous affinity of naturalist John Muir for these small gray passerines. Both males and females sing to nestlings. Often this singing occurs after feeding. Many researchers believe these post-feeding songs developed in American Dippers as a method of teaching young to sing. In many passerines, songs are learned from their parents or neighbors after fledging. Due to the often loud and turbulent river sounds found in dipper territories, songs may be difficult to learn in "typical" settings. When singing to nestlings, the parents often perch on a rock below the nest, bodies facing sideways to the nest and head tilted.

Dippers earned their names due to the dipping and bobbing behavior displayed by birds perched on rocks above the waterline.

The Lithia Dipper Watch project is studying the nesting behavior of American Dippers right here in Ashland, Oregon. Learn more on the project's website at www.LithiaDipperWatch.com ✧

References

Kingery, Hugh E (1996). American Dipper (*Cinclus mexicanus*), The Birds of North America Online (A. Poole, Ed.). Ithaca: Cornell Lab of Ornithology; Retrieved from the Birds of North America Online: http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bna/species/229

Muir, John. The Mountains of California. The Century Company. New York, 1894 (13) pp. 267.

Join KBO on Upcoming Events

September 7th, KBO Bird Walk to Emigrant Lake
Join KBO Staff Member Karen Hussey for a bird watching outing to Emigrant Lake. We'll learn to identify migrating shorebirds and other waterbirds and discover their detailed beauty using scopes provided for the walk. We'll also amble through oak-scrub habitat to enjoy as many landbird and raptor species as we can find. We expect to wrap up by noon. This outing is limited to 15 participants and registration is required. To register, contact the Northwest Nature Shop (541 482-3241).

September 7th, Greensprings Mountain Festival: Geology, Birds, and More Interpretive Tour
Brandon Breen, KBO Outreach and Science Communications, will co-lead a bird-watching and geology tour with Jad D'allura and Peter Trueblood. Join us for this interpretive tour exploring the unique geology, flora and fauna of the Greensprings. We will study the geological history, view geologic outcrops and discuss their impact on biodiversity. We will view and identify bird life as a way to understand the various attributes and overall health of the wildlife habitat. To learn more and register, visit this internet address: www.greenspringsmountainfestival.org/Page.asp?NavID=20

TBA, PechaKucha Night, "Taking Flight"
More likely than not, you've never heard of a PechaKucha night. PechaKucha refers to the art of concise presentations, and the first PechaKucha Night was held in Tokyo in 2003 as an event for young designers to meet, network, and show their work in public. It has since evolved to address broader themes, and now PechaKucha Nights are held around the world for communities to share ideas through artistic and concise presentations. KBO will participate in the next PechaKucha Night in Ashland. Visit the KBO Events Calendar on our website to learn more.

October 22nd, Presentation, eBird and the Role of Data in Bird Conservation
John Alexander, KBO Executive Director, will present a talk about eBird and role of data in bird conservation to the Rogue Valley Audubon Society in Medford, OR. The meeting begins at 700pm at Medford Congregational Church, 1801 E. Jackson St. in Medford.

November 14th, Presentation, The History and Future of Bird Conservation
John Alexander, KBO Executive Director, will present a talk titled *The History and Future of Bird Conservation* to the Siskiyou Audubon Society based in Grants Pass, OR. The meeting begins at 630pm at Grants Pass High School.

May 30th—June 1st, 2014, Mountain Bird Festival
Mark your calendar, the first-ever Mountain Bird Festival is coming! Klamath Bird Observatory will host this community conservation event next spring. Come for the guided bird walks and keynote presentations and stay for the destination lunches, fine art, music, and more. Observe Calliope's Hummingbird, White-headed Woodpecker, Mountain Quail, and Great Gray Owl in their serene natural habitats. Stay tuned for more festival details.

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Your contributions help KBO advance bird and habitat conservation.

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