Restoration Success

At Willow Wind, the abundance of several bird species that use riparian habitats during the winter has increased over time in areas where Lomakatsi implemented restoration efforts. The abundance of these same species changed less in areas where no restoration occurred.

Abundance of seven wintering bird species in restored riparian habitats at Willow Wind. These wintering populations benefitted from the growth of willows and other native species that have been replanted there.

Before restoration actions took place, the bird community at Willow Wind in the fall was substantially different than that of nearby mature riparian habitat. In the restored areas, the fall bird community is now becoming more similar to the bird communities in mature riparian habitat along Bear Creek as a result of the regrowth of native plants. Restoration actions are improving riparian habitat quality in areas where it had previously been degraded.
Bird Monitoring

Birds are excellent indicators of habitat quality, and therefore bird monitoring is a great tool for assessing the results of restoration. For more than 25 years, Klamath Bird Observatory has been studying birds to inform restoration efforts along the rivers and streams of southern Oregon and northern California.

Importance of Riparian Habitat

Riparian habitats have been heavily impacted by human activity and now cover only a fraction of their former range. Their rarity on the landscape and high biodiversity make riparian zones one of the most important habitats for the conservation of birds and other wildlife in the West. Some of our most at-risk species require riparian habitats for breeding. Many species also need healthy riparian habitats during fall and winter seasons, when they complete important activities like refueling during migration and replacing worn feathers (molting).

Restoration

Many riparian areas have been lost or altered by human development, especially in urban areas. Where riparian habitat has been degraded in quality, restoration helps return these areas back to more functioning natural conditions. Lomakatsi Restoration Project works to improve riparian habitat in our region by planting a wide diversity of native vegetation, removing invasive weeds, and supporting the natural regeneration of native plant communities. This work has resulted in increased size and health of riparian areas that help to cool and clean our water while also providing important bird habitat.

Partnerships

For nearly two decades Klamath Bird Observatory, Lomakatsi Restoration Project, and Ashland School District have been partnering on a riparian restoration project at the Willow Wind Community Learning Center along Bear Creek in Ashland, Oregon. Ashland School District is committed to improving habitat quality on this important stretch of the creek. Lomakatsi has been the long-term land steward at Willow Wind, employing local restoration workers and engaging school groups in education-based field activities. Over 3,000 native trees and shrubs have been planted across eight acres of streamside habitat. Each year, nearly 1,000 students and community volunteers have contributed to the restoration effort. As part of this project, Klamath Bird Observatory is studying birds as indicators to monitor the effectiveness of this streamside habitat restoration. Partnerships such as this one, which combine landowners, restoration practitioners, and scientists, are key to meaningful conservation.