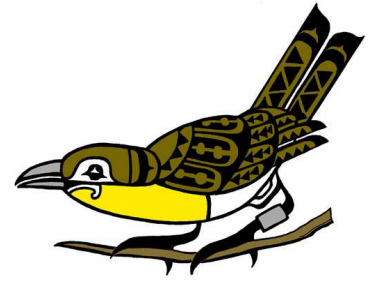


The Klamath Bird

Newsletter of the Klamath Bird Observatory, Winter 2006

Science, Education, and Partnerships



2005—A Banner Year for KBO

John Alexander, KBO Executive Director

Thanks to our supporters, partners, board of directors and dedicated staff, student interns, and contractors, 2005 brought continued success and growth to the Klamath Bird Observatory. KBO maintained its level of excellence in scientific research, monitoring, education, outreach, and training. Further, KBO took exciting new steps forward in these areas with research publications, new grants, and graduating students from SOU into the field.

KBO took part in the scientific and conservation community, both regionally and nationally, at our highest level yet. In 2005 we gave 17 presentations summarizing results from our research efforts at scientific meetings and published five peer-reviewed papers. KBO employees participated in the Partners In Flight International Landbird Conservation Program through leadership roles in state chapters and through participation with the Western Working Group and national committees. In addition, expanding on our work with the US Forest Service Redwood Sciences Laboratory (RSL) coordinating the Klamath Demographic Monitoring Network, our collaboration is helping the Landbird Migration Monitoring Network of the Americas take flight.

KBO's extensive research and monitoring fieldwork kept us busy throughout northern California and southern Oregon. We continued long-term efforts at 15 Constant Efforts Stations where we collect data on population vital rates during the breeding and migration seasons. Our "special-species" monitoring efforts that target small owls and black terns also continued. KBO's fuels and fire research efforts, which are designed to gather information about the ecological effects of landscape disturbance, helped us further link bird conservation objectives with fire-related land management priorities.

Our education program thrived in 2005 as well. Masters students, Melissa Pitkin and Thomas Sabol worked with KBO to complete their degrees at Southern Oregon University. Addi-



John Alexander with his daughter Natalie at the Winter Wings Festival where KBO's Klamath Basin Birding Trail Curriculum Kit was unveiled. photo-Kathy Larson, Klamath Wingwatchers

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tionally, KBO Research Associate Nat Seavy is finishing his PhD dissertation at the University of Florida. We provided technical training opportunities for another 14 individuals through our student internships, promoting North American Banding Council standards in ethics and science. Our international training efforts expanded their reach as three biologists from KBO and RSL assisted in running a two-week ProAves Colombia banding workshop on San Andres Island off the coast of Central America. KBO associate Daveka Boodram continued to coordinate monitoring efforts in Trinidad and Tobago as she seeks her Masters Degree at University of West Indies, Trinidad and Tobago.

Through our active outreach program we delivered our messages about bird conservation and the role of fire in the Klamath-Siskiyou Ecoregion, reaching thousands of community members and K-12 students. Our accomplishments in this arena included completing a Klamath Basin Birding Trail Curriculum Kit that will be available to schools in Klamath County through Klamath Wingwatchers and Oregon State University Extension Service.

KBO finished 2005 with awards from local and national grants and a strong response from our supporters to our private sector fundraising challenge. Our programs are being enhanced as we expand efforts in fire research, conservation planning, and wildlife appreciation. As a great end to a great year, we had a most successful fundraising campaign. With contributions from individual donors, and a match from an anonymous supporter, we raised over \$13,000 that will help us meet our new cost-share grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

All of these accomplishments make me very proud about the strength and commitment of our staff, board, membership and cooperators. It is through the commitment of each KBO participant that we find success in meeting our mission to advance bird and habitat conservation through science, education and partnerships. Many thanks to all of you!

Science

Prescribed Fire and Birds in Klamath National Forest

Nathaniel Seavy, KBO Research Associate

In many national forests across the west, prescribed fire is used as a tool to reduce fuels (living and dead vegetation that increases the risk of severe fires) and improve forest health. However, whether prescribed fire actually achieves the desired ecological effects has been scarcely studied. Leading in this area of research, KBO has been monitoring the effects of prescribed fire on bird abundance on the Klamath National Forest (KNF). Changes in bird abundance can be used to gauge the ability of management actions, such as prescribed fire, to maintain or improve habitat conditions.

From 2000 to 2005, KBO biologists worked with KNF biologists and fire managers to study the effects of prescribed burning on bird communities and vegetation. This team began by establishing four study areas where prescribed fires were scheduled to be conducted. Within each area, there was a prescribed fire “treatment site” and a “control site”

where fires would not be ignited. Bird and vegetation data were collected the year before the sites were burned, and then biologists returned to these same sites over the next four years.



Prescribed burn occurring at Klamath National Forest. photo-Tim Grenvick, USFS

The results from this research show that over this time period, there was no consistent change in the volume of vegetation in either the tree or shrub strata of the “treatment sites” that were burned. Similarly, prescribed burning had no measurable effect on the overall bird community. Lastly, there were no consistent changes in the abundance of the focal species that could be attributed to the application of prescribed fire.

This study suggests that prescribed fire, as it was applied on the KNF, may have relatively minor impacts on bird communities. If the goal of forest managers is to reduce fuels, without changing conditions for forest bird communities, a prescribed fire strategy may work. However, if the goal of these treatments includes changing habitat conditions in such a way that it improves habitat quality for birds that depend on conditions created by natural fires, then our

results suggest that management would need to be modified to achieve the desired conditions. As implemented at the four study areas, this prescribed fire management program does not create changes that are severe enough to change patterns of bird abundance.

This research will add to a growing knowledge of how and why birds respond to changes in habitat conditions. Over time, the information generated by multiple studies will help managers understand the entire landscape in which prescribed fire is applied and match the scale of management decisions with results that are desired.

As part of this process, the Partners in Flight Regional Conservation Plans are a valuable tool for local land managers because experienced ornithologists have synthesized the best available science on bird conservation into an easily accessible format (<http://www.blm.gov/wildlife/pifplans.htm>). The research results of KBO and other forest ecologists contribute to these plans. To maintain their utility, these plans need to be regularly updated to provide the most current information available on the management and conservation of bird communities, such as the results of this recent study. KBO is currently working with American Birding Conservancy to update plans for Oregon and Washington.

For more information on KBO's research on wildland fire and fuels treatments in the Klamath-Siskiyou ecoregion visit: <http://www.KlamathBird.org/Projects/fire.htm>

A Presence at Conferences

KBO has been increasing its presence at regional, national, and international professional conferences. At some of these conferences, KBO is taking a lead role, such as the annual meeting of the Washington Chapter of The Wildlife Society and the Society of Northwestern Vertebrate Biology in Olympia, Washington in March. KBO will be hosting a full-day Partners in Flight workshop: “Beyond counting birds: Estimating population vital rates through banding.” This workshop will focus on bird banding as it relates to bird conservation (see www.KlamathBird.org/2006snvb.pdf for more information).

In future newsletters, watch for articles on KBO's participation in additional conferences, such as the North American Ornithological Conference in Veracruz, Mexico in October.

KBO Biologists Teach Bird Banding in Colombia

Robert Frey, KBO Biologist

KBO biologists Robert Frey and Keith Larson joined Redwood Sciences Laboratory's Pablo Herrera and several other ornithologists in teaching an advanced bird banding course on the beautiful Caribbean island of San Andrés in late October 2005. The tiny island, governed by the Republic of Colombia, is off the east coast of Nicaragua. New KBO partner Fundación ProAves Colombia, a non-profit bird conservation organization, hosted the two-week course, working with partners from Colombia, England, Nicaragua, and the United States. Sixty students from Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, and Peru received hands-on instruction and seminars in banding skills. The training course coincided with the peak of songbird fall migration in the Caribbean, and when large numbers stopover on Isla



KBO Biologist Keith Larson instructs students on banding techniques.

San Andrés. In the midst of the course we had the added excitement of Hurricane Beta, which threatened the island, veering to the north and brushing by just hours before reaching the island's beaches.

The students were

instructed in all facets of bird banding. Most are currently involved with monitoring or research for ProAves or other efforts in South and Central Americas. During the course 3,792 birds were banded and released, including four migratory species new for Colombia. A special treat for us was the San Andrés Vireo, an endemic species, and many other tropical-resident birds.



The San Andrés Vireo perches on a nearby branch after being banded.

What an exciting and rewarding experience! We have since arranged to bring two students from Colombia to Oregon in 2006 as part of our International Internship Program and look forward to future collaborations with our new Colombian friends.

For more information and photos from the course, go to: www.hiltonpond.org/ThisWeek051022.html

Meet Biologist Keith Larson

KBO is pleased that Keith Larson joined the biology staff this winter. Keith's passion for birds and bird banding began 12 years ago when he attended a birding-by-ear workshop put on by the Great Basin Natural History Association. He then followed up with a Partners in Flight bird identification and monitoring techniques workshop and then a bird banding techniques course.

Certificates in hand he volunteered as a bird-bander in Big Sur before finding a job working with endangered forest birds on Maui. Since then he has banded thousands of seabirds, shorebirds, terns, and landbirds in Australia, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Jamaica, and throughout the United States including Alaska and Hawaii. Over the years he has worked as a biologist for the US Forest Service, HawkWatch International, Big Sur Ornithology Lab, Maui Forest Bird Recovery Project, US Fish and Wildlife Service,

Long Point Bird Observatory, Oregon State University, and now Klamath Bird Observatory.

Keith attended the University of Montana and The Evergreen State College and holds a Bachelor's of Science degree.



Keith bands a Gray Jay with KBO Intern Anja Schiller.

Education

Education Programs At KBO-A look at the last two years

Melissa Pitkin, PRBO Conservation Science Education and Outreach Director

In 2004 and 2005, I had the opportunity to work for KBO while pursuing my masters degree in Environmental Education at Southern Oregon University. KBO's practice of supporting graduate students of biology and environmental education at SOU benefits the students, the university, and KBO. I am thankful for the experience and support!

Working as KBO's Education Coordinator, I initiated several education programs that have helped KBO advance bird and habitat conservation in the Americas. The volumes of data KBO skillfully collects, analyzes, and synthesizes are more accessible to all audiences through the new KBO website (www.KlamathBird.org). Science-based recommendations are more easily accessible in the form of Decision Support Tools, handouts targeting land managers and private landowners translating KBO's findings to specific actions for improving bird habitat. The revised newsletter,

The Klamath Bird, has been successful at increasing membership and sharing our findings with the public. Finally, I instituted several education programs for students, teachers, and community members. Programs include the annual International Migratory Bird Day celebration in partnership with North Mountain Park (Ashland), hands-on classroom education programs for Rogue Valley schools, field tours to observe science in action at KBO bird banding stations, and informational handouts for the public (www.KlamathBird.org/Education).

After completing my degree I moved back to California where I resumed my position as Education and Outreach Director for PRBO Conservation Science. However, KBO's education program is in good hands due to the recent hiring of Ashley Dayer. Thanks KBO for your support, and welcome Ashley!

Meet Education & Outreach Director Ashley Dayer

Ashley Dayer comes to KBO with extensive experience in environmental and science education, social science research, and field biology. While working with Oregon Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex and Maui Forest Bird Recovery Project, Ashley significantly developed the organizations' public education efforts, forged partnerships with other organizations and schools, and designed an array of education and interpretive programs, public presentations, and outreach materials. Her efforts with these organizations received accolades at the state, regional, and national levels. Ashley's looking forward to similarly expanding the education and outreach program at KBO.

Currently, Ashley is completing her Masters of Science degree in Human Dimensions of Natural Resources from Colorado State University. Ashley's research and studies have focused on people's thoughts and behavior related to wild-

life. In addition to coordinating a large-scale research project with the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Ashley has worked as a teaching assistant in Environmental Communications.

Ashley received her Bachelor's degree in Environmental Science and Public Policy from Harvard University. She also spent a semester at Duke University Marine Lab and conducted research with marine biologists there.

Ashley will be in Ashland full-time starting in May. She's looking forward to re-hydrating after her time in Colorado and watching many plays and birds in the area.



Ashley teaches students about their local estuary. photo-Ram Papish

Meet Educator Amy Nelson



Amy Nelson has also joined KBO—as our Educator for Spring 2006. Amy has been an Environmental Educator for the past six years. She taught at residential outdoor science schools for Merced and Los Angeles counties in California for three years,

before moving to Pennsylvania, where she ran a small municipal recreation department. She moved to Oregon in January 2005. Since that time, Amy has worked for the BLM's Table Rocks and McGregor Park Environmental Education Programs. She has been an enthusiastic bird watcher for over five years now and often plans vacations with her husband to birding "hot spots".

Tips for Bird Appreciation—Winter Watching

Nathaniel Seavy, KBO Research Associate

During the winter months a number of bird species temporarily move into the Klamath Siskiyou Bioregion of southern Oregon and northern California, then move on to other areas where they spend the spring and summer. Thus, winter offers a unique opportunity to appreciate birds that are normally found on the arctic tundra, high alpine lakes, or other parts Alaska and Canada.

Waterfowl: In the summer, the pot-hole prairies and tundra of Alaska and Canada are dense with breeding ducks. During the winter many of these species can be found in large numbers in the Klamath Basin and in smaller numbers in ponds and wetlands of Rogue, Shasta, and Klamath River Valley.

Mixed flock of geese.
photo-Don Baccus

These species include Northern Pintail, American Widgeon, Green-winged Teal, and Snow Goose. The Lower Klamath Lake National Wildlife Refuge is one of the regions favorite waterfowl viewing locations.

Raptors: With the leaves off many of the trees, perching raptors become much easier to spot. They also are in greater number because several species arrive from else-

Bird Bio—Brewer's Blackbird

Ashley Dayer, KBO Education & Outreach Director

Distinguishing between blackbird species (e.g., cowbirds, grackles, red-winged blackbirds) can be challenging. Often people do not take the time to get to know any of the blackbirds due to distaste for the non-native, black-colored pest, the European Starling. The Brewer's Blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*) with its interesting behaviors is worth the time. This resident of the western U.S. is closely related to the Common Grackle but smaller (length 9") and slimmer. The male is a glossy black with green and purple undertones and a yellowish eye. The female is a drab gray-brown.

The Brewer's Blackbird's namesake is Thomas Brewer, a 19th century birder, who shared his bird biology notes with artist John James Audubon and was also supportive of the introduction of the European House Sparrow.

While the Brewer's Blackbird primarily feeds on insects, preferring damselflies and grasshoppers, it is highly adaptive. It is well-known for its parking lot feeding strategy of eating insects from the grilles of cars. It will also eat human

where for the winter. Rough-legged Hawks breed in the arctic tundra where they feed nearly exclusively on voles. In the winter they can commonly be found in the Klamath Basin. The Merlin is another raptor that is only in southern Oregon and northern California during the winter. This small falcon is just a bit larger than an American Kestrel. It feeds primarily on small birds. Although uncommon, this species can be found through the Klamath Siskiyou Bioregion.

Songbirds: Many songbirds breed in southern Oregon and northern California and then move south during the winter. However, there are a few exceptions. The Northern Shrike (closely related to the Loggerhead Shrike) is only found in the Klamath Siskiyou region during the winter. Watch for this species when driving from Ashland to Klamath Falls along Dead Indian Memorial Highway. Another species that occurs here during the winter, especially in coniferous forests toward the coast, is the Townsend's Warbler. Finally, a common bird at feeders, the Golden-crowned Sparrow is only here for the winter, before moving north to breed in British Columbia and Alaska.

So, before they are off to the north, take some time to appreciate our winter visitors.

(Information from *Birds of Oregon* edited by D.B. Marshall, M.G. Hunter, & A.L. Contreras; *The Birder's Handbook* by P.R. Ehrlich, D.S. Dobkin, D. Wheye; *North American Breeding Bird Survey, Results and Analysis, 1966-2004* by J.R. Sauer, J. E. Hines, & J. Fallon; *The Sibley Guide to Birds* and *The Sibley Guide to Bird Life and Behavior* by D.A. Sibley)

food scraps, dipping harder objects in water to soften them before feeding.

According to the Breeding Bird Survey, from 1966-2004 Brewer's Blackbird numbers decreased annually by 2.5% in Oregon and decreased by 1.4% annually in the entire U.S. Yet, they are expanding their range eastward.

KBO's research at Lava Beds National Monument suggests that Brewer's Blackbirds respond positively to prescribed fire. Their numbers increased two years after the fire application.

Checking a Brewer's Blackbird off your bird list takes little effort—glance in local open areas, such as parks, parking lots, or grassy fields. Brewer's Blackbirds are often in mixed flocks with European Starlings. Towards the end of winter Brewer's Blackbirds can be entertaining to watch as they begin their peculiar breeding behaviors.



photo-Don Baccus

KBO Calendar—Join KBO for Events

February 28th—The Role of Bird Observatories in Conservation and Education, by John Alexander (KBO Executive Director), Rogue Valley Audubon chapter meeting at the First Presbyterian Church of Medford, OR, 85 S. Holly St.

March 11th—Bird Walk with Dick Ashford in Ashland, OR. Meet at Northwest Nature Center. Call 482-3241 to pre-register.

March 27th—Beyond Counting Birds: Measuring Population Vital Rates - A Workshop on Bird Banding at the Evergreen State College in Olympia, WA.

March 30th thru April 3rd—Aleutian Goose Festival in Crescent City, CA. More information and registration at www.aleutiangoosefestival.org

April 8th—Bird Walk with Dick Ashford in Ashland, OR. Meet at Northwest Nature Center. Call 482-3241 to pre-register.

April 21st thru 23rd—Godwit Days in Arcata, CA. More information and registration at www.godwitdays.com

April 22nd—Rogue Valley Earth Day at North Mountain Park, Ashland, OR from 11am-4pm

April 22nd and 23rd—Master Gardeners Fair at the Jackson County Expo in Medford, OR

May 11th—Bear Creek Watershed Education Partners Education Symposium at Southern Oregon University, Ashland, OR

May 13th—International Migratory Bird Day at North Mountain Park, Ashland, OR

May 13th—International Migratory Bird Day at Veterans' Park, Klamath Falls, OR

May 13th—International Migratory Bird Day at Greenhorn Park, Yreka, CA

May 20th—International Migratory Bird Day at Tule Lake NWR, Siskiyou County, CA

NOTE: In addition to joining KBO for these public events, school and community groups are invited to schedule a visit to the KBO Banding Station to watch mistnetting in action. Contact KBO@klamathbird.org to schedule a field and/or classroom visit.

Trivia Corner— Q&A

Sarah Thompson, KBO Intern

Of these 4 bird species, which one are you least likely to see in the Klamath Siskiyou Region?

- A. American Redstart
- B. Prothonotary Warbler
- C. Northern Waterthrush
- D. Yellow Warbler

Answer: B. Prothonotary Warbler

In southern Oregon and northern California, the Yellow Warbler is a common bird and can usually be easily found in streamside thickets during the breeding season. The Northern Waterthrush and American Redstart are much more unusual in this region, yet bird monitoring stations and birdwatchers report observations of each species nearly every year. The Prothonotary Warbler is an extremely unusual visitor — considered a “rare bird” in Oregon and California. It breeds and migrates east of the Rocky Mountains and individuals have been seen in Oregon on less than 10 occasions. One of the Oregon sightings was a bird banded by several happy KBO biologists in 2003 in the Upper Klamath Basin.

Many of KBO's monitoring stations are near Upper Klamath Lake, an area known for attracting large flocks of migrating birds. In addition to monitoring common migrants and breeding species, we occasionally capture rare wandering migrants. KBO biologists are currently working on a report that compiles our observations of rare birds in the Upper Klamath Basin. Look for some of these exciting accounts in future newsletters!

Partnerships

International Migratory Bird Day-KBO Joint Events

Ashley Dayer, KBO Education & Outreach Director

International Migratory Bird Day celebrates the amazing migrations of birds from their wintering to breeding grounds. The theme of this year's event is "Boreal Forests: Bird Nursery of the Americas." The Boreal Forest ecosystem is found from interior Alaska through Canada to the Atlantic Ocean. It is a patchwork of forests, lakes, wetlands, and tundra. Over 300 bird species regularly occur in the Boreal. Most of these species breed and nest there. They migrate south for the winter, stopping in the Klamath-Siskiyou Bioregion on their way or even wintering here.

KBO participates with its partners in four IMBD events in Oregon and California (see Calendar on page 6). The events include bird watching, walks, activities for children, and information from a variety of bird and land management organizations.

Join KBO and partners in celebrating IMBD and spot some migrants on their way north to the Boreal Forest. Learn how KBO's migration monitoring research is essential to the conservation of these birds. We hope to see you there!

KBO Birdwalks with Northwest Nature Center

Dick Ashford, KBO Board of Directors

Klamath Bird Observatory Birding Walk, 8:00 AM Saturday, March 11th and Saturday, April 8th. KBO in conjunction with the Northwest Nature Center (Ashland) continues to offer FREE birding walks to the public. Please join a KBO ornithologist for an informative half-day outing to discover what's happening with our local birds. We'll choose our destination based on the most likely places to find birds at this time of year. Nothing is guaranteed, of course, but on a normal day we should see plenty of birds and, most im-

portantly, have fun! Depending on the season, we might visit local lakes, Bear Creek Greenway, or nearby wooded habitats. If weather conditions permit, we'll bird for a couple of hours and then visit KBO's banding station in Ashland, where you can see the birds close-up. Please dress for the weather, bring binoculars if you have them, and look forward to an enjoyable excursion into the wonderful world of birds! Please call 482-3241 to pre-register.

KBO Wish List

You can contribute to conservation by supporting KBO through memberships, contributions, and donations. The following sponsorships and donations are greatly needed. Thanks for your support!

Sponsorship Opportunities

- \$1000—publication of the newly designed KBO brochure
- \$500—one month stipend for one intern, Bird Banding or Education/Outreach
- \$60—one mistnet for bird banding research

Donations

- frequent flyer miles for international interns' travel & staff conference travel
- double-wide trailer for office space and housing at a KBO field station
- small pick-up truck or minivan for fieldwork
- bicycle with big basket for staff in-town errands
- outboard engine (25-50 hp) for Black Tern surveys
- boat trailer for 17' boat

Godwit Days

The 11th Annual Godwit Days Spring Migration Bird Festival will be held April 21-23, at the Arcata Community Center (CA). The program consists of nearly 100 field trips, workshops, lectures, boat trips, a banquet, and events like the "Big Day," where participants travel by bus around the county to spot over 110 bird species. The keynote lecture "How Ivory-billed Woodpeckers (and Other Birds) will Save the World" will be given by Dr. John Fitzpatrick, Director of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

Free community events include an opening reception and Friday night lecture, Bird Fair vendor booths, Gallery of Birds art show, live birds of prey on display, family nature activities, and selected field trips and lectures. Bird art submitted by K-12 students from throughout Humboldt County will be on display, with awards presented Friday evening.



Godwit Days poster by John Wesa.

Membership/Contribution Form:
Please mail renewals and contributions to:
PO Box 758 Ashland, OR 97520

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____
Telephone: _____ Email: _____
New Member? _____ Renewing Member? _____
Contribution Amount _____

Visit us on the web at:
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