



THE KESTREL

Salem Audubon Society

February 2024

Volume 57 Number 6

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Wildlife Emergencies

Contact: Chintimini Wildlife Center
 (541) 745-5324 chintiminiwildlife.org

Ankeny Hill Nature Center Update

By Tim Johnson

Salem Audubon Society President

In January, the Dave Marshall Classroom really started taking shape. The walls were framed, and roofing materials were being installed. Once the classroom is enclosed, work can begin on the interior walls and flooring. We anticipate most of that work to be completed in February, just in time for a ribbon-cutting ceremony and celebration of the Nature Center in March. **Mark your calendar for Saturday, March 16, for the big event.** Details will follow.

Even though most of the refuge interior trails are closed during the winter months, the Nature Center trails remain open all year, including access to the Dave Marshall classroom for wildlife viewing. The classroom will have viewing ports to provide excellent views of the waterfowl on Peregrine Marsh. Bring your binoculars, a camera, and a friend, and enjoy the unique experience.



Tim Johnson

President's Message

Christmas Bird Count Results

While it wasn't perfect, we enjoyed the best weather in many years for the 2023 Salem Christmas Bird Count, so it should be no surprise that we saw many birds. The numbers were very impressive on many dimensions. We broke the previous record of total species by a considerable amount. We recorded 123 species! The previous record high for Salem counts was 113.



Wren tit

Photo by Tim Johnson

Some of the big surprises were a Franklin's Gull at Lake Labish, a Red-necked Grebe and both Barn and Cliff Swallows at Mission Lake, and a Western Tanager at a West Salem yard feeder. See Mike Unger's count summary on Page 3 in this edition of the Kestrel.

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Thanks for the Great Support

Lastly, thanks to everyone for your great support of Salem Audubon's mission over the past year, with your volunteer hours and generous financial support. This is a member-run organization.

Volunteers lead and support our education programs, field trips, speaker programs, publications, social media, public outreach, community events, and conservation and habitat restoration work.

Please let me know if there's any aspect of this great work you would like to get involved in or something new you would like to propose. Thanks again.

Tim Johnson,
President and Treasurer
tim@salemaudubon.org 503-507-8552



Winter Wildlife Field Days

The Nature Center celebration and Dave Marshall Classroom ribbon cutting will be part of the Winter Wildlife Field Days. Some of these activities will take place at the Nature Center. Click the link for the calendar of activities <https://bit.ly/2024-wwfd>.



SAS Membership Renewal Reminder

February marks the annual renewal period for your SAS membership. To renew your membership (or become a new member), complete the membership form at <https://bit.ly/2024-sas-membership-form> using a credit card or PayPal account, or by check by completing the form on back of this newsletter, clip and mail to the address on the form.

The cost of membership is increasing slightly this year after nearly a decade of no change. We have simplified membership categories as all members now can access the E-Kestrel.

The printed version of the monthly newsletter will still be available to those who wish to pay slightly more for the mailed version.

Beginning with our February membership renewal period, **Individual membership dues will be \$45, and Family membership dues will be \$60.** All digital information we produce will be freely available online, and those who wish to receive a print version of The Kestrel will now pay \$15 for the 11 issues they will receive by mail.

Volunteers Prepare for Busy Spring at Ankeny Hill Nature

Volunteers are busy preparing for upcoming public events like Winter Wildlife Field Days, Arbor Day, Migratory Bird Day, and the 'Bees and Blooms' pollinator event. Indoors and outdoors – they do everything from making materials for visitor activities to moving wood chips. The new year is a busy time for educators, too. Organizations and school groups are reserving Gehlar Hall to learn more about nature and the environment at the Center.

Ankeny Hill Nature Center Volunteer Report

Would you like to be a volunteer? For information, contact Pat (he/him/his) and Bobbie (she/her/hers) Allaire, Volunteer Coordinators, at volunteers@ankenyhillnaturecenter.org or call (541) 760-3700.

To learn more about the Nature Center, check out <https://www.ankenyhillnaturecenter.org/>.

2023 Salem Christmas Bird Count Sets a Record!

Results compiled by Tim Johnson, Mike Unger, and Gretchen Johnson

Our Salem Christmas Bird Count volunteers helped set a record for the number of species seen during this year's count. **We saw 123 species, which beat the old record of 113 species in 1998.** The weather was the best in years despite some fog throughout the day. The temperatures ranged from 29 to 43 degrees with calm to 6 m.p.h. wind, but there was no rain. The count day on Saturday, December 16, had a good turnout of field teams, with 67 participants on 47 teams, which included at least nine (9) new participants. We also had 37 feeder counts submitted.

The 123 species observed is 16 more than last year's total of 107 species. The average number of species observed during the previous 12 years is 106. One downside to this year's count was that the number of birds observed decreased drastically. This year, 26,199 birds were observed versus 42,447 birds observed last year. This is a 38 percent decrease year over year. It is unclear why the number of birds observed in 2023 decreased by such a large amount.

This was the 61st year for the Salem CBC. With such a long history of collecting CBC data, we rarely find new species, but this year, a **Western Tanager was a new species** seen at a local feeder. In addition, we had some rare/unusual species observed this year, including **Franklin's Gull, Tree Swallow, Barn Swallow, and Wrentit.**

We had record-high totals for nine (9) species; here are a few:

Wild Turkey: 21. This is only the fifth year we have recorded this species. 16 was the previous high, set last year. The turkey numbers appear to increase each year.

Eurasian Collared-Dove: 151. The previous high was 114 in 2019. This count contrasts with last year, which had a record small number of these doves, with 44. This species was first recorded during the 2011 Salem CBC.

Black Phoebe: 17. The Black Phoebe has been a rare flycatcher for the Salem CBC. But recently, the numbers have been increasing every year. Last year, we had 15 phoebes, and the year before that, we had six. This is only the 5th year they have been reported, all in recent years.

Lesser Goldfinch: 200. The record was 194 in 2019.

Other uncommon findings:

Orange-crowned Warbler, 13. The number of Orange-crowned Warbler observations has increased significantly in the past year. Last year was the previous high with two!

Sparrows, lots of them! The sparrows showed up this winter. We had record numbers of **White-crowned, Golden-crowned, and White-throated Sparrows.** Most surprising is the **White-throated Sparrow, with 25 observed.** The previous high was 23 in 2016. We can go a year without seeing a White-throated Sparrow or seeing only one or two. We had **596 White-crowned Sparrows** vs. 554 in 2016 as the previous high. **Golden-crowned Sparrows numbered 889** vs. the previous high of 884 in 1990! To put the sparrow numbers in perspective, we had 3,403 sparrows observed last year, while this year, the total sparrow number was 4,221. That is an increase of 24 percent year over year!

Another shocking finding is the decline in the number of waterfowl, including geese, ducks, and shorebirds, noted during the count. The geese numbers dropped drastically from 17,556 in 2022 to 5,932 in 2023. This is a 66 percent decrease in geese numbers. **Plus, we had no Dusky Canada Geese observations this year, which is unusual.** A few years ago, we had 487. As far as ducks go, we had 2,524 ducks this year, while in 2022, we saw 4,665 ducks. This is a 46 percent decrease in ducks year over year. Last, there was a decrease in the number of shorebirds, with 714 (2023) vs. 813 (2022). This is a decrease of 12 percent.

Christmas Bird Count data is invaluable for documenting broad patterns of change in winter bird populations over an extended period and large geographical areas. As we can see from the data presented, the numbers fluctuate year to year depending on several factors.

Many people deserve recognition for supporting the 2023 Salem CBC, too many to name individually. However, we want to mention Dell Ford, who hosted this year's Countdown potluck gathering at her lovely home in Keizer.

Thanks to our sector and team leaders and the many participants, including the field volunteers and those who counted birds at their feeders. All our volunteers contributed to a record year. The Salem CBC could not have been this successful without their support.

Plan to join us for the 2024 Christmas Bird Count on Saturday, December 21, 2024. Let us know if you have questions about the count results or want to dive deeper into the data.

Birder's Night - February 13, 6:30 - 8:00 PM (Doors open at 6:00 PM – Scottish Rite Center)

Vaux's Happenings: 30,000,000 and Counting

The sight of hundreds, if not thousands, of swifts descending en masse toward a tall chimney at dusk is something almost any birder would love to see. Larry Schwitters, the National Audubon Society's 2023 Volunteer of the Year and expert on the Vaux's Swift, will share his images and knowledge of this smallest member of the Swift family at our February Birder's Night. Schwitters, a resident of Issaquah, Wash, will join the meeting online.



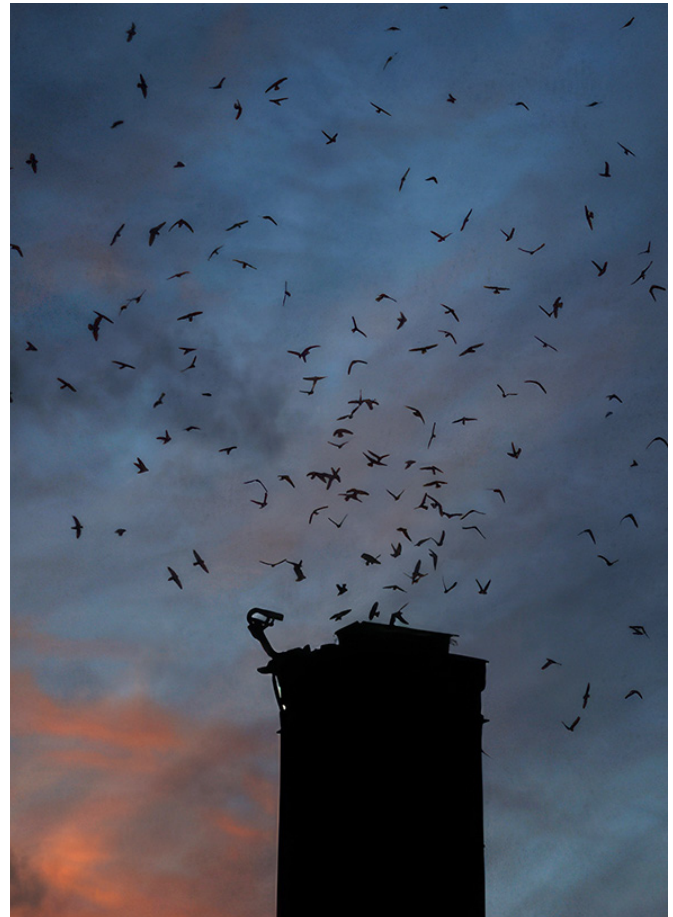
Larry Schwitters

Schwitters earned a Master of Science degree from East Texas State University and spent thirty years in the trenches of public education, mainly as a middle school science teacher and coach in the Renton, WA School District.

After an early retirement, his first involvement with the avian Apodidae family was Black Swift field research for the American Bird Conservancy. His experiences in this endeavor were the subject of the cover story for the American Birding Association's "Winging It" magazine.

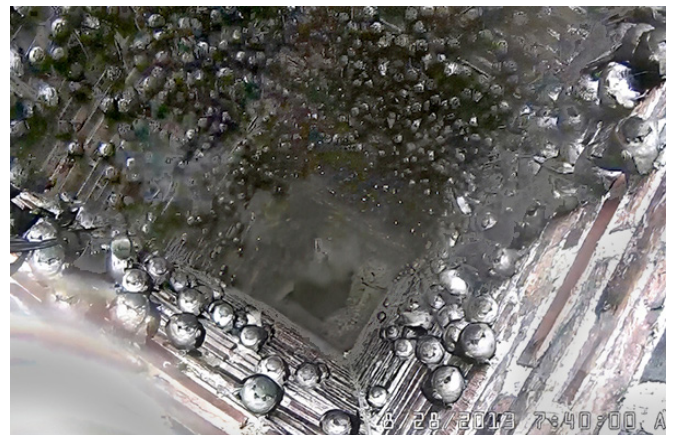
Audubon's "Vaux's Happenings" project began in 2007 as a successful effort to save a school chimney, one of only two well-known big-number Vaux's roost sites in Washington state and recognized as a Partners in Flight Important Bird Area of Global significance. The project quickly expanded into an attempt to locate, raise awareness of, and preserve the essential roost sites used by this species throughout their migratory path. The project has documented over 200 roosting sites from the Yukon to Guatemala used by over 30 million swifts in the last 33 migrations.

Schwitters' 17-year focus on the smaller Vaux's Swift was featured in the Birder's World article, "46 Minutes of WOW". Cornell Lab of Ornithology chose him to do their most recent Vaux's Swift update on their Birds of the World database.



Photographs courtesy Larry Schwitters

Vaux's Swifts descend toward their chimney roost at dusk.



A chimney camera captures Vaux's Swifts inside their roost.

During the Birders' Night program, Schwitters will share images and information captured by the project's chimney surveillance cameras, precision temperature recorders, and radio tracking transmitters.

To register on Zoom, click on the following link:
<https://bit.ly/briders-night-feb-24>

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 and classes will be listed in order by date.

SAS FEBRUARY FIELD TRIPS AND CLASSES

Thursday, February 1, 2024, 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM – Minto-Brown Island Park

(Upcoming – Sunday, March 3 at 9:00 AM and Monday, April 8 at 8:00 AM. Note time change)

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

Birding the loops in this city park is ideal preparation for the upcoming Great Backyard Bird Count. The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is an annual event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of bird populations. The 27th annual GBBC will be held Friday, February 16, through Monday, February 19, 2024. Participants are asked to count birds for as little as 15 minutes and submit their observations online. The purpose of the GBBC is to help researchers at Audubon, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and Birds Canada learn more about how birds are doing and how to protect them and the environment we share.

The data collected during the count helps scientists better understand global bird populations. It is a free, fun, and easy way for people to contribute to bird conservation and citizen science. Please visit the official website at birdcount.org for more information.

Our February Minto-Brown trek will provide species familiarity. Leaves are off the trees. It is cold, still winter, yet shrubs and trees are beginning to bud. Join us to enjoy and get in the swing of counting and identifying wintering sparrows, kinglets, nuthatches, wrens, chickadees, and more. We hope to find wintering warblers, possibly a Hutton's Vireo, and elusive species such as Varied and Hermit Thrush. Since our valley attracts wintering raptors and the water provides winter stopovers for ducks, gulls, shorebirds, and geese, we can study and enjoy them. Snags, woodlands, and hedgerows provide bird spots to shelter and reveal themselves when seeking food.

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
February 2024

THUR 1	<p>SAS - FIELD TRIP Minto-Brown Island Park</p> <p>🕒 9:00 AM - Noon 📍 Minto-Brown Island Park</p>
SAT 3	<p>SPECIAL EVENT Williamette Valley Bird Symposium</p> <p>🕒 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM 📍 CH2M Hill Alum. Cntr. OSU</p>
SAT 10	<p>SPECIAL EVENT Raptor Identification Class</p> <p>🕒 9:30 AM - Noon 📍 Ankeny Hill Nature Center</p>
TUES 13	<p>SAS - BIRDER'S NIGHT Vaux's Happenings 30 Million and Counting</p> <p>🕒 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM 📍 Scottish Rite Temple</p>
WED 14	<p>SPECIAL EVENT Baskett Slough NWR In-Depth Discovery</p> <p>🕒 9:00 AM - Noon 📍 Coville Rd. Park. Lot, BSNWR</p>
SUN 18	<p>SAS - FIELD TRIP Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge</p> <p>🕒 9:00 AM - Noon 📍 Ankeny NWR</p>
FRI 23	<p>SAS - FIELD TRIP Keizer Rapids Park</p> <p>🕒 9:00 AM - 11:30 AM 📍 Keizer Rapids Park</p>
EVERY WED	<p>VOLUNTEER ACTIVITY Audubon Nature Reserve Work Party (All are welcome)</p> <p>🕒 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM 📍 Ankeny Nature Reserve</p>

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Saturday, February 10, 2024, 9:30 AM to 12:00 PM – Raptor ID Class

Instructor: Mike Unger salemaudubonsociety@gmail.com

The most popular class (Raptor ID) that the Salem chapter of the Audubon Society holds locally is coming up on Saturday, February 10, 2024, and reservations are required. The workshop will be held at the Ankeny Hill Nature Center at 130 Ankeny Hill Rd SE, Jefferson, OR. This will be an IN-PERSON CLASS, and participants will learn about raptors that call Oregon home. Raptors discussed include hawks, eagles, vultures, osprey, falcons, and harriers. This workshop will highlight the best sites in the area to look for them and offer participants tips for identifying these birds of prey.

Participants will learn to distinguish a Red-tailed Hawk from a Red-shouldered Hawk, find out how fast falcons can fly, discover why vultures never get sick when ingesting dead carcasses, and learn how to ID raptors by sight and sound.

The workshop costs \$10 per person, with all proceeds going to the Salem Audubon Society. The class includes handouts for future reference.

Register for this exciting workshop using this link (Note: The link is only to register for the class. As it is an IN-PERSON CLASS, there is no Zoom access): https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_d3X2sD14RB2hjRzQzRZHfw

If you have any difficulty registering for the workshop or have any questions, please email Mike at salemaudubonsociety@gmail.com

Wednesday, February 14, 2024, 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM – Baskett Slough

Leader: Harry Fuller (791) 312-1735

Established in 1965 as part of the Willamette Valley NWR Complex, Baskett Slough is primarily managed to provide a wintering habitat for the Dusky Canada Goose, a subspecies of Canada Goose with minimal summer and winter ranges. This refuge also provides wetland and woodland sanctuary for migrant and resident wildlife, including Fender's Blue Butterfly, once thought extinct but rediscovered here! We are meeting at the Rich Guadagno Trailhead, just off Coville Road, near the center of the refuge. Rich, a former manager at this NWR, perished on September 11, 2001, on United Flight 93. Walk and experience the flora and fauna that call this part of the refuge home. From the overlook, you can see wetlands throughout the southern part of the refuge. We will drive to Cackler and Taverner marshes and check out the wintering migrants, some of whom come in huge numbers. The raptors frequent the area in all seasons as well. Enjoy a Valentine's Day morning engaging in one of your favorite activities!

Meet at the Rich Guadagno Trailhead Parking Lot on Coville Road at 9:00 AM. Restroom and picnic facilities are available. Bring water, binoculars, a snack, and dress for the weather. Trails may be uneven, so please use appropriate footwear. We will finish around noon.

Directions: From Salem, take Hwy 22 west to 99W. Proceed north to Coville Road and turn west (left). Continue to the trailhead, which will be on your right. Restroom and picnic facilities are available.

Sunday, February 18, 2024, 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM – Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge

(Upcoming – Tuesday, March 12 at 9:00 AM and Sunday, April 21 at 8:00 AM Note time change)

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

This refuge is a spectacular birding spot in winter. The interior is closed, but we will travel around the refuge to hotspot parking lots and pullouts to view geese, waterfowl, and shorebirds in field ponds and grassy areas. We will watch for winter visitors such as Northern Shrike and Merlin. American Pipits, sparrows, warblers, wrens, woodpeckers, and kinglets can be found.

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

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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.

Friday, February 23 at 9:00 AM – Keizer Rapids Park

Leader: Dominic Valenti (503) 507-7008

This short walk on both paved trails and dirt paths will cover about 1.5 miles and should take us between 1.5 to 2 hours to complete. This park is situated along the Willamette River and includes shaded woods and open fields. Bald Eagle, White-breasted Nuthatch, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Pileated Woodpecker, and White-crowned Sparrow are just a few resident birds. When you add to these the ducks that can be seen on the river (Mallard, Lesser Scaup, Common Goldeneye, Common Merganser, Hooded Merganser), as well as the many sparrows (Golden-crowned, Sooty Fox, White-throated, Lincoln's) and thrushes that populate the park this time of year, it makes for an excellent diversity of species. Hope to see you there!

Meet in the public parking lot near the boat launch area.

Directions: From Salem, take River Road N, turn left onto Chemawa Road N, turn left onto Walsh Way N, and proceed to the parking lot at the end of the road near the boat ramp.

UPCOMING BIRD FESTIVALS

Saturday, February 3, 2024, 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM – Willamette Valley Bird Symposium

CH2M Hill Alumni Center, 725 SW 26th St, Corvallis, OR 97331

The WVBS is an annual, day-long symposium bringing together professionals, students, and amateurs from the Willamette Valley to celebrate birds. The 2024 Symposium will be held IN PERSON! WVBS registration information is available online at <https://willamettevalleybirds.org>. Registration opened on December 15, 2023. The regular registration deadline is January 15, 2024. Standard registration includes admission and lunch.

Oregon State Extension Service strives to ensure that all educational publications, programs, services, and activities are accessible. All announcements for programs, services, and activities must include a statement describing how to request accessibility accommodations. Accommodation requests related to a disability should be made by January 13, 2024, to Douglas Robinson at douglas.robinson@orst.edu. Questions can be addressed to the same address.

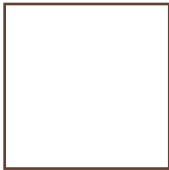
Thursday, April 11 to Sunday, April 14, 2024 – Migratory Bird Festival, Burns, OR

From the website <https://migratorybirdfestival.com>.

Registration opens in February! Follow us on social media for updates and information over the next few months. We're looking forward to your participation! Thank you for supporting the Harney County Migratory Bird Festival and our community!

Spend a fantastic weekend witnessing the spectacular spring migration in the Harney Basin of Southeast Oregon. View thousands of migratory birds as they rest and feed in the open spaces of Oregon's high desert. The Harney County Migratory Bird Festival was first held in 1981 to celebrate the annual migration of birds passing through Harney Basin on the Pacific Flyway. Harney Basin is one of the three most essential areas left in the western United States for spring migratory birds stopping on their way north.

Over 300 bird species use the refuge each year, making Harney Basin a bird watcher's paradise. Today, we celebrate the return of migratory birds each year with guided tours led by experts, workshops, and fun activities for youth and adults.



Salem Audubon Society
 PO Box 2084
 Salem, OR 97308

RETURN POSTAGE GUARANTEED

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Birder's Night Harry Fuller	Birding Workshops Mike Unger
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SAS Woodshop John Jorgenson	SAS Nature Reserve Lee Slattum
Kestrel and Web Editor Mike Williams	Conservation David Harrison
Christmas Bird Count Tim Johnson, Mike Unger, Gretchen Johnson	

**Salem Audubon Society
 Membership Form**

Name* _____

Address* _____

City* _____ State* _____

Phone* _____ Zip* _____

Email* _____ *Required Information

Membership Options
 Membership valid Feb. 1, 2024 - Jan. 31, 2025

Please select one

<input type="checkbox"/> Individual Membership \$45.00 Includes all digital content access	This Form Represents A <input type="checkbox"/> New Membership <input type="checkbox"/> Renewed Membership <small>Please select one</small>
<input type="checkbox"/> Family Membership \$60.00 Includes all digital content access	
<input type="checkbox"/> Add Print Kestrel + \$15.00 Printed Kestrel mailed to your address	

To pay by check, please complete this form and mail with payment to:
Salem Audubon Society PO Box 2084 Salem, OR 97308

To use PayPal or credit card, please visit our online membership form at:
<https://salemaudubon.org/membership-form>

