



Siskiyou Audubon Society

THE FIRST TEN YEARS

SISKIYOU AUDUBON SOCIETY
A Brief History for the 10th Anniversary

We can thank Lee Webb for starting the Grants Pass Chapter of Audubon Society. When Lee moved to this area in 1975, he began attending Audubon meetings at the Rogue Valley Chapter in Medford. Rogue Valley Audubon annually offered bird identification courses; Lee persuaded various Grants Pass friends (mostly Forest Service employees) to take the course.

These classes generated interest in forming a local chapter (especially considering the 30 mile drive to attend meetings in Medford). Lee brought this to the attention of the Medford group; and in February 1981 Otis Swisher, of Rogue Valley chapter, wrote a letter of recommendation to Glenn Olson, Western Regional Representative of National Audubon Society. A follow-up letter was written by Lee, requesting information and materials for chapter formation in Grants Pass.

In April 1981, Glenn Olson sent the necessary materials. Lee began rounding up interested people in our area, and in January 1982, received 50 membership brochures from Glenn, and was informed that "Siskiyou" was available for a chapter name. John Borneman, Audubon Regional Representative, attended the first meeting at Lee's home, on February 11, 1982. Thus the birth of "Siskiyou Audubon" chapter took place, and was launched with a \$50 gift from the Rogue Valley Chapter (and a \$100 loan, which was later forgiven).

Lee became the first president. Among the founding members were: Lee and Pat Webb, Randy and Becky Brown, Steve and Jane Medley, Annie Dueker, Tish Steinfeld, Rose Andersen, Nancy Congleton, Dick and Gwen Adams, Doug Calamar, Jim Skibby, Orley Ringering, Ray Davis, Mike Amaranthus, Evelyn Kelly, Joe Atkin, John Collins, and Nick Barr (and others we undoubtedly missed).

The following excerpts are from an open letter, dated 11 March 1982:

"The Siskiyou Audubon Society is being formed to serve Josephine County (and Rogue River) residents interested in the conservation of wildlife and the natural environment....

The Society will meet at 7:30 pm on the second Thursday of each month, at the Senior Center, 317 NW B St. (except for June, July, August). Some meetings will be held in Cave Junction. Programs will cover an array of nature and conservation interests. Programs for March through May are (listed).

....a variety of field trips are planned. Also offered is a Bird Identification Course.

Your help is needed if the Siskiyou Audubon Society is to become an effective voice for conservation of wildlife and the natural environment in Josephine County....

Meetings and field trips are always open to the public free of charge."

The first Officer Report Form, dated November 3, 1982, lists the following:

Officers:

President - Lee Webb (held office till June '84)
V. Pres. - Becky Brown
Secretary - Nancy Congleton
Treasurer - Gwen Adams

Committee Chairpersons:

Membership - Becky Brown
Editor - Tish Steinfeld
Conservation - Nick Barr
Programs - Joe Atkin
Education - Jim Skibby
Field trips - Rose Andersen
Publicity - Evelyn Kelly
Hospitality - Pat Webb

Board of Directors: John Collins, Ray Davis, Doug Calamar,
Orley Ringering, Annie Dueker, Randy Brown.

The required materials for chapter certification were sent to National Audubon Society, November 4, 1982. These included:

1. Two copies of the Constitution and By-Laws.
2. Two copies of the officer report form.
3. Three copies of a list of communities in the territory the chapter plans to serve.
4. Two copies of programs and field trips scheduled for Sept 1982-Aug 1983.

At this time there were the required number (35+) of memberships. Communities to be served included: Glendale, Sunny Valley, Wolf Creek, Cave Junction (Oregon Caves, Takilma), Grants Pass, Kerby, Merlin, Murphy, O'Brien, Rogue River, Selma, Wilderville and Williams.

The December 1982 Board of Directors meeting convened at the Senior Center in Grants Pass. Lee announced that, besides the initial \$50 gift from the Medford Chapter, the additional \$100 loan was granted to help cover costs of the newsletter until Siskiyou Chapter's share of dues came from NAS.

As a fund raising project, Orley Ringering offered the use of his home workshop and some scrap lumber, for constructing bird houses.

The first issue of the Newsletter was published in September '82. Subscription rates were \$3.00 per year to cover costs of copying and mailing. By November the name "THE SISKIYOU SISKIN" was adopted, first appearing on issue no. 3, along with a logo of a Pine Siskin (finch family), drawn by chapter member Rosie Andersen.

Interesting articles and field notes, by Siskiyou members, began appearing in the SISKIN, such as Rosie Andersen's "The Outdoor World", and Karen Farrar's "Naturalist Notes."

Attendance at monthly general meetings was reportedly excellent, and the names of 50 new members were noted in the September newsletter.

The first bird house building project was held at Orley's home on January 9th, 1983. 56 bluebird houses were made, and sold to members for \$3.50 each, or two for \$5.00. The proceeds were earmarked for the printing of the newsletter, which was costing \$25 to \$40 for printing and mailing each issue. Funds were needed, as Siskiyou's share of membership fees had not yet been received from NAS.

In March of '83 Jim Collins, state non-game wildlife biologist, asked if Siskiyou chapter would be interested in contracting to build 250-300 nest boxes for the state at \$1.00 a box. The lumber would be supplied. The consensus of the membership was a definite yes!

Other high-lights of the first year included:

Provisional chapter status for one year was granted, beginning January 1st. (In March '84 Siskiyou Audubon received certification of full chapter status. Letterhead stationery was purchased.)

A bird identification course was conducted by Otis Swisher and Vince Zausky.

Siskiyou Audubon joined other chapters in bringing attention to conservation issues, such as curtailing the mining of laterite soils at Gasquet Mountain. A Chapter fund was started for this purpose.

The first Christmas Bird Count was scheduled for December 23rd. Maps were drawn up, and team leaders chosen. The results were tabulated at a potluck supper at the Brown's house.

In 1984, Eleanor Pugh started 'birding-by-ear' classes, at \$10 per person and \$15 by couple. Proceeds, after expenses, were donated to the chapter. An evening 'owl-prowl' was also scheduled.

Bill Ward began offering his bird song tapes for sale, with the earnings, after expenses, donated to the chapter. Later, similar tapes were offered by Eleanor.

A wild flower identification class was conducted by Bob Mansfield.

During the same year, SAS became involved in the "Adopt-a-Refuge" program, and White Horse Park was adopted. Work projects entailed clearing the main trail all the way to the Beaver Dam on the main ponds. Bird houses were also hung. White Horse Park has since been the site of the SAS potluck suppers held in June of each year. (By 1992, due to vandalism and escalating costs to the County, the park was in need of repairs. SAS funds were appropriated and, in cooperation with the County Parks

department, new signs were installed, benches replaced, trails cleared, and new bird houses hung. Brochures, with a map and trail guide, were printed.)

To acquaint the community with our activities, a table was set up at the "Garden Faire", organized by the Extension Service's Master Gardeners, and held at the Fair Grounds in conjunction with the home show.

Siskiyou chapter became involved in several cooperative ventures with state and county agencies. In 1985, County Parks granted permission to conduct a bird banding project at Whitehorse Park; the board approved the purchase of two nets. Osprey nests were installed in the Savage Rapids area, in conjunction with the department of Fish and Wildlife. SAS also assisted Oregon State Parks in an experimental effort to provide alternate nesting shelters for swallows at Stewart State Park. (Over the years many bird houses have been installed and/or cleaned out at Stewart Park. In 1992, 77 bird new houses were hung after many old trees, containing bird habitats, were removed.)

A Siskiyou Audubon Banner was commissioned in 1985, and has since flown over 6th street in Grants Pass, in April of each year in celebration of "Earth Day."

Other out reach programs include an occasional free lecture series in Natural History.

The board of directors approved the sponsorship of Audubon Adventure Classes for 4th and 5th graders in the public schools, at \$20.00 a class (by '92 the cost was \$30 per class). In 1985, membership dues were used to sponsor five classes in Grants Pass (up from two the previous year). In the 1987-88 school year, SAS sponsored 22 classes in Josephine County schools. The following year, requests were received from 36 teachers. Funds were appropriated for 24 classes, and an appeal was made to the membership to sponsor the remaining number; requests were made to "Adopt-a-class" for \$25.00. The response was generous. By 1992, Siskiyou Chapter was sponsoring 41 classes.

Bird house construction has evolved into an annual work project, and the public is usually invited to participate. Each year close to 600 bird houses are built. Sales have become a major source of funding for the Audubon Adventure Classes. The total cost for the 1991-92 school year was \$843.00.

For several years, a few nesting boxes for ducks were constructed and distributed to people who had observed wood ducks in their ponds. Later, houses for kestrels were built, as numbers of these cavity-nesting hawks appeared to be declining in Josephine County.

Eventually, through the efforts of Ray Menegazzie in his home workshop, wren/chickadee houses, bat houses, and bird feeders were also offered for sale. The community responded enthusiastically to the annual birdhouse and feeder sales. In

1991, more than 800 items were built, and by the fall of the year, were completely sold out!

Ray and Hazel Menegazzie continue to sell bird houses throughout the year, at the local Grower's Market. It has been said, quote: "Ray and Hazel garner over \$1000 a year at the Grower's Market. They have become 'good will ambassadors' for SAS, encouraging people to join Audubon."

Representatives have regularly been sent to Audubon Council meetings, as well as Regional gatherings at Asilomar. Delegates have often attended the Bald Eagle Conferences in Klamath Falls. One year, SAS hosted a NAS Council meeting, attended by 26 people representing 6 chapters.

Brochures were printed in 1989 and distributed at the County Library, the Visitor's Center, Rogue Community College and the Grower's Market.

There have been tree-planting projects in city and county parks. Fund-raisers, such as yard sales, have been held.

Conservation and environmental issues involving political activism and letter-writing, have been on-going concerns with Siskiyou Audubon.

Since October 1989, SAS has co-sponsored annual conferences with the Grants Pass AAUW, Environmental Study Group. Financial and volunteer support has been offered.

Most recently, support has been given to the Ancient Forest campaign in the form of implementing the "Audubon Sister Chapter Network." For this purpose, funds were appropriated, with the help of NAS, for the purchase of a FAX machine.

During his term as president, Lee Webb gave tribute to the membership, very nicely summing up the service our Chapter has provided to the community, quote:

"Conservation efforts are not just one paper push after anotherSiskiyou Audubon, during it's short history, has rolled up it's sleeves and banded birds, built bird houses, cleared trails, sustained a Christmas Bird Count, adopted Whitehorse Park, and generally catalogued many natural phenomena in the Rogue Valley."

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Siskiyou Audubon Society Goals and Purposes

- Provide programs and activities that involve and educate our membership and the community at large.
- Coordinate efforts with other organizations and individuals.
- Strive to maintain the quality of life by wise use and conservation of our natural resources.

-- September 1992