

BIRDMAN

Duck fans rally 'round

BY TED A. GLOVER

It's winter time and what better time to watch water fowl. As you travel the Applegate you may see birders gathered around lakes, ponds and marshes with their spotting scopes and binoculars pointed at groups of ducks.

Ducks are usually divided into "dabblers" and "divers." The dabblers feed on vegetation on the bottoms and along the edges of shallow ponds and marshes. The divers usually prefer deeper waters and feed by diving underwater often 100 feet or more. In lifting off for flight, the divers do not spring directly upward, but patter along the water's surface while getting underway.

Of course, like most avian behavior the dabblers will occasionally dive and the divers will often dabble. So it's best to familiarize yourself with other identifying marks to distinguish the many species visible here in our area.

Of the diving ducks, the most common in our area is the Ring-necked Duck, which interestingly enough, leaps into flight like the dabblers. The male is identified by the white "spur" on its side and by the peaked crown and a white ring and black tip on its bill. Other diving ducks to watch for include the small Ruddy Duck and the Canvasback.

Among the dabbling ducks, the most often seen is the mallard, usually in small groups or pairs.

The male sports a yellow bill, white collar around the neck and a flashy green head. Also seen in abundance is the unique Northern Shoveler, nicknamed "The Spoonie" because of the very long and broad bill that is distinctive on both males and females. The shovellers can often be observed swirling around in circles while feeding. This is a common feeding method known as "pinwheeling." Despite the odd-shaped bill, the male shovellers are quite attractive with their dark green head and snow-white chest.

Other dabbling ducks seen in the Applegate include Northern Pintail, Gadwall, Green-winged and Cinnamon Teal and the American Wigeon. Last year, a Eurasian Wigeon visited the Provolt area.

Along the Applegate River, keep watch for the mergansers, a duck that dives underwater and eats mostly fish. The merganser's bill is serrated and this aids the duck in holding its slippery fish prey. The Common Merganser, a large duck, has a dark green head, white breast and sides and a red bill. The Hooded Merganser is somewhat smaller than the Common Merganser and has a shorter, thinner bill. The Hooded Merganser also has a distinctive white fan-shaped patch within its crest—a truly magnificent duck.

Be sure to watch any ponds near you as well as Applegate Lake and River. This time of year is great for ducks!

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Photos clockwise from top left:
Ring-necked duck (Aythya collaris) by Stephen Tuttle, USFWS
Hooded merganser (Lophodytes cucullatus) by Lee Karney, USFWS
Canvasback duck (Aythya valisineria) William Vinge, USFWS
Northern shoveler female (Anas clypeata) Steve Hillebrand, USFWS



DAM

FROM PAGE 20

overhead of people's homes; in addition, we expect that the extra height and capacity of the poles and wires will necessitate clearing and cutting outside the bounds of the right-of-way on private properties.

Finally, survey maps indicating the location of the easement show that the present physical location of Pacific Power's poles does not conform to the described location of the easement. In some cases, the easement falls in the center of the road, in the river, or on the opposite side of the road from the actual pole's location. This means that the right-of-way easements that currently exist on our properties are non-conforming, and according to Jackson County regulations, it is illegal to make a non-conforming situation more non-conforming. In other words, the proposed routing of high-voltage power poles is both physically and legally problematic.

For these reasons as residents of Upper Applegate Road and surroundings, we have repeatedly requested that consideration be given to burying the power lines. In response, the FERC report simply noted that the "considerable expense" of burying the lines did not warrant further consideration of this option. It is not acceptable to us that in dismissing this option, FERC did not engage our underlying concerns about safety, property values, and aesthetics. Surely it is expensive to bury lines, but surely too there are other options that might be considered, to address these concerns. What about the possibility of strategically burying the lines at points where the view

and residents' homes would be most affected? What about the possibility of restricting the height of the towers to their current level (with the limitations on voltage this would entail)? What about the possibility of re-routing the easements in places?

In sum, given the uncertainties surrounding the project's implementation over the 15 miles between the dam and the power sub-station, how can you feel that you have sufficient information to make an informed decision on the viability of this project?

The following statement was signed by over 100 Applegate Valley residents.

If—despite the uncertainties and lack of information—you do approve the project, we would like to be assured that concerned residents will have access to the Pacific Power and/or Symbiotics engineers who will make decisions about how the lines will be routed, so that these decisions can be made in collaboration with the residents who will be most affected.

On the morning of the hearing on September 21, Symbiotics representative Erik Steimle (together with Symbiotics' attorney Kirk Burkholder) met with Judge Han and community members at Swayne Viewpoint overlooking the Applegate Dam. They explained aspects of the proposed hydroelectric project, and answered questions. A video of a portion of this presentation is available on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7cnQd6itlBE>

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