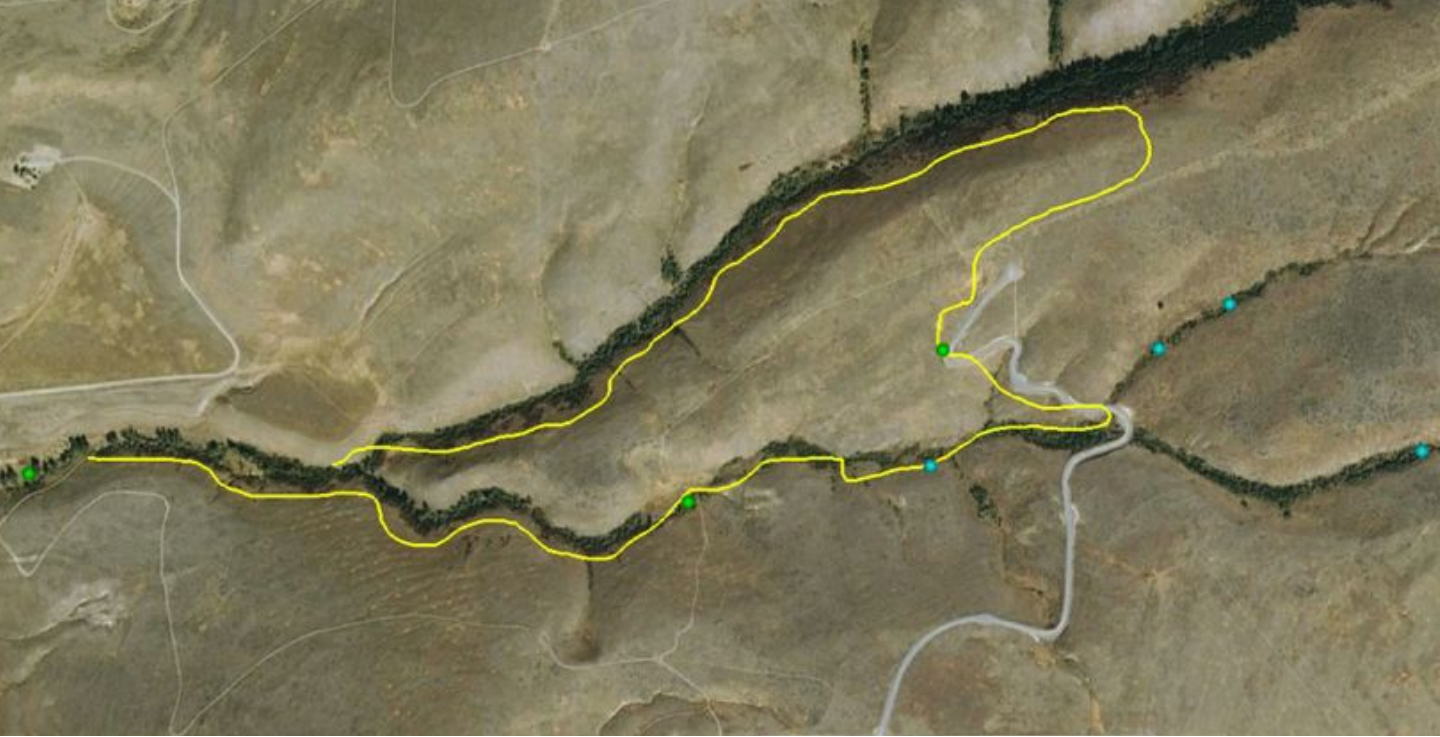




Kate Stone
Field Note
3-29-13



We performed a night survey in the Lower Woodchuck area for long-eared and northern saw-whet owls. Though we didn't detect any saw-whets, we heard **great horned owls** in three locations and **long-eared owls** in two. We heard a long-eared owl hooting from a draw where at least two pairs nested last year. A ground survey confirmed heavy current use of the area, but no nesting yet. We also flushed two long-eared owls from a draw further south. In these draws, the long-eared owls roost in dense hawthorne.





We continue to observe a short-eared owl near the Top House. AR photo.

Spring weather alternates between snow squalls and sunshine.









We've enjoyed several beautiful sunrises. On most mornings, honks from above alert us that a ribbon of snow geese passes overhead. In the past week, we counted 4,103 snow geese migrating north. Tundra swans, trumpeter swans, and northern pintails also flew over in large groups.





A pair of red-tailed hawks perform courtship displays over Lower Woodchuck Creek. They will likely take advantage of the recent emergence of chipmunks throughout the shrubby draws. This chipmunk wisely sticks to dense cover.





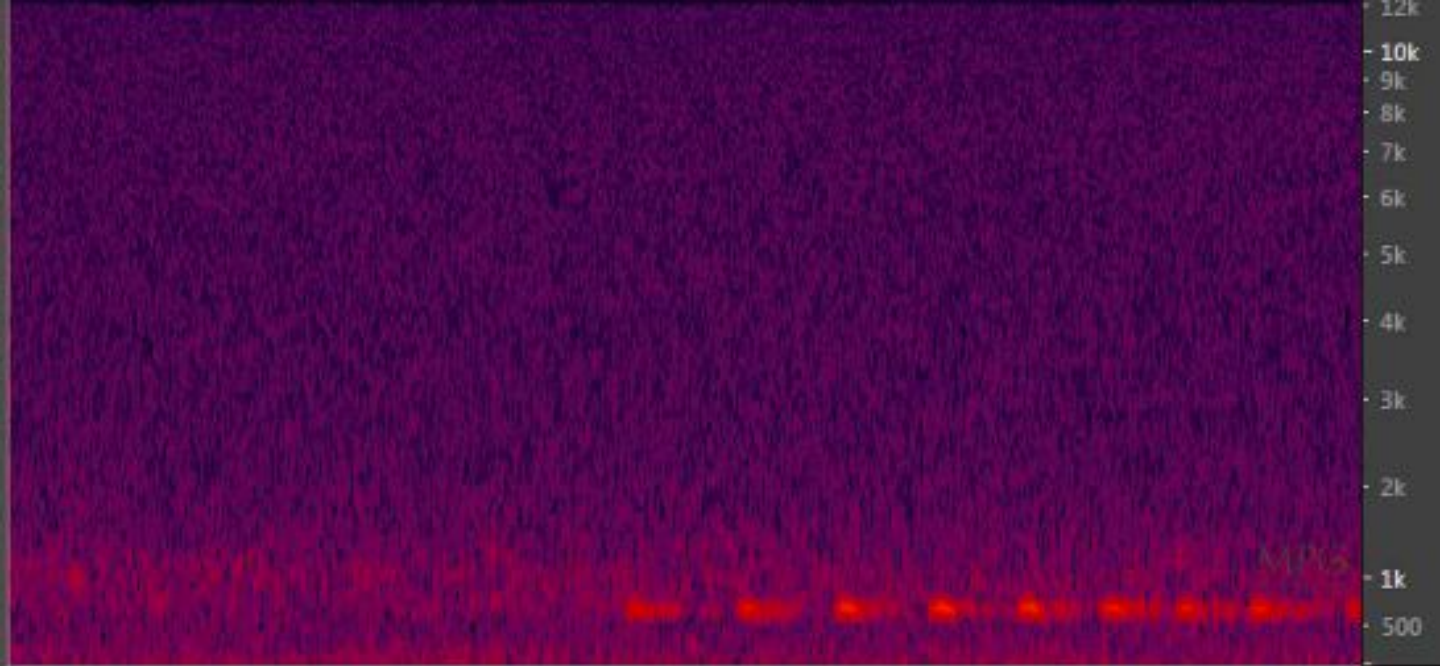
We continue to see a few overwintering species like the northern shrike (above), American tree sparrow, and rough-legged hawk. We started to see and hear spotted towhees (below) a few weeks ago. In the past week, we also started seeing the Brewer's blackbird, vesper sparrow, and long-billed curlew.



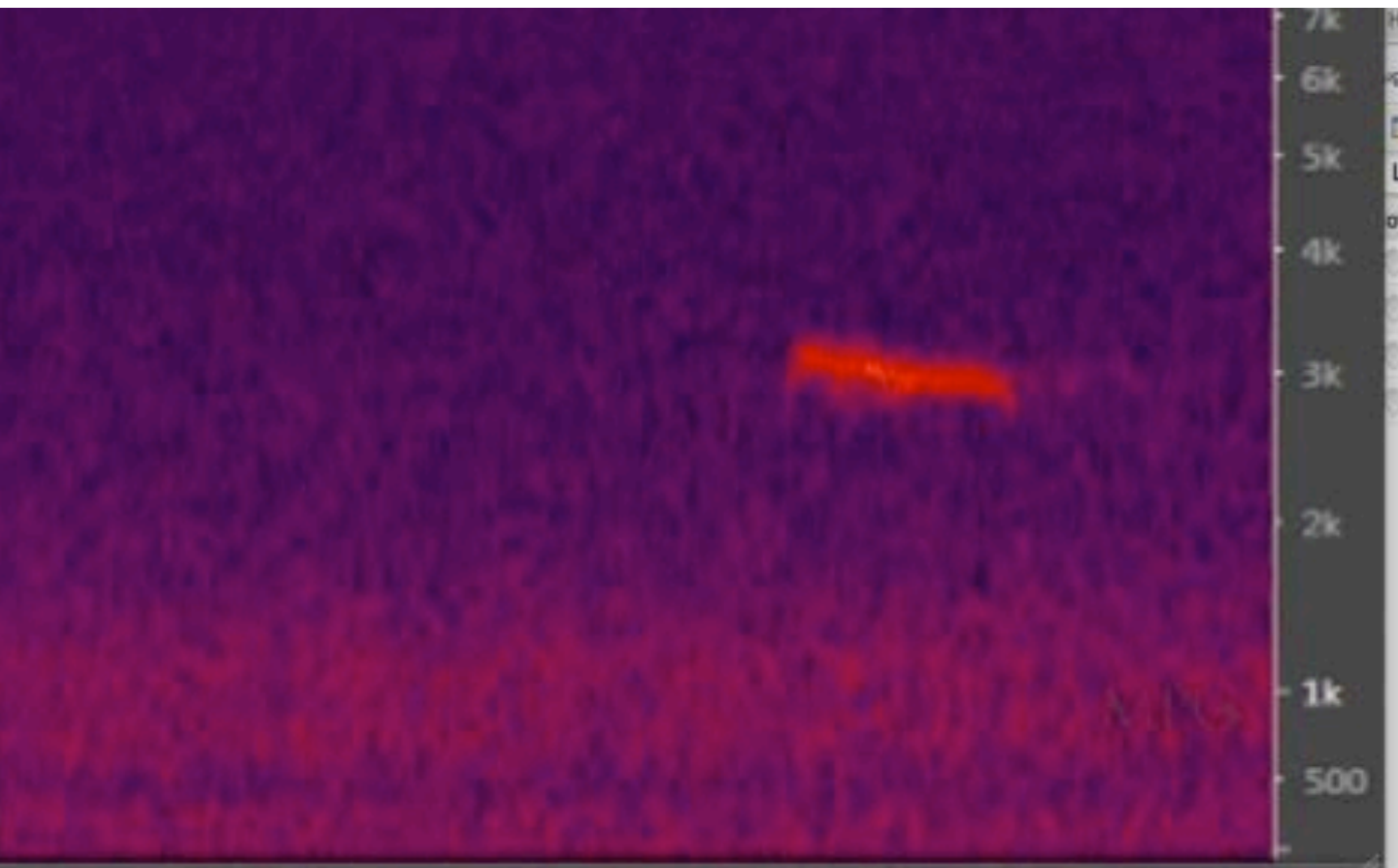


We've observed golden eagle activity around the large stick nest in Tongue Creek, including the addition of a thick layer of greenery to the nest. We've seen two adults displaying above the nest, including one adult with a distinctive gap in its tail.





Our Davis Creek Acoustic Monitoring Station continues to generate valuable sound files. It recorded western screech owls hooting on March 12 and 15 (above). Our species list for the ranch grows closer to 200 with this detection. We also detected a varied thrush on the morning of 3/18; their short, referee-whistle song is obvious in the spectrogram below.



Debbie saw this northern goshawk perching on a ponderosa pine near North Draw. She watched it dive into a group of mountain bluebirds but it failed to catch one.





Yellowbells and buttercups provide splashes of yellow on an otherwise dull landscape.





Though it looks like a flower, this bit of yellow color results from a fungal infection on hoelbel's rock cress.

Prairie smoke emerges between the tines of this antler.





Judging by the surrounding scat, this young coyote fed several other canids (above). Snow partially obscures what little remains of the moose carcass used for eagle trapping (below). Despite the lack of meat, ravens still congregate in the area.





The colors of lichens and mosses seem more vibrant when dampness permeates the air.



Smoke funnels rise from a series of prescribed fires initiated this week.



Horned larks forage in flocks on these hummocks of plowed agricultural fields near the ranch entrance. The dark soil absorbs the sun's heat and radiates warmth.





Photos Kate Stone unless noted otherwise. Photo credits include:
AR: Alan Ramsey DL: Debbie Leick ER: Eric Rasmussen WB: William Blake