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The California Condor

Ventura Audubon Society
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venturaaudubon.org

Call Notes

by Cynthia Hartley VAS Executive Director

Cynthia nest monitoring on Ormond Beach (right) Photo by Caitlyn Barrerra



Welcome back to a new VAS year! This is our first newsletter of the new 2021-2022 VAS season. We hope everyone had a great summer! I know many of my birding friends were finally able to do some traveling and birding away from home. I had a very busy summer working with my Shorebird Recovery team doing nest monitoring at Ormond Beach. We are still finishing up our surveys and starting to crunch the data, so look for a more detailed update in October's newsletter.

Last spring we were optimistic we would return this fall to more traditional in-person programing. However, all summer we watched infection rates increase, a return to mask mandates and uncertainty about the duration of vaccinations. Because of this, our board has voted to proceed with caution, so our September speaker will be help via Zoom only. We will reassess as we go regarding holding in-person meetings, but will definitely have a Zoom option for speaker programs and recordings from now on. Field trips are very important to our chapter, and will continue this fall. But we require pre-sign ups so that we can provide enough field trip leaders to divide into small groups of 4-6 people. We also ask attendees to be vaccinated as well as our field trip leaders. Please see the Field Trip section for more details.

In this month's California Condor, besides our regular articles on programs and field trips, we have Dave Pereksta's popular "Notes from the Field" column. We are publishing this article roughly quarterly now, with birds sightings from several months combined into one article. So be sure to scroll all the way to the bottom of this newsletter to read about rare bird sightings in Ventura County from last winter.

As ever, Ventura Audubon has a need for volunteers to help our chapter with our mission of protecting wild birds and their habitat. If you love birds and have a desire to volunteer we need you! We can use volunteers of all levels and commitment time. We have opportunities from a single volunteer day of habitat maintenance, to monthly field surveys to leadership positions. We even have opportunities for remote volunteer work to help with our Facebook page, calendar and social media. To connect with us please fill out our volunteer survey and we will contact you about opportunities.

Save the month!



October is our Birdathon Fundraiser

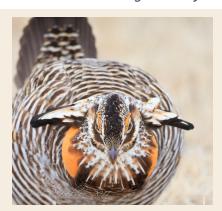
Watch for the October newsletter for info on the fundraiser and updates on VAS programs and campaigns

Mailers will be sent out in the beginning of October

Speaker Programs

7pm Tuesday Sept 14, 2021

We had hoped to return to in-person meetings this fall, but with the rise of the new COVID delta variant our board has voted to hold our September meeting remotely. We will re-assess each month.



"Ranching is for the Birds"

To join the program visit our Monthly Speaker webpage

Then click the
"Watch Virtually Via Zoom" button
at the top of the webpage

Program Description: When the Switzer Ranch turned to nature based tourism it spurred the family to learn more about grassland birds. Sarah and her family soon fell in love with this aspect of their ranch and began to look for ways to incorporate biodiversity and habitat improvement into their management goals. Sarah will outline how they actively manage for grassland birds on their ranch using the ecological processes that shaped the Great Plains; fire and grazing. She will also give a summary of the Sandhills ecosystem and highlight some of the unique birds found there.





Speaker Biography - Sarah Sortum

Sarah (Switzer) Sortum's passion for the land began by growing up on her family's ranch in the Sandhills of Nebraska. However, returning to the family operation didn't look financially possible after completing college (she bounced around between ND, WY and MN before receiving a Bachelor's in Social Studies). Sarah and her husband managed a high end resort ranch in northern CO before taking a leap of faith and returning to Nebraska 15 years ago, near Sarah's home place. By using conservation as a rural economic development tool, Sarah and her family were able to move back to the Switzer Ranch

where they are raising their two boys, which is a life goal.

Sarah and her family currently steward the Switzer Ranch, where biodiversity is a key management goal, with special emphasis on grassland bird habitat. She is also

a 4-H Leader, Loup County School Board Member, and Nebraska State Tourism Commissioner. She and her family enjoy spending time together practicing for and attending rodeos.

In case you missed it in the May newsletter...

Meet Sabrina Kennedy, our Program Chair!



Sabrina volunteered to take on the role of Program Chair last year and is currently a candidate to join our board of directors. She is an Environmental and Resource Management major at CSUCI. She has been hard at work lining up speakers for our new program year. Sabrina's interest in birds started with her grandfather. He came to America from Indonesia and was an avid birder and his love of birds inspired her from an early age. Sabrina became involved with Audubon through the local CSUCI Audubon club. She attended our Beach Naturalist training and worked as a volunteer on Ormond Beach last

spring. Over the summer she took on a special project to develop a training video for beach driving awareness. We plan to use the video to educate police and other agencies that need to drive on the beach in snowy plover and least tern nesting habitat.

Upcoming Speaker Topics

- Oct: "Audubon Starr Ranch Sanctuary: Protecting and Promoting Southern California Wildlands"; presenter Sandy DeSimone
- Nov: "Caring for Wildlife at California Wildlife Center"; presenter Denys Hemen
- Dec: Movie Night "Condor's Shadow"; presenter Joseph Brandt
- Jan: Title TBD, wildfire and forest biodiversity; presenter Gavin Jones
- Feb, March and April TBD

If you have requests or would like to recommend a speaker, please email Sabrina at programs@venturaaudubon.org

Diversity is Important for both Birds and Birders

Ventura Audubon Society is committed to fostering and preserving a birding culture of diversity, equality and inclusion. Promoting birding to a diverse audience is critical to the future of birds, benefits humans, improves our chapter and supports our mission to protect birds and their habitat. As an audience member if you ever feel we are not living up to this promise please feel free to reach out and let us know.

Ventura Audubon Birding Field Trips

A message from Adele Fergusson, our field trip Coordinator

"We hope everyone is doing well emotionally and physically. With ongoing COVID we have made some changes. To ensure everyone's safety, we are now having several leaders and several small groups for each field trip. This is safer for COVID distancing, and it also gives everyone a chance to interact and ask questions of our experienced leaders. As a consequence, currently we will not be having weekly field trips as we did prior to the



We look forward to being with our birding community again!"

COVID-19 safety measures:

- All participants sign up in advance for field trips
- Participants sign and return a COVID release form
- All participants must be vaccinated This includes our leaders too
- Everyone must wear a mask and social distance during the field trip

Beginners are always welcome on field trips!

Please do not be shy if you are learning bird ID or are just curious.

We love having and encouraging beginner birders

To register for a field trip:

- 1. Visit our Field Trip webpage
- 2. Scroll to the bottom of the page and fill out your name, contact info and select the trip you want to attend
- 3. You will be sent an email by our Field Trip Coordinator
- 4. Fill out the form and email back, or bring with you to the trip

Questions or need help? Email fieldtrips@venturaaudubon.org

September Field Trips

Visit our Field Trip webpage for parking directions and to sign up!



Townsend Warbler; photo by Arnaud Lacroix/Audubon Photography Awards

Camino Real Park

Saturday Sept 11, 2021 Meeting Time: 8:30am

Camino Real is a grassy park surrounded by pines and eucalyptus. Potential birds will include Red Shouldered Hawk, Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Yellow Warbler and Townsend's Warbler. GOOGLE MAPS



California Thrasher; photo by Alecia Smith

Arroyo Verde Park

Saturday Sept 18, 2021 Meeting Time: 8:30am

Enjoy birding the oak woodland, grassy areas, and chaparral in this long, broad canyon. Early fall migrants may include Western Tanager, Townsend's warblers, Ashthroated Flycatcher, and Phainopepla.

GOOGLE MAPS

Parking \$2/hr, up to \$5/day, or park on Foothill and walk inside to meet our group

Light drizzle does not necessarily cancel trips, but heavier rain will. Please wear appropriate clothing (layers are suggested), comfortable shoes, and bring snacks, water, hats, sunscreen, binoculars and field guides.



September Field Trips - Birdathon Month!



Willet; photo by Alecia Smith

Ormond Beach

Saturday Oct 16, 2021 Meeting Time: 8:30am

Join us at this excellent coastal location, where we will look for a variety of birds, such as Willets, Whimbrels, Long Billed Curlew, Black Bellied Plovers and other migrating shorebirds. We will also look for Peregrine Falcon, Loggerhead Shrikes and Blue-Gray Gnatcatchers. Dress in layers, as the morning may be chilly.

GOOGLE MAPS



Yellow Rumped Warbler; photo by Alecia Smith

Ventura Settling Ponds

Saturday Oct 30, 2021 Meeting Time: 8:30am

The settling ponds at the Ventura Harbor is a reliable place to find ducks, grebes, gulls and terns, as well as songbirds and raptors. We should hear Spotted Towhees, Yellow Rumped Warblers and Blue-gray gnatcatchers.

GOOGLE MAPS

see article below about parking

Parking Spaces Saved for Visitors at the Settling Ponds

This summer there was an increase in long term RV parking on Angler Ct, in the same parking spaces birders park in when accessing the ponds for a few hours of birding. After complaints where lodged with the city, the Ventura

Police starting citing vehicles that were parked in these spaces. Unfortunately this included birders too. For a short time it looked like we would loose all parking spaces on Angler Ct, but in the long run it worked out well for birders. Only some of the faded "No Parking" red curbs were repainted, so it's clear to see where it's safe to park. The rest of the street has not been repainted and "4 Hour Parking: 6am-8pm" plus "No Parking 8pm - 6am" signs were installed. There is room for about one car adjacent to the entrance gate, which is also marked for 4 hour parking. These changes will allow birders to park and provide a safer environment.

See the map and photos below. Thanks to Marvin Kwit for notifying us and helping communicate the concerns of birders to the City of Ventura. Bruce Schoppe of VAS also wrote a letter to the City Manager and Deputy Mayor Joe Schroeder. Thank you to the City of Ventura for recognizing how important this area is to birders.









Other VAS News and Updates

COSTA RICA Introduction to Neotropical Birding February 10 - 16, 2022

This Portion of Trip Fees Benefits the Ventura Audubon Society

- Take a guided hike in the private, 500-acre rainforest reserve at Selva Verde Lodge, which provides habitat to more than 350 bird species, including the endangered Great Green Macaw.
- Ascend the 100-meter suspended walkway at Tirimbina Biological Reserve for the chance to see species that spend their time high within the forest canopy layer.
- Visit El Tapir, a private reserve adjacent to Braulio Carrillo National Park and a good place to see the Snowcap.
- Search for the Resplendent Quetzal, Slaty Flowerpiercer, Ruddy Treerunner, and other highelevation species in the cloud forests of the Talamanca Mountains.
- Cost: \$1,875 (10 participant limit):includes meals, accommodations, activities as indicated in the itinerary, in-country transportation, full time guide for duration of program, bottled water on the bus, and donation to the Ventura Audubon Society
- The deposit deadline is Oct 13 for the Costa Rica trip

Please contact Frank DeMartino if you want to sign up or have any questions frank@colynx.com

For the full trip brochure please visit our Costa Rice tripwebpage

2021 Snowy Plover and Least Tern Nesting Summary



Nesting season has almost wrapped up on the beaches we monitor. Our last snowy plover nest hatched on Ormond Beach in early August, which means this year nesting season will be over the beginning of September. This is because it takes the chicks a full month to be able to fly and become independent from their parents, or "fledge". So we continue to conduct surveys each week until the chicks from the last nest reaches fledging age. Our last chick was spotted yesterday and it is 3 weeks old.

Nesting Season Outcome

Ormond Beach had a total of 44 snowy plover nests, with 27 successfully hatched. Least terns established 27 nests total and 15 hatched.

<u>Hollywood Beach</u> had 14 snowy plover nests. This year least terns used Hollywood



Beach before and after nesting season, but we did not have any tern nests.

We are still collecting and analyzing nesting outcome, so look for detailed information about nesting season and the Shorebird Recovery Program in the October newsletter

Channel Islands Audubon

We are pleased to support and mentor our local college Audubon chapter at the California State University at Channel Islands. This fall marks the beginning of their 4th year. The club has worked many hours helping with habitat fencing on Ormond Beach, attending Beach Naturalist training, helping with outreach events and collecting trash to help clean nesting habitat on Ormond Beach.

President Clara McNamara: "This month, our chapter meeting is going to be a digital game night over zoom which we've done before. It was our most successful event last year! For the month of October, we're planning on doing an in-person paint night. There will be a raffle with the prize being a bird-themed paint by numbers set. Sporadically we are hoping to do bird walks and of course volunteering at Ormond any chance you need us! September 18 is Coastal Cleanup Day, and we plan on participating as a club."

This month we feature Channel Islands Audubon 2021-22 officers.



Clara McNamara (President)

Clara is an ESRM major with a minor in art. She enjoys spending time in the outdoors, playing videogames, and hanging out with chickens. She was Cynthia Hartley's Student Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) intern the summer of 2019. This is her second term as President of CI Audubon.



Heidy Yupe (Secretary)



Ariana Cortez (Vice President)
Ariana is a biology and chemistry
double major and is the VicePresident of CI Audubon. She
currently volunteers at the California
Wildlife Center in the Orphan Care
Unit. She hopes to pursue a career as
a wildlife veterinarian and is applying
to veterinary school this cycle!



<u>Viviana McKinley (Treasurer)</u> Viviana is an ESRM major and treasurer of CI Audubon. She enjoys

Heidy is a biology major and was the VAS Audubon in Action intern the summer of 2020. She helped build the Shorebird Recovery program online survey form for volunteers and created bi-lingual English & Spanish outreach materials.

hiking, birdwatching, drawing, and playing volleyball. She also works at Wild Birds Unlimited in Ventura!

Birding Classes with Frank at Wild Birds Unlimited Ventura



Falling For Migration

Speaker: Frank DeMartino Time: 2-3pm Date: Sunday Sept 5 2021



Fall migration is upon us! What does that mean? It means birds are passing through our yards and heading to their wintering grounds. Migration is an amazingly complicated event that birds perform twice a year, at least! We're going to take a look at the history of migration and highlight some of the birds that go that extra mile (literally).

Click here for event link



Saving the Songbirds!

Speaker: Frank DeMartino Time: 2-3pm Date: Sunday Sept 12 2021

The birds need our help! Population declines have hit many of our favorite birds and it's time we talk about how we can help them out. We will take a closer look at Cornell's Seven Simple Actions as well as some other local organizations and projects that are helping restore lost habitat. We'll talk about turning your yard into a Certified Wildlife Habitat and how native plants can help turn the tide for our feathered friends.

Click here for event link

Great Programs from Other Audubon Chapters



Birding Fast and Slow

Speaker: Alvaro Jaramillo

Time and Date:

7:00pm Tues Sept 20, 2021

As we know, birding can be immensely gratifying. But there is a lot to it that we do not think about. Our brains actually engage in different ways to identify a bird. You have heard of the "reptilian brain" well there is something to that, and some aspects of what we do as birders is reflexive, other aspects are deeply thoughtful and contemplative. There is perhaps no activity as complete as birding, in that it can be enjoyed in a multitude of ways, by essentially every type of person. Even every personality can get something from birding. As a pastime birding is also like a good hot sauce, it goes well with everything! It adds to other outdoor activities, and even to mundane situations like doing outdoor chores. There is a lot to birding, and perhaps what we forget is that it makes us privileged to become connected with nature. This connection is not only fun, it is



vital, and it is absolutely wonderful for our health. Yes, I can assure you that in time doctors will prescribe birding to people as it is good for us! Come see how, and why this is.

more info (including zoom link)



Goleta Coast Audubon Society - A New Student Chapter of the Audubon Society at UCSB

Speaker: Conor McMahon Time and Date: 7:30pm Wed Sept 22, 2021

Tonight's program will explore Goleta Coast Audubon Society's (GCAS) initial projects, present activities, and future opportunities to engage students with birds and conservation related issues. GCAS is UCSB's birdwatching and conservation club, founded in 2019. GCAS is actively working towards connecting the UCSB student population with birding and conservation in the wider Santa Barbara region and beyond. GCAS is a registered campus organization at UCSB and an official campus chapter of the National Audubon Society. GCAS membership is composed of both undergraduate and graduate students, and the chapter organizes birding walks, conservation projects, and advocacy initiatives. GCAS's mission is to protect wildlife and the habitat it needs to thrive, while engaging and educating students and the public on science and conservation issues pertaining to birds.

more info (including zoom link))

Notes From the Field

December 2020-March 2021 by David Pereksta

The most exciting find of the period was Ventura County's first record of Verdin discovered at Ormond Beach 5 Dec-14 Feb (KS & SS). There are very few records of this species along the California coast so this was a surprising record. Other birds of note at Ormond Beach included a Tundra Swan 22-29 Dec (AW), a Cattle Egret 1-4 Jan (CT), a Tropical Kingbird 30 Nov-6 Feb (ZA), a Lucy's Warbler on 5 Dec (KS & SS), and a Palm Warbler on 5 Dec (DKB).

Eurasian Wigeons included one in Arroyo Simi 1-31 Dec (AW), one at Lynn Ranch on 28 Dec (DKB), one in Fillmore on 13 Mar (TT), and a continuing individual at Mugu Lagoon through 16 Mar. Three White-winged Scoters were along the coast south of Pont Mugu on 20 Dec (AS, BH, DM) and the continuing one at Mugu Lagoon was joined by a second on 31 Dec (DP & SK), with both staying through 16 Mar. Long-tailed Ducks included one at the Santa Clara River Estuary on 21 Jan (ZA) and another at Mugu Lagoon 19 Feb-11 Mar (MR). Two Sandhill Cranes were at the Santa Clara River Estuary 18 Jan-13 Mar (ES & MG). An

unseasonably late **Solitary Sandpiper** was in the Arroyo Simi 6-7 Dec (MB). Two **Marbled Murrelets** were offshore of the Ventura Harbor on 22 Mar (JB) and two**Ancient Murrelets** were in the Santa Barbara Channel on 17 Mar (PB). A **Neotropic Cormorant** was at the Ventura Settling Ponds on 23 Dec (KS) and later found at the Ventura River Estuary 2 Jan-26 Mar (KS & SS). A different **Neotropic Cormorant** was at the Naval Base at Port Hueneme on 1 Mar (MR). An **American Bittern** was at Lake Sherwood 6-27 Mar (MH) and another was on the Oxnard Plain on 21 Mar (DP). The wintering **Tricolored Heron** at Mugu Lagoon, now in its third winter there, continued through 16 Mar.

Swainson's Hawks included an amazing 21 near Fillmore on 13 Mar (LH), one south of Fillmore on 30 Mar (SC), and 3 over Matilija Lake on 31 Mar (JG & BS). There were several Zone-tailed Hawks along the Highway 33 corridor this winter including one at Canada Larga Road 30 Jan-12 Mar (VP), a juvenile in Ojai on 18 Jan (DP), and an adult in Ojai 28 Nov-8 Mar (JM). California Condors continue to recover and expand their range locally with a number of reports below their usual mountainous habitat including 14 at Steckel Park on 16 Feb (KK) and as many as three at Canada Larga 18 Feb-28 Mar (LE),

White-winged Doves included as many as two in eastern Camarillo 1-18 Jan (DP), one near the Camarillo Airport on 20 Dec (JM), one in Newbury Park on 29 Dec (DKB), one at Point Mugu on 17 Feb (MR), one continuing along Old Lewis Road through 13 Dec, and several individuals continuing at Arroyo Verde Park through 20 Mar with a high of four on 7 Mar (SS). A Broad-billed Hummingbird continued in Oak View through 18 Mar. A Williamson's Sapsucker continued in Oak Park through 23 Feb. AYellow-bellied Sapsucker was at the South Victoria Tipus 6 Jan-27 Feb (DKB) and another was at Lake Casitas on 13 Jan (DM). Red-naped Sapsuckers included one at Lake Casitas on 2 Jan (JG et al.), one at Toland Park 11 Dec-11 Feb (KO), one at Conejo Community Park on 20 Dec (KR & SR), one in Thousand Oaks on 28 Feb (GR), one in Conejo Creek North Park on 8 Mar (DP), and as many as two continuing at CSUCI through 7 Feb.

Ventura County's third Dusky-capped Flycatcher continued at Camino Real Park through 26 Jan. A Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was near Pitts Ranch Park in Camarillo 20-27 Dec (MB & CL). Wintering Gray Flycatchers are rare locally so one at Arroyo Vista Community Park 15 Dec-5 Mar (SC) and two at Point Mugu on 20 Dec (MR, RM & DP) were notable. Eastern Phoebes included one in Moorpark 31 Jan-6 Mar (DKB) and one on the Oxnard Plain 27 Feb-30 Mar (DP). Remarkable in mid-winter was a Philadelphia Vireo at Camino Real Park 31 Jan-2 Feb (SS). A Plumbeous Vireo was at Pitts Ranch Park 10 Dec-7 Mar (DP). A Chestnut-backed Chickadee continued at Camino Real Park through 17 Mar.Red-whiskered Bulbuls included one at CSUCI 6-14 Dec (SS) and another in Oxnard on 23 Mar (KS). This species has expanded in the San Gabriel and San Fernando Valleys, but there are few records for Ventura County. A Varied Thrush at Matilija Lake 22-31 Jan was the only one reported during the winter (JG & BS).

As many as four Lapland Longspurs were along Arnold Road 17 Jan-19 Feb (DP). The only Clay-colored Sparrow this winter continued in Newbury Park through 5 Dec. A"Red" Fox Sparrow was in Ojai 17-23 Dec (JG). Individual"Gray-headed" Oregon Juncos continued at the Conejo Cemetery through 20 Dec and in Thousand Oaks through 15 Feb (GR). White-throated Sparrows included one at Conejo Creek South Park on 7 Jan (SR), one in Simi Valley on 6 Dec (DK), and one continued in Newbury Park through 13 Mar. A "Large-billed" Savannah Sparrow was at McGrath State Beach on 10 Jan (DB). ASwamp Sparrow was on the Oxnard Plain on 16 Feb (DP) and another continued on San Nicolas Island through 7 Jan. A Northern Waterthrush continued at the Ventura Settling Ponds through 15 Jan and a Black-and-white Warbler was there 10 Dec-22 Feb (KS). ALucy's Warbler was at the South Victoria Tipus 2-13 Jan (RM & MR). A Palm Warbler was at Round Mountain On 29 Dec (KR & SR). The Painted Redstart continued in its second winter at Arroyo Verde Park through 16 Mar.

A Scarlet Tanager, only the second midwinter record ever for California, was at the Harmon Barranca in Ventura 3-10 Jan (DP & SC). Other notable birds in the barranca included a male Summer Tanager 2 Jan-27 Feb (RM & MR), aBaltimore Oriole 2 Jan-15 Feb (RM & MR), and as many as four Western Tanagers 29 Dec-4 Mar (m. obs.). The nearby Cornucopia Gardens hosted a wintering Green-tailed Towhee 26 Nov-11 Mar (AF) and a White-throated Sparrow 2 Jan-22 Mar (AF).Orchard Orioles included one at Bubbling Springs Park 6-8 Feb (SK, SS & SB) and one at the Ventura Community Park 10 Feb-11 Mar (DP). A Summer Tanager was in Camarillo on 31 Dec (DC). Backyard feeders attracted a few buntings that are rarely found in California in winter, including a Painted Bunting in Ventura 6-19 Feb (JMc) and an Indigo Bunting in Ojai on 27 Jan (BK). ARusty Blackbird that frequented backyard feeders in Camarillo 2-18 Jan (LH) was one of the few records of this species ever in the county.

Thank you to those who reported sightings during this period. If you have any questions about local birds or have a good one to report (please no calls about nuisance birds) e-mail David Pereksta at pereksta@pacbell.net>

Good birding,

David Pereksta

Observers: Zack Abbey, Joel Barrett, Peter Bedrossian, David Bell, Marc Better, Sage Bylin, Dan Cooper, Sammy Cowell, Linda Easter, Adele Fergusson, Jesse Grantham, Marianne Gunn, Linnea Hall, Mary Hansen, Deven Kammerichs-Berke, Sangeet Khalsa, Bob Kilpatrick, Don Klabunde, Karl Krause, Carol Langford, Jerry Maryniuk, Dan Maxwell, Robert McMorran, Jim McWaters, John Mueller, Kris Ohlenkamp, David Pereksta, Griffin Rohrer, Martin Ruane, Karen Rusch, Steve Rusch, Spencer Seale, Bill Shanbrom, Eric Shaphran, Kirill Shtengel, Tina Tan, Cameron Tescher, Amy Worell

Thank you to our supporters!

Financial contributions to our chapter allow us to continue our work protecting birds and their habitat.

Grants

- California Department of Fish and Wildlife and United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Endangered Species Act Section 6 Grant
- National Foundation of Fish and Wildlife (NFWF)
- National Audubon Society, Audubon in Action Grant
- Start the Wave website

Support Ventura Audubon Society

Please consider donations to VAS Ventura Audubon Society is a registered tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization.

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