

## The California Condor

Ventura Audubon Society

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A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

[venturaaudubon.org](http://venturaaudubon.org)



*Tricolored Blackbirds; photo by James Scott*

## Call Notes

*by Cynthia Hartley*

*VAS Executive Director*

I want to extend my deepest gratitude to everyone who supported our Raise the Roost fundraiser and joined our special speaker presentations. With your support we met our fundraising goals! Plus that, many people got some very sweet deals in the auction. I'd like to thank our multi-talented biologist Kat Whitehouse and new volunteer coordinator Alecia Smith. Together they were the driving force behind conceptualizing the fundraiser, curating auction items and organizing the silent auction.

On that note, this month we introduce Alecia Smith who is stepping into the role of volunteer coordinator. She brings special insight to the program, having been our Lead Naturalist for the past 4 years. Many of you may recognize her name from her many shorebird photographs we use on our website and publications.

It is with great sadness that we learned of the passing of Nancy Schorsch this month. Nancy was an important Ventura Audubon leader for over two decades. Nancy's passing brought forth an out pouring of love and reminiscing from all of our board members who worked with her. We have a special memorial article about her in this newsletter. I am humbled to follow in her footsteps and so very grateful for her leadership. Our deepest condolences to her family for their loss.

This month we have a lot of news items in our newsletter. In addition to articles on our speaker program, a wrap up on the Raise the Roost fundraiser, our tribute to Nancy Schorsch, and educational programs for birders, we are bringing back two very popular items. We are re-introducing Field Trips after a long hiatus due to Covid-19. We also have the ever popular "Notes from the Field" update on rare bird sightings in Ventura Count by David Peretska. Please enjoy.

## NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING - May 11, 2021

### **The Annual Meeting of the Ventura Audubon Society will be held on: Tuesday, May 11, 2021 at 7:00 PM Via Zoom**

This has been for our members on the last month of our season and to elect our officers for the following year, instead of our usual monthly speaker program. For the first time ever we will be holding our annual meeting virtually. A link to the Zoom meeting will be provided prior to the date on our website, via Constant Contact and social media. At the meeting, you will be able to hear and see the proceedings, ask questions and vote on the election of directors and any other item on the Agenda.

In addition to electing officers, we will hold a fun event... A Kahoot!**What is a Kahoot?** Our host will show a series of bird images, of varying difficulty, and the audience will vote on the species ID. Prizes for correctly ID'ing birds. Not only a great way to test your bird ID skills, but a great way to increase your knowledge.

#### **The Draft Agenda for the Annual Meeting:**

1. Kahoot
2. Election of Board of Directors for 2021-2022 Program Year:

Debra Barringer  
Tom Black  
Deborah Burns  
Frank DeMartino  
Sherry Dorris  
Adele Fergusson  
Alexis Frangis

Cynthia Hartley  
Sandy Hedrick  
April Randol  
Bruce Schoppe  
Alecia Smith  
Kat Whitehouse

## March 13, 2021 - Speaker Program



## Conservation in the Central Valley 3 Keys to Our Future

**Speaker:** Xerónimo Castañeda,  
Conservation Manager California Audubon

**Date:** Tues April 13, 2021

**Time:** 7:00 pm

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To join the program  
Use the link on our [Monthly Speaker](#) webpage  
Click the "Watch Here" button on the monthly speaker page

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### Program description

Xerónimo's work at Audubon CA focuses on habitat restoration and enhancement through multi-benefit management of Central Valley wetlands, agricultural operations, and groundwater recharge projects to benefit birds and people.

This presentation will focus on projects related to:

- 1) The conservation partnership leading to the protection of at-risk Tricolored Blackbird colonies
- 2) The development of multi-benefit groundwater recharge projects in target regions to benefit birds and communities
- 3) On-farm demonstration of how cover crops and riparian restoration create habitat and reduce green house gases.

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### Speaker Biography

Xerónimo Castañeda is a Conservation Project Manager with Audubon California. He is a native of the Bay Area spending most of his time living and working along the coast, from Monterey to Arcata.

In between spring and summer field seasons with Point Blue Conservation Science, he ventured to the east coast to run fall migration banding stations. Regardless of seeing some amazing landscapes across the country, each year he found his way home to California, eventually settling in the Sacramento region. Away from work, Xerónimo spends time backpacking, riding bikes, cooking, and of course birding.

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To read more about California Audubon's working lands conservation projects, follow these links:

- [Farmers Play Key Role in Protecting Tricolored Blackbirds](#)
- [177,000 Tricolored Blackbirds Saved in 2020!](#)

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***Sneak peak at our Sept speaker topic***

***Title:*** *Ranching is for the Birds*

***Speaker:*** *Sarah Sortum, owner/rancher Switzer Ranch*

***Story of how a Nebraska ranching family manage their ranch for grassland bird habitat***

## Past programs

If you missed a past program and would like to see it, please visit the ["Monthly Speaker"](#) page on our Ventura Audubon Website and scroll to the bottom. We record most meetings and post the YouTube link on our website.

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## 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 Field Trips

**We are so happy to share the good news!**  
**We are going to have field trips again, with COVID-19 safety measures**

**We are starting up our field trips again as the COVID-19 status in Ventura County has moved to the **Orange Tier**.**

To keep everyone safe we will continue to adhere to the COVID-19 safety measures we developed last fall. If you are interested in participating in a fieldtrip:

- All participants must pre-register
- We will email you a COVID-19 release form for you to sign and return electronically before the trip
- Everyone must wear a mask during the field trip
- All participants must maintain social distancing of 6 feet

**For our part**, we are arranging to have multiple field trip leaders on each trip so we can break into small groups. This is safer for COVID-19 distancing, and it also gives everyone a chance to interact and ask questions of our experienced leaders. We encourage family groups to break into their own groups with a leader.

**Beginners are welcome on all field trips!** Please do not be shy if you are learning bird ID or are just curious. We love beginners!

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.

If you have any questions or want to register contact [fieldtrips@venturaaudubon.org](mailto:fieldtrips@venturaaudubon.org) or use the application below

To register for a field trip, visit our [Field Trip webpage](#). Scroll to the bottom of the page and fill out your name, contact info and which trip you want to attend. You will be sent an email by our Field Trip Coordinator.



*California Thrasher - photo by Alecia Smith*

## Arroyo Verde Park

Saturday April 17, 2021  
Meeting Time: 8:30am

Arroyo Verde park is a fantastic place to view many birds, such as California Thrasher, Hermit Thrush, Wrentit, woodpeckers and California quail. This time of year the Orioles are returning so hopefully we will have some sightings!

[Google Maps link](#)

See Field Trips webpage for details directions.



## Ventura Settling Ponds

Saturday May 1, 2021  
Meeting Time: 8:30am

Enjoy a morning of mostly waterfowl birding. There will also be a wide variety of birds such as Common Yellowthroats, Song Sparrows, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, and Red-tailed Hawks .

[Google Maps link](#)

See Field Trips webpage for details directions.

## In Memory

**Nancy Schorsch - Sep 3, 1927- Mar 12, 2021**

*The celebration of a beloved Board Member of*

*by Jim Susha*

Nancy was a junior high and high school teacher, a writer, a Phi Beta Kappa, a photographer, a world traveler, a swimmer, hiker, birder, and the loving wife of Carl Schwartz. She served on the Board of our chapter for 29 years beginning in 1989 and retiring in 2014. Sixteen of those 25 years as Program Chair and 2 years as Secretary. She published a book "Saving the Condor" on March 1, 1991. Her travels with her husband Carl included 17 trips to Panama, others to the Galapagos, Central and South America, Europe, Africa, China, and the South Pacific. What an amazing and fun filled life she and Carl have lived.



Audubon member Janet Kessler recalls this side of Nancy: "When I remember Nancy, I think of her authoritative speaking voice. I assume it came from her years teaching high school. Once when I was shopping in Santa Barbara, and in a dressing room, I heard this voice coming from another part of the store and said to myself, that sounds like Nancy Schwartz. And it was. She and Carl were the perfect couple, complimenting each other. Nancy and Carl were kind and full of good humor and willing to share their knowledge of birds and birding areas."

We can't forget that the annual board member BBQ began at Nancy and Carl's home in Ventura so many years ago. What fun times those were. As we look back on her many contributions to our chapter and life, it is with admiration and love that we say "Thank You for It All".



Nancy and Carl at the Christmas Bird Count potluck



Newspaper clipping about Nancy's book  
(thank you Janice Levasheff of SBAS!)

## Raise the Roost Fundraiser: Thank You!

*by Kat Whitehouse - Shorebird Recovery Program Biologist*

The Shorebird Recovery Team would like to extend their thanks to everyone who participated in Raise the Roost! The weekend was filled with two amazing speakers and a very lively silent auction! Through your generosity we were able to meet our goal of \$5,000! Items won in the silent auction raised a total of \$2,773 and we received donations totaling \$2,227. Raise the Roost, not only brought together shorebird lovers from our local community but across the United States and the World. Thanks to this widespread support, the Shorebird Recovery Program will have the funds to continue conservation efforts for the current season. It is our hope to multiply this energy further, without you our donors, activists and volunteers, much of our amazing work at Ormond and Hollywood would still be ideas on paper. It's not about what each individual can do or give, but about what we can do together! We invite you to be a part of this wonderful team at the Ormond and Hollywood and become a Volunteer Naturalist, help spread the word about The Shorebird Recovery Program, and of course have fun and "Raise the Roost".



## "What the shorebird recovery program means to me"

*Joan Tharp - Shorebird Recovery Program: Tideline Monitor*



I believe that every species on this planet should have the chance to thrive. Without balance, ecosystems collapse. Humans have done a lot to unbalance nature, and it's critical for my well-being to do my small part to help bring the world back into balance. Being on Ormond Beach monitoring the endangered shorebirds brings what really matters back into focus.

**Online Birding Classes with Frank at  
Wild Birds Unlimited Ventura**



## Beginner Bird ID Class - Spring Edition!

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**Speaker:** Frank DeMartino

**Time:** 2-3pm

**Date:** Sunday April 18, 2021

Struggling to identify sparrows? Frustrated with finches? Are there flashes of yellow going through your yard that you wish you could name? Spring migration is in coming up and mystery birds will be everywhere! We will be having a beginner bird identification class focusing on the most common species that you are likely to see at your feeders this time of year and how you can tell them apart.

[more info](#) (including zoom link)

## Springing Into Migration

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**Speaker:** Frank DeMartino

**Time:** 2-3pm

**Date:** Saturday April 24, 2021

Migration is one of the most amazing feats that birds perform. Humanity has been fascinated with the pattern of appearing and disappearing birds for millennia. Understanding migration is a key step to realizing the challenges and threats that birds deal with on a regular basis. We will look at some of the myths that have surrounded migration and highlight the many obstacles birds face and the incredible ways they have evolved to deal with them. Finally, we will discuss current conservation issues that pertain to migration, including Cornell's "Seven Simple Actions to Bring Birds Back"

[more info](#) (including zoom link)

## Great Programs from Other Audubon Chapters



**Morro Coast Audubon Society**

Serving San Luis Obispo County Since 1966

**No Birdbrains Here: The Latest on Bird Learning, Instinct, and Intelligence.**

**Speaker:** Dr. Susan Schneider

**Time and Date:** 7:00pm Wed April 19, 2021

(after the annual membership meeting)

Birds can learn from consequences, as we and many other species can: Baby chicks learn to peck accurately, wild mockingbirds learn to recognize individual people, and pigeons learned to categorize art and music. Even instinctive behaviors like imprinting can be more flexible than scientists used to think, and songbird song appears particularly malleable. This talk will explore bird learning and intelligence, from everyday foraging, to learning through observing, to tool use. Such adaptability may be critical as wild birds attempt to adjust to the many threats they face. Scientists also take advantage of this powerful learning ability to help save endangered species. A behavioral and biopsychologist, Dr. Schneider is an expert on learning principles and nature-nurture relations. She's also an avid birder, field trip leader, and environmental activist. A Past President of San Joaquin Audubon (CA), she is currently focused on applying learning principles to the climate crisis. Her award-winning book for the public, *The Science of Consequences: How They Affect Genes, Change the Brain, and Impact our World*, was a selection of the Scientific American Book Club. Schneider is a Visiting Scholar at University of the Pacific (Stockton) and a consultant for the Bay-area sustainability nonprofit Root Solutions.



[more info](#) (including zoom link)



**SANTA BARBARA  
AUDUBON SOCIETY**

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## **The Russian Far East: Birding in a Sea of Sorrow**

**Speaker: David Pereksta**

**Time and Date: 7:30pm-9pm, Wed April 28, 2021**

The nearly landlocked Sea of Okhotsk in the Russian Far East, which dominates the Northwest Pacific, is little known outside of Russia and seldom visited by westerners. Its upper regions remain frozen much of the year and winter storms make it an inhospitable place, but the “Sea of Hunters” as it is translated provides a clue to the abundance of wildlife found there. Despite historical exploitation of wildlife, marine mammals and seabirds still thrive there in numbers that boggle the mind. Seabird numbers can only be described as spectacular with numbers rarely seen elsewhere in the world, including one small island with an estimated 7 million birds! However, this little-known sea also has a dark history that up until recently has been suppressed and not spoken about, and perhaps no other sea in the world has witnessed as much human suffering and misery.

[more info](#) (including zoom link)

**Notes From the Field: Oct-Nov 2020**

A **Snow Goose** was along Arnold Road 4-25 Oct (SC, GVH, DP), 7 were there on 27 Oct (MBe), and a flock of 50 was there 29-30 Nov (m. obs.). Other **Snow Geese** sightings included one at the Ventura River Estuary 5-14 Oct (EH), one at the Ventura Settling Ponds on 13 Nov (RG) and four there on 22 Nov (DKB & MBa), and one in Simi Valley on 29 Nov (KR & SR). A **Snow Goose** and a **Cackling Goose** were at Lake Sherwood on 14 Nov (MH). **Cackling Geese** included four along Arnold Road on 27 Oct (AM, BH), one there on 30 Nov (JMu), and as many as four were on San Nicolas Island 14-29 Oct (MR, DP, SK). Four **Tundra Swans** were over the Ventura Settling Ponds on 28 Nov (SM). A **Black Scoter** was at the Santa Clara River Estuary on 24 Oct (DP) and two were at Mugu Lagoon on 10 Nov (MR) with one continuing through 13 Nov.

The sod fields on the Oxnard Plain attracted a variety of uncommon and rare local species in Oct. The most exciting discovery was a **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** at Arnold Road 17-20 Oct (MBe). An **American Golden-Plover** was at Arnold Road 12-29 Oct (m. obs.) and **Pacific Golden-Plovers** were reported widely 5-29 Oct with as many as four birds present at a time (m. obs.). Two **Mountain Plovers** were at Arnold Road 14-17 Oct with one remaining through 25 Oct (BTu, DP). As many as four **Baird's Sandpipers** were at Arnold Road 1-12 Oct (JMu, DP et al.). Two **Red-throated Pipits** were found on 4 Oct (DS) with one continuing through 5 Oct, and another was at Arnold Road 14-24 Oct (BH). A "**Japonicus**" **American Pipit** was at Arnold Road 14-16 Oct (DP). Longspurs at Arnold Road included a **Lapland Longspur** 10-24 Oct (DP) and a **Chestnut-sided Longspur** on 16 Oct (CRu & KK).

**Neotropic Cormorants** included one at the Saticoy Spreading Ponds 2-10 Oct (RM), one in Camarillo on 15 Oct (LK & NA), and another continued at the Santa Clara River Estuary through 1 Oct. Two **Cattle Egrets** were at Casper Road on 26 Oct (JMu). A **Tricolored Heron** returned to Mugu Lagoon for another winter on 25 Nov (MR). A **Red Knot** was at Mugu Lagoon on 2 Oct (DP). A **Northern Goshawk** was on Mount Pinos on 12 Nov (DP) and a **Zone-tailed Hawk** was in Ojai 28-29 Nov (JMary). **Ferruginous Hawks** near the coast included individuals along Canada Larga Road on 15 Nov (LO) and in east Ventura on 30 Nov (DP). A **Short-eared Owl** was in the La Jolla Valley on 4 Nov (RT).

**White-winged Doves** included as many as two at Arroyo Verde Park 4-23 Nov (BS), one in Somis on 12 Oct (NA), one at the Ventura Settling Ponds on 24 Oct (DKB), two along Lewis Road on 15 Oct (NA & LK), and four along Lewis Road on 20 Nov (JM). Ventura County's third **Broad-billed Hummingbird** was in Oak View 9-30 Nov (JC). A **Williamson's Sapsucker** was at Chaparral Park in Oak Park 23-30 Nov (CTe). A **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was a one-day wonder at Lake Casitas on 12 Nov (LF). **Red-naped Sapsuckers** included one at the Pine Mountain Inn 13-16 Oct (AF et al.), one at Lake Casitas on 16 Oct (SA), one at Matilija Lake on 25 Oct (JG), and as many as two at CSU Channel Islands 17-29 Nov (SC).

Ventura County's third **Dusky-caped Flycatcher** was at Camino Real Park 28-30 Nov (DP, AF). A **Gray Flycatcher** returned for another winter at Point Mugu 3-18 Nov (MR). **Tropical Kingbirds** included one at Arnold Road on 18

Oct (DPf) and another at Ormond Beach on 30 Nov (ZA). A **Plumbeous Vireo** continued at Pitts Ranch Park through 24 Oct and a **Chestnut-backed Chickadee** continued at Camino Real Park through 7 Oct. A **Bank Swallow** was at the Santa Clara River Estuary on 24 Oct (DP). Four **Mountain Bluebirds** were in Quatal Canyon on 12 Nov (DP). Individual **Varied Thrushes** were at Barranca Vista Park 10-13 Nov (RM), Frazier Mountain on 12 Nov (DP), and Wheeler Gorge Campground on 25 Nov (SC). A **Sage Thrasher** was at the Ojai Meadows on 13 Nov (SW). Individual **Orchard Orioles** were at Sycamore Canyon on 2 Oct (AS et al.), Ventura on 2 Oct (RM), Alessandro Lagoon on 10 Oct (DKB), and Port Hueneme 18-21 Oct (SK).

Individual **Clay-colored Sparrows** were in Ventura on 8 Oct (MT), Mandalay County Park on 20 Oct (DM), the Ventura Settling Ponds 5-11 Nov (MBe), and Newbury Park 27-30 Nov (RA & CB). **White-throated Sparrows** were found in backyards in Ojai 8-12 Nov and 28 Nov (BTa) and Newbury Park 5-28 Nov (RA & CB). A **Swamp Sparrow** was in Oak Park on 23 Nov (ZA). A **"Gray-headed" Dark-eyed Junco** was at the Conejo Cemetery 22-23 Oct with another one joining it on 11 Nov (JMu); another was in Thousand Oaks on 11 Nov (GR).

An **Ovenbird** continued in Ventura through 1 Oct. A **Northern Waterthrush** continued at the Ventura Settling Ponds through the end of November. **Black-and-white Warblers** included one at the Ventura Harbor on 4 Oct (CRo & CTr), one at the Ventura Settling Ponds 11 Oct-12 Nov (CS, DD & DT), one at Bob Kildee Community Park 21 Oct-26 Nov (NA), and one continued at the Laguna Tamarisks through 4 Oct. A **Tennessee Warbler** was at the Laguna Tamarisks on 2 Oct (ZA) and another was in Ventura 2-8 Oct (RM). **Lucy's Warblers** included one in Port Hueneme 15-21 Oct (LK), and another continued at San Buenaventura State Beach through 9 Oct. **Blackburnian Warblers** included one in Port Hueneme 17-21 Oct (DS & JMart) and another at the Ventura Settling Ponds 23-26 Oct (MBe). A **Blackpoll Warbler** was at San Buenaventura State Beach on 4 Oct (JMu). **Palm Warblers** included individuals at San Buenaventura State Beach on 8 Oct (SK), Arnold Road on 25 Oct (SC), and the Ventura Settling Ponds on 5 Nov (MBe) and 22 Nov (DKB & MBa). The **Painted Redstart** was seen at Arroyo Verde Park through the end of November.

An outstanding variety of rare migrants were found on Ventura Counties offshore islands in October. Reports from Anacapa included a **Magnolia Warbler** and **Black-throated Blue Warbler** on 6 Oct (JH), and a **Pacific Wren** 9-11 Oct and **Sage Thrasher** on 9 Oct (AS). San Nicolas Island had an impressive variety of rare species including a **White-winged Dove** on Oct 14 (MR & DP), an **Eastern Phoebe** on 12 Nov (SK), a **Varied Thrush** 14-29 Oct (MR & DP), a **Clay-colored Sparrow** on 14 Oct (DP & MR), a **Swamp Sparrow** on 24 Nov (SK), a **Bobolink** 14-23 Oct (DP & MR), a **Northern Parula** and **Magnolia Warbler** on 14 Oct (DP & MR), a **Black-throated Blue Warbler** 23-26 Oct (KO & MBall) and another on 29 Oct (DP & MR), a **Palm Warbler** on 29 Oct (DP), and a **Scarlet Tanager** on 6 Nov (SK),

Highlights from pelagic birding trips out of Ventura included nine **Craveri's Murrelets** and a **Brown Booby** north of San Nicolas Island on 3 Oct (DP, JB et al.), and an **American Oystercatcher** on Anacapa Island and a **Short-tailed Shearwater** between Anacapa island and Ventura on 21 Nov (DP, JB et al.)

Thank you to those who reported sightings during the last month. 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, Simon Arambula, Richard Armerding, Noah Arthur, Mario Balitbit, Morgan Ball, Marc Better, Catherine Bourne, Janine Conahey, Sammy Cowell, Dana Duncan, Adele Ferguson, Linda Frazier, Jesse Grantham, Russell Galipeau, Eric Heisey, Bruce Henderson, Jim Howard, Deven Kammerichs-Berke, Logan Kahle, Sangeet Khalsa, Karl Krause, Justina Martelli, Jerry Maryniuk, Dan Maxwell, Robert McMorran, Sam Modest, Andy Moore, John Mueller, Katrina Olthoff, David Pereksta, Donna Pfaff, Chris Rohrer, Griffin Rohrer, Martin Ruane, Craig Rudolph, Karen Rusch, Steve Rusch, Adam Searcy, Dessi Siebuth, Brad Sillasen, Cody Swanson, Bob Tallyn, Cameron Tescher, Robert Thoren, Michael Tiffany, David Torfeh, Celeste Troon, Becky Turley, Gerard Van Heijzen, Steven Wolpe*

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## 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 VAS in your year end donations.  
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