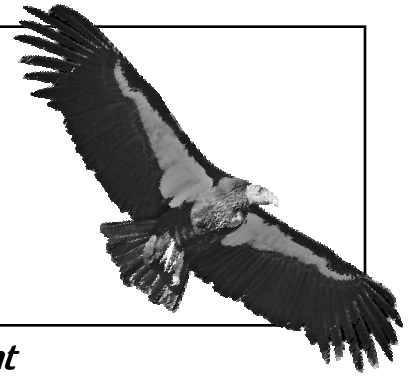


The CALIFORNIA CONDOR

Ventura Audubon Society **DECEMBER 2011** Volume 32 Number 4
A Chapter of the National Audubon www.VenturaAudubon.org



CALL NOTES ...Bruce Schoppe, President

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT Saturday, December 17, 2011

The annual Christmas Bird Count is scheduled for December 17, 2011. We'll hope for better weather than last year and, perhaps, more birds. We'll bird the same seven sectors as we have for years. A potluck will follow (as usual) at Church of the Foothills (as usual). Please see Page 4 for details.

In their November/December newsletter, Pomona Valley Audubon told the story of how, prior to the turn of the twentieth century, people engaged in a holiday tradition known as the Christmas "Side Hunt". They would choose sides and go afield with their guns; whoever brought in the biggest pile of feathered (and furred) quarry won!

We have come a long way since then. This will be the 112th Christmas Bird Count begun in 1900 by ornithologist Frank Chapman, an early officer of the newly organized Audubon Society. Today, it is one of the largest (if not the largest) citizen science project. The data collected over 111 years provides information on the number of birds in a specific area and how the numbers and species have changed over time.

Ventura Audubon's piece of this effort is a 24 kilometer (15-mile) diameter circle centered, roughly, on Canada

Larga Road, and includes a variety of habitats. That circle is divided into eight sectors with a leader and a team of birders in each. The details regarding leaders and the plan are contained on Page 4.

The VAS count circle offers a variety of habitat and, always, an interesting assortment of species. The area is the wintering home for many species and others that migrate through on their way to wherever they winter. And there is always the possibility of a rarity. We have used data from the count to support various conservation efforts including, most recently, our opposition to the annexation and development of the Canada Larga Valley.

Anyone can participate in the CBC. If you are an experienced birder (or, even if you are not), and would like to be a citizen scientist for a day, please contact one of the sector leaders or me. Their phone numbers and email addresses are on Page 4. There is a \$5.00 fee per participant that goes to national Audubon to help cover the costs of compiling the data and preparing the reports.

Locally, 90 people participated last year on a rainy Saturday and 166 species were recorded, both somewhat fewer than usual. Even in the rain, it is a great day in the field and we'll contribute to an ever growing body of scientific data on birds and how they are affected by climate change, development and other factors.

DECEMBER PROGRAM ...Janice Sussha, Program Chair

7:30 p.m. Tuesday, December 13th, Poinsettia Pavillion, 3451 Foothill Road, Ventura

Differences Between Island and Western Scrub-Jays, Presented by Katy Semple Delaney

Katy Semple Delaney is currently working as a wildlife ecologist for the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, the country's largest urban national park. Her projects include monitoring stream amphibians and invasive species, monitoring terrestrial reptiles and amphibians, and re-introducing the federally threatened red-legged frog to streams within their historic range in the Santa Monica Mountains. She also hopes to become a better birder so she can initiate a long-term bird monitoring project in the future.

She will talk about her research project identifying morphological, behavioral, and genetic differences between Island and Western Scrub-Jays. She will also briefly present some results which showed that, even over a small geographic area in southern California, habitat fragmentation caused by urban sprawl altered the genetics of a common west coast endemic, the Wrentit.

BIRD OF THE MONTH – DECEMBER 2011

Article and Photo by David Pereksta

EURASIAN WIGEON (Anas Penelope)



Waterfowl are conspicuous winter visitors throughout Ventura County with some species occurring in abundance while others are rare. A rare but regular wintering species in the county is the Eurasian Wigeon.

The Eurasian Wigeon is the Old World counterpart to the American Wigeon. Males have a vermiculated gray back and sides and a russet-red head with a cream-colored crown stripe. A large white wing patch is also visible in flight. The pale gray back and sides readily distinguish it from the male American Wigeon, which is pinkish-brown. Females and immatures are difficult to separate from American Wigeon. Adult females have rufous and gray color morphs and have those respective colors on their heads, necks, chests, backs, sides, and flanks. They can be distinguished from female American Wigeon (to which they are nearly identical) by their warmer brown head, lack of contrast between the head and the breast, unmarked throat, and grayish axillaries and underwing coverts. In all sexes and ages, the bill is pale blue with a dark tip. Males make a distinctive shrill two-note whistle that is higher, stronger, and more vibrant than the American Wigeon and is clearly audible above a noisy group of American Wigeon. Hybrids do occur so beware of individuals that are intermediate in characteristics.

The Eurasian Wigeon breeds in Eurasia from Iceland, the British Isles, and Scandinavia east to eastern Siberia and Kamchatka, south to northern Europe, central Russia, and Transcaucasia. They occur regularly in small numbers during the winter in North America, mostly on the Pacific coast from southeastern Alaska south to northern Baja California.

While in North America, Eurasian Wigeon frequent freshwater marshes, lakes, and ponds; grassy meadows, pastures, and golf courses for grazing with other wigeon; and saltwater bays, lagoons, and estuaries. They eat almost entirely plant material and forage by grazing on land or dabbling at the water's surface. They may also steal food brought to the surface by other species such as coots or geese. Eurasian Wigeon should be looked for among large flocks of American Wigeon. Most records are of males; however, many females are undoubtedly overlooked.

Eurasian Wigeon are rare in southern California with the majority of records occurring along the coast. The numbers of wintering birds have increased in recent decades. The species starts to arrive in late October and most depart by mid-March. In Ventura County, Eurasian Wigeon can be found anywhere large flocks of American Wigeon occur including Mugu Lagoon, Rancho Simi Park, the Ventura Settling (Sewer) Ponds, the Olivas Links Golf Course, and Lake Sherwood.



DECEMBER FIELD TRIPS ...Judy Dugan

Beginners are welcome on all field trips. Light drizzle does not necessarily cancel trips, but heavier rain will. If in doubt, please call the trip leader.

Saturday, Dec. 3, 9:00 – 12:00 a.m. Friends of the Santa Clara River volunteer workday. Arrive at 8:00 for birding. Leader: Sandy Hedrick (340-0478). For information about location & work go to www.fscr.org or contact Jackie Worden (652-0577).

Monday, Dec. 5, 8:30 a.m. Ventura Wildlife Ponds at Ventura Water Treatment Plant. Leader: Adelle Fergusson (415-4304). Enjoy a morning of mostly waterfowl birding. Spotting scopes are always welcome. **Directions:** Take Harbor Blvd to Spinnaker and enter Ventura Harbor. The Water Treatment Plant is on Angler, a left turn before Spinnaker curves to the right. Turn in left and meet outside the gate.

Wednesday, Dec. 7, 8:30 a.m. Arroyo Verde Park, Ventura. Leaders: Carl & Nancy Schorsch (643-5825). Enjoy birding the oak woodland, grassy areas, and chaparral in this long, broad canyon. We will be pre-scouting for the Christmas Bird Count looking for among others the Common Yellowthroat & White-breasted nuthatch. Take Victoria Ave. north, left on Foothill Rd., right on Day Rd. entrance to the park. Meet at the last parking lot by the restrooms.

Saturday, Dec. 10, 8:30 a.m. Canada Larga. Leader: Neil Ziegler (983-7207). Take Hwy 33 toward Ojai. Exit Canada Larga Rd. Meet near the beginning of the road. We will walk and drive the canyon. Always a great walk & a good scouting opportunity for the Christmas Bird Count! Some we may see are Western Bluebirds, Red-tailed Hawks & perhaps a Ferruginous Hawk.

Saturday, Dec. 17. Christmas Bird Count – See newsletter for areas, section leaders, and other information.

Mark Your Calendar:

Sunday, Jan. 8 – Friends of the Santa Clara River Workday – www.fscr.org

Sunday, Jan 15 – Saticoy Ponds

Saturday, Jan. 21 – Lake Los Carneros



FRIENDS OF THE SANTA CLARA RIVER WORK DAY SCHEDULE

Volunteers, we will meet at the gate at the end of Hallock Drive. To reach the property, take Hwy 126 and go south on Hallock Drive (at the traffic light on the east side of Santa Paula). Continue to the end of the road and park at the TNC gate at the end. The gate will be opened at 8 a.m. for birding, and restoration activities will begin about 9 a.m. and go until 11:30. As usual, wear safe field attire, including closed toe shoes and long pants. Rain cancels. Contact Sandy Hedrick for more information at 805-340-0478.

Workdays have been scheduled for the following dates:

January 8th, Sunday

February 4th, Saturday

March 4th, Sunday

April 7th, Saturday

May 6th, Sunday (tentative, based on weather)

Watch for future announcements of the location of these

VENTURA AUDUBON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

DECEMBER 17, 2011 ...Bruce Schoppe

Ventura Audubon will conduct its Christmas Bird Count on Saturday, December 17, 2011. Bird counts take place all over North America. The data on bird distribution collected during the counts is used to assess the health of our bird populations. On the Ventura Audubon count last year we recorded 166 species and over 20,000 individual birds.

The 2011 CBC is dedicated to the speedy and complete recovery of Reed Smith. Reed, whose service to VAS spans decades, serves as Science Chair and Webmaster and other things too numerous to mention. He is recovering from major surgeries.

Volunteer counters are assigned to one of the section leaders who coordinate the count in each of eight areas within the count circle. If you wish to participate in the count, please contact the section leader of the area where you would like to count. He/she will give you the start time and other details. You can contact me if you want to volunteer where needed.

Section 1 – Ventura River	Kay Regester	kaybirder@aol.com	258-1025
Section 2 – Lake Casitas	Allen Bertke	bertke@pacbel.net	640-9037
Section 3 – Ojai	Rick Burgess	burgess@toaks.org	449-2326
Section 4 – Cañada Larga	Neil Ziegler	neilziegler@yahoo.com	208-3149
Section 5 – Wheeler Canyon	Gary Tuttle	gt10k2826@verizon.net	525-2327
Section 6 – Ventura City	Eric Waian	dawaiains@roadrunner.com	630-0100
Section 7 – SCRE & Coast	Cindy Hartley	1surfbird@gmail.com	653-1552
Section 8 – Ocean	David Pereksta	pereksta@pacbell.net	404-8265

We will get together at the end of the day to review the day's highlights and to consolidate the sector counts for a provisional total of species.

We will also have a potluck dinner at the Church of the Foothills, 2679 Foothill Rd. Ventura at 6:30PM. Linda O'Neill is organizing the dinner. Call her at 649-9408 to help. This potluck is open to members, friends, and guests; you do not have to be a field observer to be included. Those attending are requested to bring the following types of dishes based on the first letter of you last name. Please bring your own place settings, utensils and beverages (sodas and hot coffee provided.)

Dessert S - Z

Salad A - J

Main Dish K - R

Please bring your own place settings, utensils and beverages (sodas and hot coffee provided.)

BEGINNERS' BIRD WALK ...Allen Bertke, Leader

A bank of fog and low clouds settled over the Settling Ponds in Ventura as we settled in for a nice exploratory walk, having to settle for gray and gloomy conditions. But we were amply rewarded. As we approached the first pond, the calm water was completely carpeted with Coots. We also got great ganders at gobs of gathering Grebes, including many Eared and Pied-billed and at least one Horned Grebe. I think that was the most Eared Grebes I have ever seen in one place – at least a dozen or more.

We tried for the Teal Trifecta, but truly tanked, as we totalled a teal short, with no Green Teals to be tallied. Heavy herons hung high in the trees and hunkered here and there - Great Blues and Black-crowned Nights, but no Greens. Erect egrets were easy to espy, eagerly entertaining us with their bright white plumage against the green foliage. We observed several Greats and Snowys.

Common Yellowthroats proved to not be very common or completely cooperative, counting only one. The delightful ducks were deftly diving and dabbling, depending on whether they were Dabbling Ducks or Diving Ducks. There were Ruddy's, American Wigeons, Gadwalls, Mallards, Northern Shovelers, Cinnamon Teal and a Blue-winged Teal. We heard a Sora calling, and after some serious searching I'm sorry to say we only saw it for a second – just a single snippet before it silently slunk out of sight. So we really only sorta saw a Sora. Sorry I had to resort to such a sorry Sora story, but I just couldn't help it.

Go to www.beginnersbirdwalk.shutterfly.com to see representative pictures of some of the birds we saw, most of which I have taken previously at other Ventura county locations.



NOTES FROM THE FIELD

...David Pereksta

The most exciting find of the last month was the return of the **Black Vulture** to Lake Casitas on 15 Oct (AB & KR). First found during the winter of 2009-2010, this was the first time it had been seen locally in nearly 2 years. While often difficult to relocate, it was seen through 1 Nov and is likely still in the vicinity. Other notable species at or near the lake included a **Bald Eagle** on 19 Oct (DR & BD); a **Ferruginous Hawk** on 20 Oct (RH); 34 **Common Mergansers**, a **Burrowing Owl** (DR & BD), and 3 **Cattle Egrets** (JC) on 11 Nov. The only other **Ferruginous Hawk** reported locally was in Wheeler Canyon on 19 Oct (KK).

A number of uncommon species were seen in and around the Ventura Harbor area. A **Burrowing Owl** was found on a rocky jetty near the Ventura Harbor 27 Oct – 8 Nov (BC). Shorebirds in the harbor area included 23 **Surfbirds** and 3 **Black Oystercatchers** on 19 Oct (KR), and **Surfbirds** and 2 **Black Oystercatchers** on 27 Oct (BC). The 2 **American-like Oystercatchers** continued at the Ventura Harbor through 11 Nov and after study of photographs now appear to be American x Black hybrids. The nearby Ventura Wildlife Ponds hosted a **Eurasian Wigeon** and **Common Moorhen** 29 Oct – 7 Nov (FD), a **Redhead** and **Clay-colored Sparrow** on 29 Oct (FD), and five **Blue-winged Teal** on 7 Nov (AS). Five **Greater White-fronted Geese** were at McGrath State Beach on 25 Oct (AF).

Birders frequenting the Oxnard Plain continued to find rare and uncommon migrants. Seven **Cackling Geese** and a **Snow Goose** were on the sod along Arnold Road 6 Nov (JC). As many as four **Pacific Golden-Plovers** were seen on the sod fields along Arnold Road through 31 Oct (KR & MH) with an **American Golden-Plover** also reported there on 30 Oct (EW). The Conejo Audubon trip to Point Mugu on 10 Nov produced a **Burrowing Owl**, **Vermilion Flycatcher**, and **Summer Tanager** (RB et al.). Individual **Clay-colored Sparrows** were at Perkins Road on 4 Nov (AS) and at the Laguna Tamarisks (perhaps a different bird from the one seen in early Oct) on 15 Oct (MF et al.).

Sightings from elsewhere around the county included a variety of notable species from reliable birding hotspots. A **Greater White-fronted Goose** was at Lake Sherwood on 22 Oct (MH) and a **Least Bittern** was there on 6 Nov (AS). At least one **Bobolink** continued at the Saticoy Spreading Ponds through 19 Oct and two **Wood Ducks** and two **Blue-winged Teal** were also

there on 19 Oct (RM). The only eastern vagrant warbler reported anywhere in the county last month was a **Tennessee Warbler** in Ventura on 24 Oct (FD & CB). Uncommon on the coastal plain were two **Hairy Woodpeckers** and two **Lawrence's Goldfinches** at the Buenaventura Golf Course on 21 Oct (DP). The only report from the north county was of 30 **Mountain Bluebirds** in the Lockwood Valley on 25 Oct (JS).

A pelagic trip that visited Ventura County waters southeast of the San Juan Seamount on 16 Oct found a **Black-footed Albatross**, **South Polar Skua**, four **Sabine's Gulls**, and four "hypoleucus" **Xantus's Murrelets** (DP 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 nuisance bird calls), e-mail or call David Pereksta at <pereksta@pacbell.net> or 659-5740.

Good birding,
David Pereksta

Observers: Ron Barns, Cia Bates, Alan Bertke, Jeff Cartier, Bill Crowe, Frank DeMartino, Becky Donahue, Alexis Frangis, Mary Freeman, Mary Hansen, Rob Hewitt, Karl Krause, Robert McMorran, David Pereksta, Kay Regester, David Roine, Adam Searcy, John Sterling, and Eric Waian.



HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO ONE AND ALL!!

VENTURA AUDUBON SOCIETY

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THANK YOU!



Helping VAS by contributing to our education program, "Audubon Adventures" this month are: Victoria Ammons, Rodney Frykholm, Judy Dugan, Estelle Ichino, John Connor, Neil Zeigler, Hank and Susan Stoutz, and Bruce and Joyce

Shoppe. We are grateful and so are the students at our local elementary schools who are learning about the natural world and their role as future stewards of the environment. Thanks to all for their generous support. VAS has now supported 12 of the 23 classrooms that are receiving "Audubon Adventures" this year. Please consider supporting a classroom this year, the cost is \$45.00.

NEWSLETTER PROBLEMS?

If you're experiencing delivery problems with your newsletter, need to change your address, want to change your delivery type, or have questions about your membership renewal date, please contact **Jackie Worden** at jbworden7@gmail.com or call her at (805)652-0577. In addition to being our new Membership Chair, she also now manages our membership and mailing databases, so she's the one to make the changes. Conversion to the new system took place during the summer, at the same time that we solicited members to receive our newsletter via E Mail.

VAS OFFICERS AND CHAIRS

President	Bruce Schoppe	658-2396
Vice-President	Neil Zeigler	983-7207
Secretary	Joyce Schoppe	658-2396
Treasurer	Marianne Slaughter	484-8415
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Programs	Janice Sussha	983-3929
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	Jack Gillooly	646-3867
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	Art Marshall	642-1585
	Alexis Frangis	217-4833
Non Board:		
Newsletter Mailing & Membership	Jackie Worden	652-0577
Newsletter Editor	Dee Press	484-8415

DECEMBER BOARD MEETING

The Tuesday, December 13th Board of Directors meeting will be held at Art Marshall's, at 4449 Whittier St. in Ventura at 7:15 p.m.. Call 642-1585 for more information.

THE VENTURA AUDUBON SOCIETY holds its regular meeting on the second Tuesday of the month at the Poinsettia Pavilion, 3451 Foothill Rd. in Ventura at 7:30 p.m., September through April. The May meeting is a barbecue. Call the President for information. Board Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of the month. A Membership Form is available on our web site.

THE CALIFORNIA CONDOR is published nine times per year (September—May). Members are encouraged to submit articles, announcements, letters and drawings in WORD format or in the form of an e-mail message. *The deadline is noon on the 12th of the month preceding the next issue.* E-mail to: birderz1@roadrunner.com Call Editor Dee Press at 484-8415 for more information.