

The **CALIFORNIA CONDOR**

Ventura Audubon Society **SEPTEMBER 2015** Volume 36, Number 1
A Chapter of the National Audubon www.VenturaAudubon.org



CALL NOTES ...Bruce Schoppe, President

Another program year begins! We get to again enjoy more birds locally and help build awareness of the need for habitat preservation and restoration.

This year, as last, I must begin by thanking you for your generosity towards Birdathon. You contributed \$5,648, a record amount. ***Thank you!*** Laura and her committee will continue to plan interesting programs; Karin will continue to schedule field trips including, perhaps, some new and different destinations or formats. The rest of your Board will continue to do their jobs in support of our many education, conservation and restoration programs.

Joyce and I attended the 2015 National Audubon Convention in Leesburg, Virginia in July. When we got off the plane at Dulles, the heat and humidity provided a vivid reminder of why we love Ventura! Over the two days of the conference, we attended many workshops on a variety of subjects. Audubon, under David Yarnold, has hired many very smart, technically savvy people who are focused on using social media to attract millennials and to diversify its membership. The National Board wants Audubon to be one of the leading conservation organizations in the country, taking full advantage of the “distributed network”, aka chapters. To do that, we (National and VAS) need to attract a more diverse membership – diverse in age and ethnicity!

Audubon’s Climate Initiative has gotten a lot of attention. Birds are the “canaries in the coal mine” for climate change. As I write this, the EPA has announced a major effort to reduce carbon emissions from power plants nationwide that will be controversial but strongly supported by Audubon. Audubon is also taking a lead role in beating back attempts to weaken the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, even supporting efforts to expand its coverage to include industrial activity such as oil and gas development. If you want to be a part of the grassroots efforts, we encourage you to sign up to receive “Action Alerts” from Audubon. Go to: <http://www.audubon.org/takeaction>

Closer to home, both Ventura County and the City of Oxnard have begun efforts to update their Local Coastal Plans. VAS will be paying attention. Long running efforts to better protect Ormond Beach are moving forward. We will be paying attention there, too. Dredging of the sand trap at Hollywood Beach greatly reduced habitat and, consequently, WSP and CLT nesting this year as compared with 2013 and 2014. We need to find ways to Share this Shore! On behalf of the terns and plovers, a thank you is also in order for the nearly two dozen volunteer docents (including Walter, the Steward of Ormond Beach) who were trained and spent time on the beaches this summer. Thanks also to Alexis, Debra, Cynthia and Danielle who conducted the monitoring on the beaches.

Please join us in any of our activities or projects!

SEPTEMBER PROGRAM ...Being a Better Birder with Frank De Martino ***7:30 p.m. Tuesday, September 8th, Poinsettia Pavilion, 3451 Foothill Road, Ventura***

Welcome back to Ventura Audubon Society’s new season of programs! Our first program features Frank De Martino presenting a very interactive, entertaining and educational program on “Being a Better Birder.” This is aimed at helping everyone from novice backyard birdwatchers to expert county listers. Frank will address such classic Ventura County issues as: Laguna Fever, Private Property, commonly misidentified species, reporting sensitive birds, participating in bird counts, how not to get run over while birding the farms, and more. Frank is the ABC coordinator for Ventura County, co-complier for the Ventura CBC and creator of Warbler Bingo. Frank has been actively birding Ventura County for the last 7 years and has seen over 300 species.



NOTES FROM THE FIELD

...David Pereksta

A flock of 10 **Greater White-fronted Geese** were at the Buenaventura Golf Course 10-13 Apr (EP). A pair of **Wood Ducks** was at the Ventura Settling Ponds 17-28 Apr (RR) and another was at Lake Sherwood on 23 Jul (MH). A **Blue-winged Teal** continued at the Ventura Settling Ponds through 8 Apr and three were apparently over-summering on the Oxnard Plain on 5 Jul (DP). **Common Mergansers** are an uncommon and little known breeder locally so reports of a female from Wheeler Gorge Campground 11-20 May (JB), a pair at Matilija Lake on 5 May (BH), two males and a female on the Santa Clara River on 28 Apr (LJ), and a female with two chicks along the Santa Clara River on 14 Jun (LJ) were notable. Two **Redheads** at Lake Sherwood on 6-24 June were unseasonal (MH).

A **Neotropic Cormorant**, apparently the same individual that provided Ventura County's first record of the species in March, was at Ormond Beach 5-21 Jun (BH). The wintering **Red-necked Grebe** transitioned to alternate plumage and continued in the Ventura Harbor through 26 Apr. **Least Bitterns** were reported from their limited localities in the county including Matilija Lake 3 Apr-23 May (MP) and Lake Sherwood 1 May-29 Jul (MH). A **Cattle Egret** was on the Oxnard Plain on 5 Apr (DP) and perhaps the same one was in the eastern arm of Mugu Lagoon 16-17 Apr (BH). A **Reddish Egret** was at Mugu Lagoon 10-12 Jun (JB) and another was there from 5 Jul through the end of the month (DP). **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** numbers continue to grow at Point Mugu with adults, nests and young seen there throughout the period. The wintering **Sandhill Crane** continued on the Oxnard Plain through 19 Apr. **Black Skimmers** were present at Mugu Lagoon 5 Apr-20 Jul (with a high count of 38 on 4 May (FF)) and as many as nine were at Ormond Beach 1-15 Jun (DK). An early **Semipalmated Sandpiper** was on the Oxnard Plain on 5 Jul (DP) and a **Ruff** continued there through 19 Apr.

The rarest bird of the spring and summer was a **Nazca Booby** on Anacapa Island 20-21 May (JH); furnishing only the third record for the ABA Area. Individual **Brown Boobies** were also reported at Anacapa Island on 16 and 21 May (JB). A **Magnificent Frigatebird** seen briefly over the Ventura Harbor on 21 Jun (MT, BL & JB) was the first county record in many years. An **American Oystercatcher** was at Anacapa Island on 22 Apr (DP) and two were there on 24 May (M. obs.). **Buller's Shearwaters** were seen unseasonally early and closer to shore than normal this year including one in the Santa Barbara Channel on 15 Jun (JB), one near Anacapa Island on 17 Jun (DP), and another in the channel on 18 Jun (JB). Rarely seen offshore of Ventura were eight **Sabine's Gulls** on 1 May (DP) and three **Ancient Murrelets** on 14 Jun (DS). Highlights of a pelagic trip out of Ventura on 12 Jul included a **Flesh-footed Shearwater** and 5 **South Polar Skuas** (M. obs.).

The pair of **Bald Eagles** at Lake Casitas continued near their nest through 28 May although it appears a different female moved in to the territory. Other **Bald Eagles** included as many as two at Lake Piru 26-31 May (NS) and one on Anacapa Island on 24 May (M. obs.). A **Flammulated Owl** was on Pine Mountain on 18 Jun (DP) and **Long-eared Owls** were heard in several locations near Highway 33 on 24 Apr (DP).

Rarely seen in migration in the county, a **Black Swift** was over Quatal Canyon on 25 Apr (MP & KK). This year saw another good showing of **Calliope Hummingbirds** in migration including reports of single individuals from feeders in Ventura on 5-7 Apr (RS & MM), Sespe Gorge on 10 Apr (DP), Wheeler Gorge on 15 Apr (BH), Peninsula Park at Channel Islands Harbor on 21 Apr (GJ), a feeder in Newbury Park 1-3 May (CB), at Lake Sherwood 26-28 Apr (MH), and in Ojai 13 Apr-3 May (JG). A **Lewis's Woodpecker** was in the Ozena Valley on 29 Apr (AL), two continued near Lake Sherwood through 1 Apr, and one continued in Ojai through 2 Apr. The female **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** returned for a second year at Teague Park in Santa Paula 1 May-29 Jun where it appeared to mate again with a **Western Kingbird** (GT). Territorial **Gray Flycatchers** were at perennially occupied areas in Dry Canyon 24-25 Apr (DP) and Quatal Canyon 24 Apr (DP). A pair of **Vermilion Flycatchers** nested again this year at Point Mugu and the pair and two fledglings were present throughout the period. Migrant **Bank Swallows** were at Lake Casitas and Round Mountain on 24 Apr (DP). A **Plumbeous Vireo** was at Marion Cannon Park in Ventura 8-17 Apr (FD). The only **Townsend's Solitaire** of the season was on Mount Pinos on 18 Jul (MP). After this winter's exceptional invasion of **Varied Thrushes**, a few lingered into the spring including one at Wheeler Gorge through 4 Apr, two at Lake Sherwood through 10 Apr, one at Foster park through 14 Apr, and one in Matilija Canyon on 1 May. **Summer Tanagers** were reported from a variety of locations this spring including one along the Santa Clara River on 27 Apr (LJ), one in Camarillo on 26 May (DP), and one on San Nicolas Island on 27 May (DP & MR). Reports of **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** included one in Ojai 1-2 May (JG) and another in Meiner's Oaks 25 May (JG). A **Black-throated Sparrow** was along the Chumash Trail at the western end of the Santa Monica Mountains 17-20 Apr (BH) and a **White-throated Sparrow** was near Camino Real Park on 12 Apr (LB). **Scott's Orioles** were at known breeding locations in Dry Canyon 24 Apr-23 May (DP), and Quatal Canyon on 25 Apr (MP & KK) and 11 Jun (BH).
(...continued on Page 6)



SEPTEMBER FIELD TRIPS ...Karin Kersteter

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. For all trips, please wear appropriate clothing (layers are suggested), comfortable shoes, and bring snacks, water, hats, sunscreen, binoculars and field guides.

Saturday, Sept 5, 8:30 a.m. McGrath Campground. Leader: Alexis Frangis (805) 217-4833. Join us on a very special kick-off trip! The McGrath Campground is currently closed due to flooding and off limits to the public. Our leader has arranged to take our group into the park. We will begin inside the park entrance, birding the flooded campground, walk through the dunes and end at the estuary. **PLEASE NOTE: Carpooling and a RSVP are MANDATORY for this trip. To reserve your spot, email Karin at venturabirding@yahoo.com or call (805)901-2203 by Tuesday, Sept 1. Limited to 25 people.** There is no public parking at the campground. Meet at 8:15 at the parking lot behind Carrow's (next to the Chevron station) at the intersection of Harbor and Seaward (Von's Shopping Center). Please be punctual. Late arrivals will not be admitted to the campground. Birds in this area are not often exposed to humans and therefore are quite skittish; please practice good birding etiquette by moving slowly and speaking quietly. Please bring scopes if you have them!

Saturday, Sept 12, 8:30 a.m. Emma Wood State Beach/Ventura River Estuary. Leaders: David Wappler and David Torfeh (805)794-5334. We will begin at Emma Wood State Beach, where we will target Snowy and Semipalmated Plovers and Caspian Terns. We will then walk along the path that leads through the willow forest and across sand dunes to the Ventura River Estuary. The estuary is always an exciting place to bird, and target birds will include: Black-bellied Plover, Willet, Whimbrel, Black Turnstone, Red-necked Phalarope and Forster's Tern. There will be a fair amount of walking, so please dress appropriately in layers and comfortable shoes. **Directions:** From US-101, exit California St, turn right and then make a quick left onto Thompson Blvd. Follow Thompson (becomes Garden St) and turn left on W. Main St. Follow W. Main St until just before it enters the northbound 101 freeway. Emma Wood is on the left. There is ample street parking along the outside of the park on W. Main St (we must park outside and walk in). Please do not leave valuables in your car, and be sure to lock your vehicle.

Saturday, Sept 19, 8:30 a.m. Surfer's Knoll/Santa Clara River Estuary. Leader Neil Ziegler (805)982-7207. We hope to see a variety of shorebirds including Snowy Plovers, grebes, turnstones, Whimbrels, godwits, cormorants and sandpipers, as well as many ducks and gulls. **Directions:** Take Harbor Blvd to Spinnaker and enter Ventura Harbor. Follow Spinnaker as it curves around to the right. Surfers' Knoll is on the left. Please bring scopes if you have them. We will be walking a good distance on sand, so please wear appropriate footwear and plan on dressing in layers.

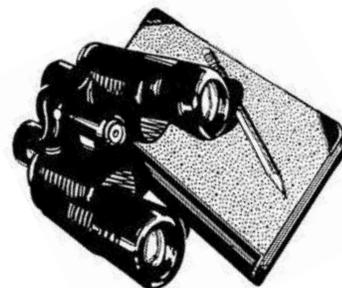
Saturday, Sept 26, 8:30 am. Laguna Tams & Arnold Rd. Leader: Kay Register (805)258-1025. The tamarisk trees at Laguna Rd are a migrant hot spot. Migrating birds are attracted to the insects in the trees and a number of uncommon to rare birds often show up at this location. **Directions:** From Hwy 101, take Rice Ave south (towards the ocean), turn right (east) on E Pleasant Valley Rd, turn right on Laguna Rd. Please observe good birding etiquette at this location, as it is a fairly busy road in an agricultural area. Carpooling is encouraged to minimize traffic. After we bird the Tams, we will drive over to Arnold Rd to bird the sod fields and Ormond Beach ponds. **Directions to Arnold Rd:** Continue down Laguna Rd, right on Wood Rd, right on E Hueneme Rd, left on Arnold Rd. **To carpool:** Meet at 7:50 am at the parking lot behind Carrow's (next to the Chevron station) at the intersection of Harbor and Seaward (Von's Shopping Center).

Monday, Sept 28, 8:30 a.m. Laguna Tams. Monday Walk with Adele Fergusson (805) 415-4304. See above for details/directions.

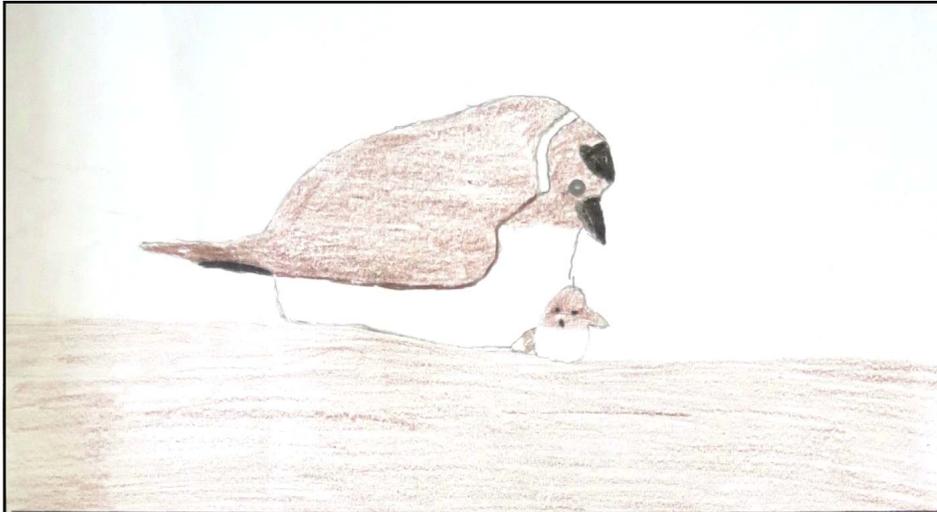
Mark your calendars!

Oct 3 – Settling Ponds

Oct 20 – Tuesday walk with Adele Fergusson at Canada Larga



A RAY OF HOPE ...Betsy Bachman



Dear Ventura Audubon Society,

We learned about shore birds. The Least Tern and the Snowy Plover. I think that my favorite part was seeing the snake and all the birds. The one thing that I didn't like was all the tar that was there. Hope all the birds will be ok. with all of the tar that was there.

Sincerely,

Cassandra

On June 5th, just before school was about to be over for the summer, a group of VAS members as well as Michael Glenn of U.S. Fish and Wildlife took two classes from Sunkist School (Hueneme District) to Ormond Beach.

As we volunteers arrived, we were greeted by Walter Fuller, "the Steward of Ormond Beach" whom I had never met. He is a tremendous asset to Ormond Beach as well as to conservation and education in general. He lives at the entrance, greets and orients visitors, and patrols the area daily checking for unusual birds and other issues.

We waited for the children to arrive and soon a big school bus came and what looked like 100 children emerged. Alas there were only about 60, plus their two teachers. One class was 6th graders and the other was 4th if my memory is correct. They lined up as directed, and Mr. Fuller and Mr. Glenn gave their introductory talks. Then the children paired up and each pair received a field guide and a pair of binoculars. They were split into groups of 10 and each group set off with its volunteer.

A nesting Mallard with her young under the bridge was an early sighting, as the students learned with varying success to adjust the binoculars and find the birds in the guides. My group was very interested in insects and spotted quite

a few. They were good at spotting birds and with my help identifying them, and lo and behold several remembered their names when the bird was spotted again. One bespectacled boy was glued to my side and proudly told me "I'm the smartest kid in the class, I want to learn EVERYTHING". I tried to reply to his many questions and comments as best I could. We picked up litter as we walked and one boy volunteered to carry our collection. When I wanted to help him, he declined and the self-declared bright boy told me that my helper's job in class was to do the trash so he was an expert.

We got to the beach and unfortunately didn't see many Snowy Plovers, but we did see quite a few Least Terns, Brown Pelicans, and gulls. Since the oil spill at Refugio had happened recently, globs of tar became the biggest attraction for the students and throwing them around with sticks was quite the thing. The leaders put a stop to that, but we all took tar home with us on our shoes. Many Hueneme moms were no doubt thrilled.

We went back to the entrance (after about 2 hours total) and sack lunches were handed out, even to the volunteers. My takeaway from this trip was that there is hope for our future. The children were engaged and for the most part soaking up the knowledge and information, and grateful for the experience (Bruce got letters from them).

If you'd like to be uplifted by participating in some of these school trips next year let me know. eabirder@sbcglobal.net. You won't be sorry!

SWAN SONG? ...Allan Bertke

As most of you probably know by now, I have vacated my lovely Ojai birding paradise and moved to the Grass Valley area of northern California into a little town called Rough and Ready, all in the name of semi-retirement. Yes, it's a real town! And it's also the name of an old cartoon show from the late '50s – The Ruff and Reddy Show.

Moving day was brutal. Grass Valley was having a record heat wave, smashing the old record high by about 10 degrees – I think it was something like 142 degrees that day. The movers got here at 7:00 am and it was already 90. We went through a whole case of bottled water, and that was before they even unloaded the first piece of furniture.

One of the first things I noticed were all of the miniature kangaroos, otherwise known by the locals as jackrabbits. They are a good complement to our miniature horses, and they make the Ojai cottontails look like little gerbils. Our little 30 lb dog was a prolific rabbit and squirrel catcher in Ojai, bringing many presents home to us, but she would need a forklift to bring one of these things back. The deer are practically domesticated, just staring at us as we walk right by them, and strolling by our windows, curious about us caged-in creatures. We currently have a resident doe with her two fawns, another doe and her fawn, two other does, a pointer buck and the boss – a big six point buck - that all wander through the property as they please.

We are getting settled in now and I am finally starting to do a little birding. I didn't pick up my binoculars for over a month! But pretty soon, I hope to have so much time on my hands that I can do oodles of birding. I may even take up golf again – or not. It's a very frustrating game, and I still have problems with my fairway woods. All I ever do with them is take huge divots out of the fairways while the ball, and my golf partners, laugh at me. My golfing buddies are lobbying to declare my fairway woods illegal. They want them classified as Weapons of Grass Destruction.

But back to birding. The Grass Valley chapter of Audubon has a few trips listed for September, so I plan on disrupting – err, I mean attending – some of those. I have promised myself to take it easy on them to start. In the meantime I can start my new back yard and county lists.

I did manage to stroll through a small park nearby. They evidently have the same dog leash issues here as in Ventura county, for even though signs clearly stated “No Dogs”, there were still two or three unleashed dogs running around.

It reminded me of the time I was birding last year at SCRE. I looked behind me and saw a gentleman with an unleashed dog stroll right past the sign that tells the public that dogs aren't allowed on the beach. ***I waited for him to catch up with me and said “Excuse me sir. Did you see the sign back there that says No Dogs On Beach?” “Yes” he said “I saw it, but that sign's wrong”, as he pointed toward his unleashed companion. “There's ONE dog on the beach!” I guess my sign enforcement technique needs a little work. He then apologized and said he didn't realize he was walking in a sensitive area. Mission accomplished.***

If any of you plan on coming up this way, let me know. I would love to go birding with old friends. By then I should know some great spots to go. I wish you all well. It has been an honor and a privilege to be a part of Ventura Audubon!



VAS presented Allan with a Certificate of Appreciation at his last Beginner's Bird Walk in May. He will definitely be missed! Thank You, Allan! Good birding in your new digs!

VENTURA AUDUBON SOCIETY

P.O. Box 24198
Ventura, CA 93002

(**NOTES** ...continued from Page 2)

Thank you to those who reported sightings during the spring and summer. If you have any questions about local birds or have a good one to report (please no calls about nuisance birds), call or e-mail David Pereksta at 659-5740 or <pereksta@pacbell.net>

Good birding,
David Pereksta

Observers: Joel Barrett, Laura Bauer, Catherine Bourne, Frank DeMartino, Francesca Ferrara, Jesse Grantham, Bruce Henderson, Greg Homel, Jim Howard, Gareth Jones, Lee Jones, Karin Kersteter, Jeri Langham, Arthur Langton, Bob Love, Meghan May, Matthew Page, David Pereksta, Eric Pilotte, Rick Ridgeway, Martin Ruane, Glenn Seeholzer, Richard Still, Noah Strycker, Danny Swicegood, Michelle Townsley, and Gary Tuttle.

VAS OFFICERS AND CHAIRS

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| Membership | Jackie Worden | 657-2837 |
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| | Margaret Wilson | 647-7962 |
| | Audrey Vincent | 525-5826 |
| WSP/CLT Team: | Cynthia Hartley | 795-4115 |
| | Debra Barringer | Unlisted |

If you are not sure if your membership has expired, please **email** Jackie at jbworden7@gmail.com and she will check it out for you.

BOARD MEETING: There will be a Board of Directors meeting on **Tuesday, September 1**, at Marianne & Dee's house, 1656 Riente St. in Camarillo. Call (805) 484-8415 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 Oxnard at 7:30 p.m., September through April. The May meeting is a barbecue. Call the President for information. Board Meetings are held bi-monthly on the first Tuesday of the month. A Membership Form is available on the VAS web site.

THE CALIFORNIA CONDOR is published nine times per year (September-May). Members are encouraged to submit articles, announcements, letters and drawings, preferably 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: deepress2@gmail.com.