The CALIFORNIA CONDOR

Ventura Audubon Society ***November 2017*** *Volume 42, Number 3*
A Chapter of the National Audubon www.VenturaAudubon.org

CALL NOTES ...Bruce Schoppe, President

This may be the shortest Call Notes I have written – no worthwhile topics came to mind! Instead, please see the attached report from National Audubon on *How Wildfires Affect Birds.*This topic is especially relevant given recent fires in northern California and throughout the west this summer.

Please sign up to receive ***Action Alerts*** from National and California Audubon. Our voices must be heard on the many issues created by the Trump administration as it denies that climate change is real and seeks to undo environmental protections, reduce the size of national monuments and marine sanctuaries and open public lands to mining and drilling.

Save the Date: Our Christmas Bird Count is scheduled for **Sunday**, December 17, 2017. Frank DeMartino is the coordinator and he does need a couple of sector leaders to cover for leaders not available on that date. Please contact Frank at frank@colynx.com or (805) 906-8733.

The position of **Program Chair** is still open! Please see the Job Description elsewhere in this newsletter. The Program Chair is an appointed position and does not require being a board member. Please consider volunteering so that we can continue to present interesting and relevant programs.

NOVEMBER PROGRAM

7:30 p.m. Tuesday, November 14 Poinsettia Pavilion, 3451 Foothill Road, Ventura

The Ojai Raptor Center with Kim Stroud and Live Bird Ambassadors

Our November program will have live birds for all ages. This will be a fun experience with a focus on educating the public on the life of a wild bird. Kim Stroud, Director and Founder of the Ojai Raptor Center (ORC), will bring non-releasable ambassador raptors and sometimes a guest critter to the show.

The ORC was founded and is directed by Kim Stroud, who started her training at the Raptor Rehabilitation and Release Program in 1992. In 1994 she co-founded Wildlife Care of Ventura, where they received permits from California State and US Federal Fish & Wildlife Agencies, and then went on to found the Ojai Raptor Center in 2000. The center is run by a small staff, but with a large group of volunteers who give their time to support wildlife education programs, animal care, transport needs, and never-ending center maintenance.

First and foremost, Ojai Raptor Center is a fully functional and permitted wildlife rehabilitation center specializing in birds of prey. Every year they take in 500-1000 sick, injured, or orphaned birds (including many non-raptor birds, and a small percentage of mammals) with the hopes of rehabilitating them and releasing them back to the wild. The 4 acre campus is comprised of a medical room and hospital, as well as outdoor flights, aviaries and mews. All of the housing is specialized to the species that will be placed in it. The center also features the largest flight pen in California.

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

...David Pereksta

SEPTEMBER 2017

Southbound **Greater White-fronted Geese** were evident late in the month including skeins over Ojai on 21 Sep (JG) and a flock of 33 on the Oxnard Plain on 24 Sep (DP, BH & DDJ). A **Cackling Goose** was with a flock of Canada Geese on the Oxnard Plain 23-27 Sep (DP). Seven **American White Pelicans** were at Lake Sherwood on 28 Sep (MH), 11 were at Ormond Beach on 28 Sep (GP), and as many as 15 continued near the Santa Clara River Estuary through 28 Sep. An **American Bittern** was in Calleguas Creek 29-30 Sep (JB). A **Reddish Egret** continued at Mugu Lagoon through 9 Sep. **Cattle Egrets** have become increasingly more uncommon in the county over the last few decades so two on the Oxnard Plain 21-24 Sep were notable (JM, DP).A **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** was in Calleguas Creek on 8 Sep (DT & CG) and two different birds were elsewhere on the Oxnard Plain 23-24 Sep (DP). A ditch on the Oxnard Plain (affectionately known to many as a "Garbage Slough") had four **Stilt Sandpipers** on 2 Sep (BS) and a continuing **Semi-palmated Sandpiper** through 11 Sep. Three **Baird's Sandpipers** were on a sod field along Hueneme Road on 27 Sep (AS).Other shorebirds on the Oxnard Plain included a **Ruff** 31 Aug-23 Sep (LS), as many as 10 **Stilt Sandpipers** 2-24 Sep (LS & DDJ), a **Baird's Sandpiper** on 2 Sep (DP), **Pectoral Sandpipers** 7-23 Sep (LS et a.), and **Solitary Sandpipers** on 2 Sep (LS & DDJ) and 24 Sep (DP). A **Bald Eagle** was seen in various places around the Oxnard Plain in September including Camarillo Regional Park on 18 Sep (JB).

Warblers are high in demand among local birders during September and October and a variety of vagrant species were seen during September. A **Northern Waterthrush** was in Los Sauces creek near La Conchita on 15 Sep (EC). **Tennessee Warblers** were reported from several locations including Sycamore Canyon on 8 Sep (JB), Los Sauces Creek on 27 Sep (AS), and Bob Kildee Park on 28 Sep (AS). A **Virginia's Warbler** was at the Hailes Road tamarisks 28-29 Sep (AS). **Blackburnian Warblers** were found at the Wolff Road tamarisks on 10 Sep (BS) and Bob Kildee Park 16-19 Sep (ST). A **Magnolia Warbler** was at Bob Kildee park on 11 Sep (LE). The only **Blackpoll Warbler** reported in September was in an Oxnard backyard on 15 Sep (JB) and a **Black-and-white Warbler** was at Conejo Creek North Park on 26 Sep (BCB). Anacapa Island is rarely birded during migration, but staff working on the island found a **Gray Catbird** on 24 Sep and a **Northern Parula** on 25 Sep (JH).

A **White-winged Dove** was along Calleguas Creek on 8 Sep (DT & CG) and another visited a backyard in Camarillo 12-13 Sep (SB). Uncommon swallows on the Oxnard Plain included a **Purple Martin** on 9 Sep (LS) and a **Bank Swallow** on 23 Sep (DP). A **Pacific Wren** was at Rincon Creek 27-30 Sep (JB) and an **American Dipper** was in Santa Ana Creek on 17 Sep (JG). A **California Gnatcatcher** was away from local breeding areas at Sycamore Canyon 28-30 Sep (DP). Rarely seen along the coast, two **Black-throated Sparrows** were at Sycamore Canyon 24-29 Sep (BCB). Individual **Vesper Sparrows** were along Edison Road on 27 Sep (AS) and Point Mugu on 29 Sep (AP). While **Brewer's Sparrows** breed in a few localities in the arid valleys in our local mountains, they are scarce as migrants along the coast. However, there were a number of reports during September including individuals at Wolff Road on 16 Sep (ST), Laguna Road on 17 Sep (KR), the Ventura River on 19-30 Sep (JG), and Ojai on 22 Sep (PL). A **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was at a feeder in Ventura on 23 Sep (BM). A **Summer Tanager** was at Rincon Creek 17-19 Sep (DP) and a second was found there 19-27 Sep (DP). Ten **Bobolinks** were on the Oxnard Plain 23-24 Sep (DP). **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** included three along Edison Drive on 5 Sep (DM), three at Point Mugu on 13 Sep (AP), two near Point Mugu on 23 Sep (DP), and six at Arnold Road on 30 Sep (JH).

Trips offshore produced a variety of uncommon pelagic species. A **Sabine's Gull** was offshore of Ventura on 1 Sep (JM). A Multi-day pelagic trip off southern California spent some time in Ventura County waters and found several uncommon species including a **Buller's Shearwater**, 3 **Brown Boobies**, and 4 **Long-tailed Jaegers** south of Anacapa Island on 5 Sep; a **Flesh-footed Shearwater**, 2 **Townsend's Storm-Petrels**, and 3 **Long-tailed Jaegers** east of the San Juan Seamount on 6 Sep; and 11 **Black-footed Albatrosses**, 2 **Cook's Petrels**, 5 **Red-billed Tropicbirds**, 3 **Long-tailed Jaegers**, a **Sabine's Gull**, and an **Arctic Tern** near the Cortez Bank on 7 Sep (DP, TM, 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 or call David Pereksta at 659-5740 or pereksta@pacbell.net

Observers: Joel Barrett, Stacey Bergman, Bonnie Clarfield-Bylin, Eric Culbertson, Don DesJardin, Linda Easter, Jesse Grantham, Chrystal Guzman, Mary Hansen, Bruce Henderson, Jim Howard, Peter Larramendy, Dan Maxwell, Todd McGrath, Brad Minnich, John Mueller, Andrew Partin, David Pereksta, Giles Pettifor, Kay Regester, Ben Sandstrom, Larry Sansone, David Torfeh, and Steve Tucker

NOVEMBER FIELD TRIPS...Adele Fergusson

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.

Friday, November 3, 2017 7:30 a.m. – noon. Pt. Mugu Naval Base (Restricted to 20 – pre-registration required).
Leaders: Mugu Staff & David Pereksta. For those registered, please note: You must have picture ID cards with names matching the names on the list. Vehicles, articles and personnel are subject to search. Cameras and video equipment are not allowed. Please bring a scope if you have one.
Directions: From Hwy 101, travel south on Las Posas Rd., west on Hueneme Rd., south on Wood Rd, crossing over PCH. Meet at the main entrance at Naval Air Rd. and Mugu Rd. near Buildings 112 & 116. Drive to gate 1 at Frontage Rd.
Reservations required. Contact Adele Fergusson at adelefergusson@yahoo.com subject: Pt Mugu Trip and provide your full name including middle initial, phone number, address, driver's license #, social security # and U.S. citizenship.

Sunday, November 5, 8:00 a.m. Work Day Hedrick Ranch.
Leader: Sandy Hedrick 805-340-0478. Arrive at **8:00 for birding** which usually yields some interesting birds. **Work from 9a.m. – noon**. **Long pants and boots or closed shoes are required.** Bring water, gloves & sun protection. Take Hwy 126 to Santa Paula, 10th St. Exit. Go under the freeway, rt. on Harvard, rt. on 12th and cross the S.C. River Bridge. Go 3.7 miles to 20395 S. Mountain Rd. Turn left onto the dirt road & follow it to the end (approx. ½ mile). Even a little rain can make the road impassible; if in doubt, call Sandy to check road conditions.

Sunday, November 12, 2017 8:30 a.m. Ormond Beach
Leader: David Torfeh 805-794-5334
Join us at this excellent coastal location, where we will look for a variety of waterfowl, such as Willets, Whimbrels, Black necked Stilts, Black bellied Plovers and other interesting birds. We will also look for Yellow-headed Blackbirds, Peregrine Falcon, and Blue-Gray Gnatcatchers. Dress in layers, as the morning may be chilly. Please bring a scope if you have one.
Directions: Hwy 101 south and exit on Rice Rd. turn right and continue to Hueneme Rd. Turn right on Hueneme Rd. After Olds Rd. take a left on Arnold and continue to the end of the road. Please note: Avoid leaving valuables in your car if you are parking it at the end of Arnold Rd. To carpool, meet at 7:50 a.m. at Carrows on Harbor Blvd near Seaward, in the parking lot behind the restaurant next to the Chevron gas station.

Saturday November 18, 2017 8:30 a.m. Hill Canyon
Leader: Linda Easter 818-519-2833
Hill Canyon is an area near Santa Rosa County Park.
Directions: From Ventura, exit the 101 freeway at Pleasant Valley/Santa Rosa Roads. Head east on Santa Rosa Road for maybe 2-3 miles to a small road on the right with a sign for Santa Rosa County Park. Head up that road about 1/4 mile to a large gravel parking area on the left. Park and meet there at 8:30. Alternatively, people may park in the County Park parking lot for a fee and walk to the free gravel parking area. We will bird along the creek and into Hill Canyon.

Monday November 20, 2017 8:30 a.m. Canada Larga
Leader: Adele Fergusson 805-415-4304
We will walk and drive the canyon. Always a great walk! Some birds we may see are Western Bluebirds, Roadrunners, sparrows, swallows, Red-tailed Hawks and perhaps a barn owl.
Directions: Take Hwy 33 toward Ojai. Exit Canada Larga Rd. Meet near the beginning of the road on the right hand side in the small parking lot before the avocado trees.

HOW WILDFIRES AFFECT BIRDS

By Andy McGlashen

October 11, 2017

Devastating and deadly wildfires in California's wine country this week made it clear that this summer's brutal fire season in the West isn't over yet. Nationwide, 38 fires are still burning, 17 of them large and uncontained, according to a daily report from the National Interagency Fire Center. Fires have scorched more than 8.5 million acres in 2017 so far, compared to a 10-year average of about 6 million acres. Multiple firefighters and citizens have died in blazes this season, and thousands of homes and businesses have been destroyed. Smoke has made the air dangerous to breathe in many parts of the West.

Black-backed Woodpecker (Robert Royse/Minden Pictures)

Like melting glaciers and rising seas, larger fires and longer fire seasons are among the predicted effects of climate change that are now coming to pass. With that in mind, it's worth exploring how wildfires affect birds. It's hard to definitively say how avian communities will be affected in the long term, but generally speaking—for now, anyway—wildfires don't pose a major threat for most birds

What do birds do when wildfires break out? No surprise here: They fly away. A fire might kill weak birds or, depending on the time of year, claim nestlings. But at least in the Western forests that U.S. Forest Service research biologist Vicki Saab studies, birds evolved alongside fire and flee in the face of conflagrations. "Direct mortality is not a big concern," Saab says.

How do wildfires physically affect birds? Assuming birds escape a fire, smoke might still affect their health in ways that aren't very well understood. "We do know that exposure to particulate matter, which of course is of great concern for human health, can affect birds as well," says Olivia Sanderfoot, a National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellow at the University of Washington Seattle who studies how air pollution affects birds. For example, veterinarians and poultry scientists who study captive birds have found that smoke can damage lung tissue and leave the animals susceptible to potentially lethal respiratory infections.

How that plays out in the wild is largely unknown, Sanderfoot says. Her current research aims to track changes in bird populations and diversity after exposure to smoke from large wildfires. In some cases, smoke inhalation might make it harder for birds to flee onrushing flames. Thick smoke, for instance, may have contributed to the deaths of 50 adult White Ibises during a 1999 fire in the Everglades, Sanderfoot reported in a recent paper. And some low-flying species might succumb to smoke inhalation or exhaustion before they can escape forest fires, according to the Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation.

How do wildfires affect habitat, and do any birds benefit from blazes? A little disturbance is a good thing for many species. In the dry, mixed-conifer forests Saab studies, most wildfires—even intense ones—burn unevenly, leaving behind a mosaic of habitat patches. "Fire definitely benefits a lot of bird species," Saab says. "It's not all doom and gloom."

For a Black-backed Woodpecker, for example, a newly burned forest provides a smorgasbord. Bark- and wood-boring beetles arrive in droves and lay eggs in charred trees; woodpeckers feast when they reach the larval stage. There's often an influx of other bugs, too, which draws aerial insectivores like Dusky Flycatchers and Mountain Bluebirds that hunt for midair meals in the new forest openings created by fire, Saab says. The patchwork of post-fire habitats also suits White-headed Woodpeckers and other species that nest in open areas but forage in unburned surrounding forests.

Black-backed Woodpeckers move in soon after forest fires to feed on bark beetle larvae. Other birds benefit from fires over the longer term. Kirtland's Warbler, for instance, nests only in the fire-dependent jack pine forests of Michigan, Wisconsin, and Ontario. Jack pine cones are sealed tight with resin until fire opens them up, releasing the seeds and generating new warbler habitat. Red-headed Woodpeckers, which nest in the high limbs of dead trees can see a local population boom after a fire devastates a patch of forest.

(Continued on Page 5.)

(...*HOW WILDFIRES AFFECT BIRDS* continued from Page 4)

Blazes aren't a boon for all avian species. Wildfire forces those that dwell in old-growth forests—including Pileated Woodpeckers, Townsend's Warblers, and Golden-crowned Kinglets—to go in search of new places to nest and forage. It also poses a serious risk to a bird that faces plenty of other threats: the Greater Sage-Grouse. Fire in the sagebrush ecosystem—upon which this iconic species depends—often gives invasive plants such as cheatgrass and juniper a leg up on slower-growing sage, and they provide fuel for future fires.

Do birds ever start wildfires? When combined with electricity, yes. We've all seen birds perched harmlessly on power lines. But if they manage to touch two transmission lines at once, they form a circuit and get zapped.
In two recent fires started by birds, hawks were carrying snakes. Chances are, those writhing meals-to-be touched the second power line, electrocuting dinner and diner both, and sparking the blaze below.

There are credible claims that birds intentionally spread fires, too. *Audubon* and other publications have covered anecdotal reports of northern Australia raptors picking up burning sticks and dropping them elsewhere on the arid landscape to flush out prey like lizards and snakes. Mark Bonta, the Penn State geographer behind those reports, says that he and colleagues have a forthcoming peer-reviewed paper with further evidence that Black Kites, Brown Falcons, and Whistling Kites all spread fires intentionally. The researchers haven't yet captured video or photographic evidence of the phenomenon, but Bonta says they've confirmed it by interviewing local experts and reviewing publications of aboriginal knowledge.

How big of a role does climate change play? Researchers detect a changing climate's fingerprints on this year's ferocious fires, which may be just a glimpse of things to come. In northern California, for example, heavy winter rains fueled a riot of new plant growth in the spring, but the summer's record heat parched that vegetation, turning it to tinder. That's part of a broader trend; Columbia University scientists last year showed that climate change has doubled the area of the western U.S. affected by forest fires over the past three decades. "Climate is really running the show in terms of what burns," one of that study's authors said. "We should be getting ready for bigger fire years than those familiar to previous generations."

PROGRAM CHAIR NEEDED

Description

The Program Chair has the responsibility to arrange all aspects of our public program. Ventura Audubon Society maintains a schedule of informative and interesting monthly programs that are open to the public. The monthly program topics are selected by their relevance to the goals of the organization, and can range from environmental issues to topics related to birding, photography, educational, etc. Currently, programs are presented on the 2nd Tuesday evening, September through April, at the Poinsettia Pavilion.

Duties

- Solicit suggestions for interesting, relevant speakers and interact with potential and confirmed speakers to book dates. A notebook containing information on past programs and speakers also provides a good source.
- Secure biographies, photographs, and program information from the speakers, communicating the information to the Newsletter Editor and Publicity Chair for media distribution to the public.
- Contact speaker prior to program to determine speaker's audio-visual equipment needs.
- Invite speaker to dinner with Board on date of program. Arrange location of dinner (make reservations) and invite Board members.
- Welcome guests at program, and introduce the speaker.
- Maintain an accurate count of attendees for year-end reporting to National along with a list of the speakers and presentations. Maintain history of programs and speakers in notebook provided.

If you are interested in the position of Program Chair or if you have any questions, please contact the Bruce Schoppe.

VAS OFFICERS and CHAIRS

Officers		
President	Bruce Schoppe	(805) 658-2396
Vice President	Cynthia Hartley	(805) 795-4115
Treasurer	Marianne Slaughter	(805) 484-8415
Secretary	Joyce Schoppe	(805) 658-2396
Board Members		
Conservation	Sandy Hedrick	(805) 643-2408
Publicity	Jim Susha	(805) 983-3929
CBC	Frank DeMartino	(805) 906-8733
Field Trips	Adele Fergusson	(805) 415-4304
Membership	Deborah Burns	(805) 933-0647
Newsletter	Janice Susha	(805) 983-3929
WSP/CLT Team	Debra Barringer	Unlisted
Outreach	David Lee	(805) 451-3504
Programs	Vacant	
	John Connor	(805) 654-1805
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Chairs		
Webmaster	Christi Lester	(310) 722-9557
Education	Betsy Bachman	(805) 646-4407
	Rachael Cavanagh	
Social Media	Jessica Ventrone	
	Tim Sullivan	

MEMBERSHIP EXPIRATION: If you are not sure whether your membership has expired, please ***email*** Deborah at debburns38@gmail.com and she will check it out for you.

BOARD MEETING: The next Board of Directors meeting will be on Tuesday, **November 7.** Future meetings will be held at Wild Birds, Unlimited located at 4020 E. Main Street, Ventura, 805-765-4594. Because the store will be closed, parking is available. VAS members are welcome to attend.

THE VENTURA AUDUBON SOCIETY holds its monthly program 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 bimonthly 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 month of publishing.*

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