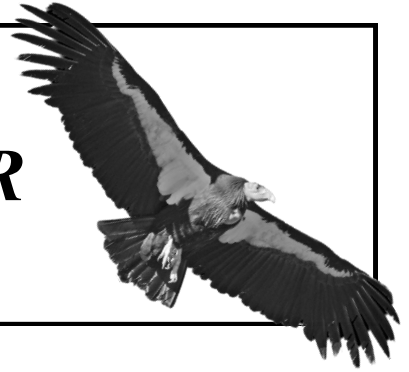


The **CALIFORNIA CONDOR**

Ventura Audubon Society **December 2017** Volume 42, Number 4
A Chapter of the National Audubon www.VenturaAudubon.org



CALL NOTES ...Bruce Schoppe, President

Forty-nine field trips, 8 workdays at Hedrick Ranch Nature Area (HRNA), 8-monthly programs, numerous classrooms and another year is quickly coming to a close. The years do seem to be going more quickly – or, is it just me? We wish you Happy Holidays and Good Birding in the New Year!

Thank you to all who make Ventura Audubon successful.

Our conservation work continued focusing on shorebirds (Western Snowy Plover and California Least Tern), restoration of the Least Bell's Vireo to the Ventura River and habitat restoration along the Santa Clara River HRNA. Perhaps, the most significant accomplishment in 2017 was formation of the Channel Islands Audubon Club at CSUCI, started by students who worked with Cynthia Hartley at Ormond Beach.

At the national level, National Audubon and Audubon California have been working hard to stay abreast of the many challenges to birds and the environment presented by the current administration and congress. New challenges appear almost weekly. If you have not signed up to receive *Action Alerts* from both National and CA Audubon, please go to their websites and do it! It is important that your voice be heard.

Locally, we are participating in efforts to update Ventura County's Local Coastal Plan (LCP), recertification of the levees on the Santa Clara River upstream of Highway 101, planning for implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management program in the several groundwater basins beneath us and several others. All of these are complex land use issues with many local, state and federal agencies as well as stakeholders involved. We are fortunate to have qualified volunteers to help monitor and, when appropriate, comment upon these projects.

Finally, please join us for the 118th Christmas Bird Count on Sunday, December 17, 2017. Please contact Frank DeMartino or a Sector Leader. Details appear separately in this newsletter.

DECEMBER PROGRAM ***Resource Conservation Partners...Samantha Lantz, PhD***

7:30 p.m. Tuesday, December 12 Poinsettia Pavilion, 3451 Foothill Road, Ventura

Resource Conservation Partners (RCP) is a local non-profit organization focused on habitat restoration and enhancement of open spaces within our region. Beginning in 2009, RCP has been working with community members and organizations such as conservancy groups, state parks and local public agencies to protect and conserve our natural resources. One of their projects is the Wildlife Ponds at the Ventura Wastewater Treatment facility.

Samantha Lantz is a Biologist and GIS Specialist for Resource Conservation Partners. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in Biological Sciences from Willamette University in Salem, OR, a Masters in Biological Sciences from Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, FL, and a PhD in Ecology & Evolutionary Biology from Tulane University in New Orleans, LA. She has over 15 years of field experience, with extensive ornithological experience in the US and abroad. She will talk briefly about her past field work before transitioning to current habitat restoration work being done by RCP and the birds that these habitats support.





NOTES FROM THE FIELD

...David Pereksta

DECEMBER 2017

October is usually one of the best months of the year for finding rare birds in Ventura County; many of which are often warblers. However, this past month produced some exceptional birds from other families. The best bird of the month and one long overdue for the county was Ventura County's first **Great Crested Flycatcher** at Sycamore Canyon on 1 Oct (DP). The other outstanding passerine of the month was a **Scarlet Tanager** at Camino Real Park on 18 Oct (DM). This is the first county record of that species on the mainland in 30 years. A **Tricolored Heron** was at Point Mugu 5-16 Oct (JP), which was a fifth record for the county and the first since 2009. Also exceptional at Point Mugu was Ventura's third **Bar-tailed Godwit** on 27 Oct (MR).

The sod fields on the Oxnard Plain produced a number of locally rare species in October. No longer an annual species, five **Mountain Plovers** were found along Casper Road on 28 Oct with four remaining through 31 Oct (DM). A **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** was found in the company of the Mountain Plovers on 28 Oct and also continued through 31 Oct (DM). Other exciting finds included an **American Golden-Plover** 29-31 Oct (BH), a **Red-throated Pipit** 28-31 Oct (DP), and a **Lapland Longspur** on 29 Oct (DM). A **Pacific Golden-Plover** was found on 17 Oct (AS & DM), a second bird was found 22 Oct (DP), and a third was found on 28 Oct (DM) with at least one continuing through 30 Oct. While the local sod fields had only one longspur sighting, several were found on Point Mugu including a **Chestnut-collared Longspur** on 10 Oct (JP), a **McCown's Longspur** 12-25 Oct (JP) with a second bird being found on 25 Oct (AP), and a **Lapland Longspur** on 25 Oct (JP). A late **Pectoral Sandpiper** was also at Point Mugu on 24 Oct (JP).

Forty **Greater White-fronted Geese** were on the Oxnard Plain on 10 Oct (JP) with 17 remaining through 23 Oct. Two **Snow Geese** were along Casper Road on 16 Oct (AS & DM) growing to four in the same vicinity 17-19 Oct (AS & DM). **Cackling Geese** included one at the Santa Clara River Estuary 25-26 Oct (JM), as many as three at Point Mugu 16-20 Oct (JP), and a group of as many as 30 that were seen between Arnold and Casper Roads 7-30 Oct (M. Obs.). A **Wood Duck** was at Foster Park on 29 Oct (DB) and a **Hooded Merganser** continued in the Arroyo Simi through 14 Oct. The number of **American White Pelicans** at the Santa Clara River estuary and Ventura Settling Ponds increased to 30 on 13 Oct (DD). Two **Reddish Egrets** continued in Mugu Lagoon through 31 Oct. **Cattle Egrets** continued on the Oxnard Plain through 31 Oct with a high count of 6 on 29 Oct (JB). **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons** continue to spread away from the breeding area at Point Mugu including two in the Ventura Harbor on 17 Oct (JB).

Rare or uncommon birds of prey were scarce in October, but a **Broad-winged Hawk** was in the Ventura Harbor on 22 Oct (JB), a **Ferruginous Hawk** was at Point Mugu 23-30 Oct (JP), and a **Long-eared Owl** was in Arroyo Verde Park on 26 Oct (ZH).

A **White-winged Dove** was at the Laguna tamarisks on 16 Oct (M. Obs.). A **Lewis's Woodpecker** was in Hidden Valley near Lake Sherwood on 14 Oct (MH). An **Eastern Phoebe** was a rare fall migrant at Sycamore Canyon on 17 Oct (SS). **Tropical Kingbirds** included individuals at Ormond Beach in early Oct (ZA), perhaps the same or maybe another at Arnold Road 8-11 Oct (PD), Sycamore Canyon on 17 Oct (AS & DM), Camino Real Park on 19 Oct (JP, BHe), and Point Mugu on 25 Oct (JP). A **Plumbeous Vireo** was at Rancho Simi Park on 11 Oct (JT). A **Pacific Wren** continued along Rincon Creek through 9 Oct. A **Varied Thrush** was at Krotona in Ojai on 31 Oct (JG). This October was slower than normal for vagrant warblers, but a few were found including a **Northern Parula** at Point Mugu 3-4 Oct (AP), a **Virginia's Warbler** in Ojai on 6 Oct (JG), and a **Blackpoll Warbler** on the Oxnard Plain on 13 Oct (DM). **Palm Warblers** included individuals at Bob Kildee Park 13-17 Oct (DM), Point Mugu on 18 Oct (AS), and the Hailes Road tamarisks on 22 Oct (RT). A **Clay-colored Sparrow** was at Sycamore Canyon 17-18 Oct (SS, PD). Three **Brewer's Sparrows** were at Krotona in Ojai on 5 Oct (JG), one was at Sycamore Canyon on 8 Oct (RT), and another continued in Ojai through 2 Oct. A **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was in Simi Valley on 1 Oct (DK & CK) and two were coming to a feeder in Thousand Oaks on 5 Oct with a third being seen there on 14 Oct (RF).



DECEMBER 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.

A few reminders about birding etiquette: Stay behind the leader, move quietly, ask questions, listen to what people are pointing out. When socializing, stay behind the group.

Questions/suggestions about an organized trip? E-mail Adele Fergusson at adelefergusson@yahoo.com, subject: VAS trip questions. We are looking for leaders for bird hikes so please contact me if you are interested

Saturday, December 2, 2017 8:00 a.m. Work Day Hedrick Ranch Nature Area.

Leader: Sandy Hedrick 805-340-0478.

Arrive at 8:00 for self-guided birding which usually yields some interesting birds. Work from 9am – noon. Long pants and boots or closed shoes are required. Bring water, gloves and sun protection.

Directions: Take Hwy 126 to Santa Paula, 10th St. Exit. Go under freeway, right on Harvard, right on 12th and cross the S.C. River Bridge. Go 3.7 miles to 20395 S. Mountain Road. Turn left onto the dirt road & follow it to the end (approx. ½ mile). Even a little rain can make the road impassable; if in doubt, call Sandy to check road conditions.

Saturday December 9, 2017. 8:30 a.m. Camp Bartlett (Santa Paula) Private Property

Leaders: Karen Laing 907-351-5176 and Adele Fergusson 805-415-4304

This is a hike near Sisar Canyon, Karen lives at Camp Bartlett where we will walk through an old oak forest and then hike up into the hills where there is active oil pumping. Birds that we could see include acorn woodpeckers, Hermit thrush and Steller's jay.

Directions: Take 126 and exit at 10th Street in Santa Paula. Take 10th Street through town, leaning right at the Y so that you stay on 10th St. as it turns into HWY 150. One mile past Thomas Aquinas college you will see a red barn on the left. Look to the right side of the road where you will see a low concrete wall followed by the metal arch that is the Camp Bartlett sign. Go through the arch, cross the bridge over Sisar Creek and lean right at the Y. You will see some large buildings on the right and then on the left a parking area with a tree carved with a condor, this is where you park. If you have questions about getting here from Ojai call Karen at 907-351-5176

December 17, 2017 118th Christmas Bird Count.

Organizer and Compiler: Frank DeMartino (frank@colynx.com) or (856) 906-8733.

Details appear on Page 4 of this newsletter.

VENTURA AUDUBON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

December 17, 2017

Calling all birders! Our Christmas Bird Count is **Sunday, December 17, 2017**. The CBC is the longest running citizen science effort in existence. Bird counts take place all over North America with a few in the Caribbean and Latin America as well. This will be the 118th Christmas Bird Count conducted by National Audubon. On the Ventura Audubon count last year, we recorded 175 species and more than 19,000 individual birds.

Frank DeMartino is Organizer and Compiler. Please contact Frank at (frank@colynx.com) or (856) 906-8733. (Yes, 856 is the correct area code!) or, you may call the Section Leader with whom you have counted previously or may wish to work with this year. Online registration through National Audubon is NOT available this year.

Birders of all skill levels are encouraged to participate. The more participants we have, the more areas we can cover and we can cover them more thoroughly. Sector Leaders usually start at 8:00 or 8:30 although some of the more ambitious leaders may start earlier! Those looking for owls need to be out early or stay late! Most counts end by noon; however, it is not necessary to stop at noon. If you have the energy and stamina, go back in the afternoon to search out birds you should have seen but, didn't.

Volunteer counters are assigned to one of the sector leaders who coordinate the count in each of eight areas within the VAS count circle. If you wish to participate in the count, please contact the section leader of the area where you would like to count, directly. He/she will give you the start time, meeting place and other details.

Section	Location	Section Leader	Section Leader Email Address	Telephone #
Section 1	Ventura River	Kay Regester	kaybirder@aol.com	258-1025
Section 2	Lake Casitas	Jesse Grantham	ojaismimmer@gmail.com	405-5632
Section 3	Ojai	Rick Burgess	rburgess@toaks.org	449-2326
Section 4	Cañada Larga	Linda Easter	Dleaster17@gmail.com	818-519-2833
Section 5	Wheeler Canyon	Gary Tuttle	Gt10k2826@verizon.net	525-2327
Section 6	Ventura City	Tevin Schmitt	Tevinschmitt9@gmail.com	661-904-1563
Section 7	SCRE & Coast	Alexis Frangis	alexisraehamilton@gmail.com	217-4833
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 count.

The end of day review includes a potluck dinner at the Church of the Foothills. 6279 Foothill Road, Ventura at 6:30 PM. The 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 your last name.

Main Dish: S-Z

Salad: K-R

Dessert: A-J



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

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act...Martha Harbison



Don't know what the MBTA even is? Here's your comprehensive guide to the Act, and what's coming up.

At 97 years, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) is among the oldest wildlife protection laws on the books. Its creation was one of the National Audubon Society's first major victories, and in the years since its enactment, the MBTA has saved millions, if not billions, of birds from depredatory human activities.

Now, it's about to save even more. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) announced on May 22 that it would be strengthening the implementation of the bill to better protect birds from modern-day threats (think windmills and cell phone towers), to ensure that the MBTA remains as powerful and effective as possible.

So, what do the proposed changes entail? Here's a primer on the bill, and the upcoming changes.

What is the Migratory Bird Treaty Act?

Stated most simply, the MBTA is a law that protects birds from people. When Congress passed the MBTA in 1918, it codified a treaty already signed with Canada (then part of Great Britain) in response to the extinction or near-extinction of a number of bird species that were hunted either for sport or for their feathers. According to the USFWS: "The MBTA provides that it is unlawful to pursue, hunt, take, capture, kill, possess, sell, purchase, barter, import, export, or transport any migratory bird, or any part, nest, or egg or any such bird, unless authorized under a permit issued by the Secretary of the Interior. Some regulatory exceptions apply. Take is defined in regulations as: 'pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or attempt to pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect.'"

Since its passage, the MBTA has expanded its geographic area (via treaties with Mexico, Japan, and Russia) and the scope of its coverage (adding eagles, corvids, and other birds). In 1962 it was updated to address how Native American tribes can collect feathers from protected birds for religious ceremonies (a practice otherwise banned by the MBTA). For a full history of how the MBTA has evolved over time, see our timeline.

What birds has the treaty already helped?

The most obvious success story is the Snowy Egret, which was hunted almost to extinction for its delicate feathers before early conservationists like the Audubon Society, along with the federal government, stepped in to stop the slaughter. Since then the act has been expanded to include a wide variety of birds that live in or migrate through the United States, Canada, Mexico, and beyond..

...NOTES FROM THE FIELD... *(Continued from Page 2)*

A trip to Pine Mountain on 15 Oct found two **Williamson's Sapsuckers** and two **Evening Grosbeaks** (AS, DM et al.). More than 30 **Red Crossbills** were on Pine Mountain on 21 Oct (LB). Unusual any time locally, but especially so at higher elevations, a **Sage Thrasher** was on Pine Mountain on 21 Oct (KK, CR). Some montane species appear to be on the move this year and **Red-breasted Nuthatches** and **Pine Siskins** were reported widely during October in both the local mountains and lowlands. Rare on the coastal plain, a **Williamson's Sapsucker** and a **Mountain Bluebird** were at Point Mugu on 25 Oct (JP).

A trip to San Nicolas Island by Navy staff on 18 Oct produced a number of interesting sightings including 14 **Cackling Geese**, a **Eurasian Wigeon**, **Varied Thrush**, **Sage Thrasher**, and two **Gray-headed Juncos** (AP, JP, RM & MR). A **Short-eared Owl** and the continuing **Eurasian Wigeon** were on San Nicolas Island on 26 Oct (AP, JP). Anacapa Island produced a **Mountain Bluebird** 16-17 Oct (PL) and a **Sage Thrasher** on 17 Oct (PL).

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), call or e-mail David Pereksta at 659-5740 or [pereksta@pacbell.net].

Good birding,
David Pereksta

Observers: Zack Abbey, Joel Barrett, Lance Benner, Devon Bradley, Denise Dewire, Preston Duncan, Rick Farris, Jesse Grantham, Bradley Hacker, Mary Hansen, Bruce Henderson, Zachary Holderby, Chrystal Klabunde, Don Klabunde, Karl Krause, Peter Larramendy, Judy Matsuoka, Dan Maxwell, Robert McMorran, Jim Moore, Andrew Partin, David Pereksta, Jeremiah Psiropoulos, Marine Ruane, Craig Rudolph, Steve Summers, Jeff Tell, and Ryan

...MIGRATORY BIRD TREATY *(Continued from Page 5)*

Why are we talking about the MBTA now?

The almost century-old MBTA tries to keep birds as safe as possible. But many of the problems birds face today—wind turbines, high-tension power lines, communications towers, and the like—are (relatively) new. U.S. Fish and Wildlife wants to strengthen implementation of the law to cover these, and other, hazards to birds. Currently, enforcement of the act is arbitrary and difficult, though companies whose activities pose threats to migratory birds should take action to reduce that risk.

A number of companies in the oil and power-line sectors have already developed and implemented best practices to protect birds, some of which are simple and cheap. Learn more about how companies can reduce bird deaths thanks to existing technology.

In the coming months, USFWS will work with involved parties to determine the best ways to make the MBTA as strong as possible.

How many birds are at risk?

According to USFWS estimates, power lines kill up to 175 million birds a year. Communications towers rack up to 50 million kills, and uncovered oil waste pits account for up to another 500,000 to 1 million. Data on wind turbines are harder to come by, but estimates hover at about 300,000 bird fatalities a year.

What can I do to help?

Send a letter to U.S. Fish and Wildlife supporting this critical action here.



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	(856) 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	Vacant	
Programs	Vacant	
At Large	John Connor Jackie Worden	(805) 654-1805 (805) 657-2837
Chairs		
Webmaster	Christi Lester	(310) 722-9557
Education	Betsy Bachman	(805) 646-4407
Social Media	Rachael Cavanagh	

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, **January 2**. 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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