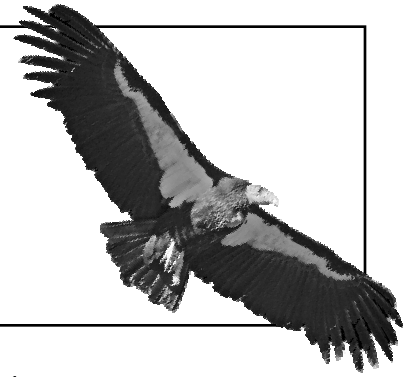


# *The CALIFORNIA CONDOR*

Ventura Audubon Society **OCTOBER 2012** Volume 33 Number 2  
A Chapter of the National Audubon [www.VenturaAudubon.org](http://www.VenturaAudubon.org)



## *CALL NOTES ...Bruce Schoppe, President*

You are all probably aware of the new Strategic Plan National Audubon has put in place. Built around the four major flyways that divide the US north and south, it commits Audubon and its local chapters to focus on issues that fall within five important areas:

- Working Lands – Putting farms, ranches and forests to work for birds
- Sharing Our Seas and Shores – Conservation of seabirds and shorebirds
- Saving the most Important Bird Areas in the Americas
- Supporting a Healthy Climate for Birds and People
- Creating Bird Friendly Communities and Cities

Within the Pacific Flyway, California has led the way and Ventura Audubon has been an important participant, especially in programs related to Sharing Our Shore and saving Important Bird Areas. Audubon California, which is the state organization coordinating efforts within the state, has a new Executive Director who has also been given an expanded role as an Audubon Vice President for the Pacific Flyway. Mike Sutton came from the Monterey Bay Aquarium and has been a member of the California Fish and Game Commission. He plans to convene a task force to identify possible priorities in the Flyway – from Barrow to Baja. A Western Snowy Plover website is coming as is a new comprehensive seabird conservation program for the entire flyway.

I'm excited about the opportunities presented by the "new" Audubon. Many of the key elements of the Strategic Plan fit well with our priorities. We must continue to educate folks about the need to respect nesting areas on our beaches that are used by the Western Snowy Plover and California Least Tern. (We need a major effort to encourage people to keep their dogs from the Ventura River Estuary!) And, we'll continue to support habitat restoration on the Santa Clara and Ventura Rivers and at Ormond Beach, partnering with many other organizations including State Parks.

Except for the paid staff at the national and state levels, Audubon is a volunteer organization. And the more volunteers we have, the more we can do!

Just sayin'!

## ***OCTOBER PROGRAM ...Janice Susha***

*7:30 p.m. Tuesday, **October 9th**, Poinsettia Pavilion, 3451 Foothill Road, Ventura*

### ***Trans-Pacific Migrations with Peter Pyle***

Discover the amazing movement patterns of albatross, sharks, and other open ocean creatures as Peter Pyle, Institute for Bird Populations wildlife biologist, presents his research on Trans-Pacific Migration.

Peter currently works for the Institute for Bird Populations where he conducts research on changes in the abundance, distribution, and ecology of North and Latin American bird populations. In addition, he is a Research Associate for the California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco, and B.P. Bishop Museum, Honolulu. He has also published or co-authored over 120 papers in the scientific literature including "Identification Guide to North American Birds, Parts I and 2" and is an expert on molt of birds.

## ***BIRD OF THE MONTH – OCTOBER 2012***

*Article and Photo by David Pereksta*

### ***Pomarine Jaeger (Stercorarius pomarinus)***



October is a great month to search for seabirds from shore or on a pelagic trip. An Arctic breeding species that transits through our offshore waters at this time is the Pomarine Jaeger.

The Pomarine Jaeger is the largest of the three jaegers with full adults having long, twisted central rectrices. About the size of a Ring-billed Gull, it is large-headed, large-billed, thick-necked, and heavy-chested. Its flight is powerful, purposeful, and slow, with relatively shallow wingbeats. Light-morph adults have dark brown upperparts, a broad breastband and dark vent, a light belly, and barring on the flanks. It has a capped appearance, a yellow wash to the cheeks, and a white throat. The dark brown wings are broad, especially at the base, with obvious white flashes that are the result of five to eight white-shafted primaries. The spoon-tipped central rectrices are longer than the other tail feathers. Juveniles are brown and heavily barred below and lack the central rectrices. Subadults resemble adults, but do not show the spoon-tipped central rectrices and may show barred underparts that encircle a white belly patch. Dark-morph birds (except adults with the spoon-tipped rectrices) can be difficult to identify and observers must rely on its large size, broad-based wings, and strong, slow wingbeats. It is similar looking to the other jaegers and skuas so care should always be taken identifying them, especially when they do not have their distinctive tail “spoons.”

Pomarine Jaegers are the most common jaeger in our offshore waters year-round. While Parasitic Jaegers are much more frequent within 1 or 2 miles from shore, Pomarine Jaegers occur most regularly from 2 to 50 miles offshore, depending largely upon shearwater presence. They are predatory while breeding in the Arctic; feeding on lemmings and other animal prey. While at sea, Pomarines (like other jaegers) are pirates that bludgeon gulls and shearwaters into vomiting partially digested fish and squid, which they then ingest. Migrants and searching birds are high fliers that are often first seen above the horizon.

The species breeds across the Arctic regions of North America, Europe, and Asia. In North America, it is a common migrant off both coasts and winters widely at sea in the Pacific and Atlantic. It is uncommon in winter along the Pacific coast, rare along the Atlantic coast in winter, and casual inland during migration.

Pomarine Jaegers are most numerous offshore during the spring (Mar-May) and fall (Sep-Nov) migration periods, but occur in smaller numbers during the summer and winter. The surest way to see this species locally is to get on a scheduled pelagic trip or whale watch out of the Santa Barbara/Ventura area during spring or fall. Pomarine Jaegers can also be seen from land off of local beaches or at coastal points such as Mugu Rock or Pitas Point.



## ***OCTOBER 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, call the trip leader.

**Tuesday, Oct. 2, 8:30 a.m. Conejo Botanic Gardens, Thousand Oaks. Leader: Adele Fergusson (415-4304). Directions:** Exit 101 Freeway at Lynn Rd. Go north .7 mile to Gainsborough Rd. Turn right & proceed ½ mile to the access drive on the right on Jeannine Dr. & Gainsborough Rd. Park & meet across from the Kids Adventure Garden. **To car pool:** Meet at 7:45 at the Pacific View Mall in Ventura. Take Coastal View Dr. off Mills Rd & park in the lot directly across from the parking garage entrance.

**Sunday, Oct. 7, 9:00-12:00 a.m. Restoration Work Day, Santa Paula. Hedrick Ranch Nature Area Restoration Program. Sandy Hedrick: (340-0478).** Arrive at **8:00 for birding** which usually yields some interesting birds. **Long pants and boots or closed shoes are required.** Bring water, gloves, and sun protection. Take Hwy 126 to Santa Paula, 10<sup>th</sup> St. Exit. Go under freeway, rt. on Harvard, rt. on 12<sup>th</sup> 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).

**Sunday, Oct. 14, 8:00 a.m. Camino Real Park. Leader: Raeann Koerner (701-1919). NOTE DIRECTIONS – Meet outside the park.** In Ventura take Telegraph Road toward Ventura College. Across from VC turn onto Estates, take a right on Aurora, go to the grass beltway across from the mobile home park. Park closest to the last house in the residential tract. We will start birding along the barranca and go into the park. A variety of birds can be found here including warblers, juncos & raptors.

**Saturday, Oct. 20, 8:30 a.m. Carpinteria Salt Marsh. Leader: Rocky Ludes (208-9648). Directions:** Take Hwy. 101 north to Carpinteria, exit Casitas Pass Rd., left on Casitas Pass Rd., right on Carpinteria Ave., left on Linden, right on 3<sup>rd</sup> St. to the marsh. **To car pool,** meet at the Museum of Ventura Co., 100 E. Main (side parking lot) at 8:00. In addition to shorebirds, there may be king-

fishers, kites, and perhaps a shrike.

**Saturday, Oct. 27, Beginners' Walk 8:30 – 10:30 a.m. Lake Los Carneros, Goleta. Leader: Allen Bertke (640-9037).** The lake, willows, and surrounding grassy scrub lands with pines, oaks, and eucalyptus should provide a wide variety of birds. **Directions:** Go north on Hwy 101 through Santa Barbara to Los Carneros Rd. and turn north toward the mountains. Go 2 blocks north on Los Carneros Rd. and turn right at the fire station into the parking lot for Stow House. **To car pool** meet at the Museum of Ventura Co. (side parking lot) at 7:30 a.m. Bring binoculars, hat & water, and a field guide is helpful.

**Friday, Nov. 2 – Reservations for Nov. 16 Mugu Trip Due.** Reservations and a \$10 deposit are required. Limit 25 – VAS members only unless there is space available after the deadline. Call Judy (642-0842) or email (catmai03@yahoo.com) to reserve. Then send a \$10 refundable check made out to Ventura Audubon to hold your place to Judy Dugan, 262 Teloma Dr., Ventura, CA 93003. If you do not attend, deposit is forfeited. Also include with the check your last name, first name, middle name, last 4 digits SS#, address, telephone, date of birth, DL# w/state, & citizenship. **Checks must be received by Nov. 2** to hold a spot.

### **Mark Your Calendar**

Saturday, Nov. 3- Soule Park

Tuesday, Nov. 6 – Canada Larga

Friday, Nov. 16 – Pt. Mugu

Saturday – Nov. 24 – Beginners' Walk, Ojai Meadows



## ***CONSIDER A BARN OWL BOX***

*...by Susan Bee*

Having had two vehicles damaged by rodents, the possibility that a local owl could provide on site rodent control was too good a proposition not to investigate. The property owner contributes the housing, and the tenants consume all those juicy rodents that have grown fat on the garden. A parental pair of Barn Owls and 5 chicks will consume up to 3000 rodents (70 pounds according to one source)!

I bring this up now in October, because fall is an auspicious time to install an owl box. Ventura County has two common, cavity nesting owls, the Barn Owl and the Western Screech Owl. The Western Screech Owl will hunt small rodents, such as mice, but the champion rodent consumer is the Barn Owl, who has an appetite for rats, gophers, mice, and voles; but unfortunately due to its nocturnal habits, not the diurnal ground squirrels. The owls begin selecting a nesting site in December and January.



Assembled Barn Owl boxes are widely available on the net priced from \$50 to \$120. The Santa Clara Audubon Chapter has detailed plans and instructions for building a box at [www.scvas.org](http://www.scvas.org). According to Tom Hoffman, a farmer and owl box guru, at [www.owlpages.com](http://www.owlpages.com), a box should measure no less than 12"x 12" with a 16" depth. The entrance hole should be 5-6" in diameter, and the box should have vent and water drainage holes. An easy means of cleaning out the box should be provided. Outside perches are discouraged because they offer predators, Great Horned Owls and raccoons, easy access. More elaborate boxes are available including one that includes a preinstalled camera for \$700.

Mr. Hoffman states that only 50% of the boxes erected will be utilized, so selection of a favorable site is critical. Reed Smith, VAS Science Chair, suggests that since Barn Owls view the surrounding 120 acres as their territory, and will drive off others, 1 box per property is appropriate. An area of low human activity is a prime consideration, females will leave the nest if frightened, and peeking in the box during the critical nesting/fledgling period is not advised. Placement near vehicles is unwise since owl waste is corrosive to finishes. In general, sources recommend placing the box in a tree or on a pole not more than 100 feet from a tree to allow fledging owlets a nearby landing site. The optimal height of the box varies depending on the source, 10-12 ft. is commonly mentioned. Secure the box so that it is level and the entry faces away from the prevailing winds. A ¾" bedding of shavings on the floor is recommended.

Owl pellets and waste on and around the box are signs of occupation. If your box is accepted by the owls, in the early spring the female will lay an egg every 2-3 days. She begins incubation with the first egg, resulting in age disparity between the owlets. She and the owlets are fed by the male until the youngest owlet is 12 days old, at which point she joins in the search for food. They forage in fields up to 1-3 miles from the box. The owlets fledge at 8-9 weeks.

The box should be cleaned out each November. Caution is advised because the owls eat mice and the debris could contain Hantavirus. Use gloves and a dust mask. The box can be sprayed with a 2% household bleach solution.

Owl boxes are an example of working with the natural world to achieve a mutually beneficial solution, excepting the unlucky rodents of course.





## *NOTES FROM THE FIELD*

*...David Pereksta*

Southbound migration through the county is now in full swing, but the majority of notable reports thus far have been of shorebirds. **Black Oystercatchers** have now become regular along the mainland coast so two at the Ventura River Estuary (VRE) on 12 Sep were not unexpected (KR). A **Solitary Sandpiper** was near Point Mugu on 15 Aug (JH) and another was in the Moorpark Arroyo on 3 Sep (CR). The only **Red Knot** report was one at the Santa Clara River Estuary (SCRE) on 12 Aug (DT). Individual **Semipalmated Sandpipers** were near Point Mugu on 22 Aug and 10 Sep (RN). Two **Baird's Sandpipers** were on the sod along Hueneme Road on 2 Sep (ST, DP & AF) and four were near Point Mugu on 8 Sep (ST & JT). **Pectoral Sandpiper** reports included 3 near Point Mugu on 29 Aug (RN), 1 on the sod fields along Hueneme Road on 2 Sep (ST, DP & AF), 1 at the VRE on 3 Sep (DT), 1 at Lake Casitas on 8 Sep (JB), and 20 near Point Mugu on 8 Sep (ST & JT) with 13 continuing (?) through 10 Sep. Two **Stilt Sandpipers** were near Point Mugu on 10 Sep (RN et al.) and the season's only **Ruff** thus far was on a sod field on the Oxnard Plain on 4 Sep (ST).



**Black Terns** (pictured above) usually pass through the county in small numbers along the coast during the late summer; two were at SCRE on 21 Aug (PJ), one was at the VRE on 29 Aug (KR), and one was near Bubbling Springs on 1 Sep (PJ). **Common Terns** were found along the coast in greater than normal abundance during early September including 3 at Perkins Road on 2 Sep (ST, DP & AF), over 20 there on 7 Sep (ST), 3 at the VRE on 9 Sep (DT), and 12 at the VRE on 12 Sep (KR).

A few uncommon and unseasonally early raptors were found over the last month. A **Swainson's Hawk** was near Somis on 19 Aug (AS). A **Zone-tailed Hawk** was reported near the Reagan Library on 26 Aug (AV), but was not seen subsequently. An early **Merlin** was at Revolon Slough on 4 Sep (ST).

Other notable reports included the continuing **Wood Duck** at Bubbling Spring through 2 Sep and a **White-winged Dove** was in Santa Paula on 8 Sep (GT).

Thank you to those who reported sightings during the spring and summer. Contact David Pereksta at 659-5740 or [pereksta@pacbell.net](mailto:pereksta@pacbell.net) with questions about local birds or to report a good one (please no nuisance bird calls).

Observers: Joe Beck, Alexis Frangis, Jim Hardesty, Penny Johnson, Karl Krause, Richard Norton, David Pereksta, Kay Regester, Chris Rios, Adam Searcy, David Torfeh, Gary Tuttle, Jim Tucker, Steve Tucker, Alex Viduetsky.

## *BROWN PELICAN BANDING PROGRAM*

For 40 years International Bird Rescue has rehabilitated sick, injured, orphaned and oiled aquatic birds in its two California centers (approximately 5,000 birds and 80+ species per year), and responded to over 200 oil spills throughout the world.

In the past two years, International Bird Rescue has released over 500 Brown Pelicans with a large plastic blue band on their leg – birds that have been rehabilitated in our Centers. We are now asking the birding community and the public at large to report any sighting of a pelican with a blue band to our website ([www.Bird-Rescue.org](http://www.Bird-Rescue.org)) or to (707) 207-0380 Ext. 7. The band number, location, and overall condition of the bird is requested.

By reporting birds with blue bands, you will help create important data to understand pelican migration patterns, longevity, rehabilitation effectiveness, and individual bird histories for subsequent analysis by the scientific community interested in these iconic birds.

(After Dave Weeshoff's presentation at the VAS program meeting this month, he mentioned Bird Rescue's "Blue Banded Pelican" program & asked us to include this information in our newsletter/website to assist in reporting any sightings of pelicans in our area ...Ed.)

## **VENTURA AUDUBON SOCIETY**

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### ***IMPORTANT ...VAS NEWSLETTER PRINTING AND MAILING CHANGE***

As announced in May, VAS will **discontinue printing** the monthly newsletter in January 2013. It has become increasingly expensive to print and mail; so, we join many other Audubon chapters in making the newsletter available only in electronic form. The money previously used for printing will, instead, be available to further advance our educational and conservation efforts. We'll send you a copy as soon as it is published **IF** we have your email address. If you are **NOT** currently receiving the newsletter **VIA EMAIL**, please **send an email to Jackie Worden**, Membership Chair, at [jbworden7@gmail.com](mailto:jbworden7@gmail.com). The newsletter will always be available on the website each month. If you **do not** have access to the internet, please call or write to Jackie or any Board member and we'll make arrangements to print and mail a copy to you each month.

#### ***VAS OFFICERS AND CHAIRS***

|                                   |                    |          |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|----------|
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| Vice-President                    | Neil Zeigler       | 983-7207 |
| Secretary                         | Joyce Schoppe      | 658-2396 |
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| Newsletter Editor                 | Dee Press          | 484-8415 |
| Program Committee                 | Laura Gulovsen     | 652-6544 |
|                                   | Margaret Wilson    | 647-7962 |
|                                   | Audrey Vincent     | 525-5826 |

#### ***OCTOBER BOARD MEETING***

The Tuesday, October 2nd Board of Directors meeting will be held at the home of Bruce & Joyce Schoppe, 4875 Mascagni St in Ventura, at 7:15 p.m. Call 805-658-2396 for more information. Any VAS member is welcome.

**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](mailto:birderz1@roadrunner.com) Call Editor Dee Press at 484-8415 for more information.