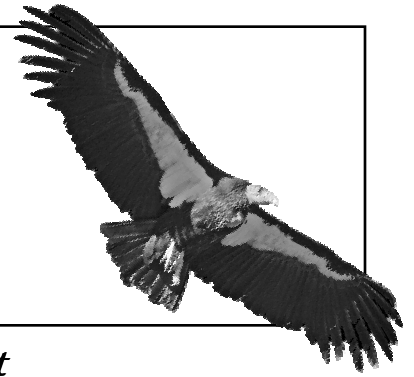


The **CALIFORNIA CONDOR**

Ventura Audubon Society **FEBRUARY 2013** Volume 33 Number 6
A Chapter of the National Audubon www.VenturaAudubon.org



CALL NOTES ...Bruce Schoppe, President

The Great Backyard Bird Count is a joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society. In 2013, it runs from February 15 -18 and, for the first time, will be available to participants worldwide. Individuals and families can participate in this huge citizen science project in a variety of ways. Traditionally, VAS has dedicated its field trip on GBBC weekend to the count. The leader will keep track of the species seen and the number of each and report it to GBBC. That field trip will take place on February 16th at Lake Casitas and will be led by Allen Bertke. Please join us and bring the family.

Alternatively, consider participating from your own backyard. Whether you have feeders or not, it is a great way to help kids develop a love of nature. It requires just 15 minutes of counting and logging into the website www.birdcount.org. Create an account. Use a checklist to record your count and then submit your checklist via the account you created. You may count on one day or on all four days but, they ask that you use a separate checklist for each day. You may also use eBird, if you are familiar with that app. All the data will be integrated and you will be able to see your results and the results of others in the area.

Why count birds, you ask? To quote the GBBC website "Scientists and bird enthusiasts can learn a lot by knowing where the birds are. Bird populations are dynamic; they are constantly in flux. No single scientist or team of scientists could hope to document and understand the complex distribution and movements of so many species in such a short time. Scientists use the GBBC information, along with observations from other citizen-science projects, such as the Christmas Bird Count, Project FeederWatch, and eBird, to get the "big picture" about what is happening to bird populations. The longer these data are collected, the more meaningful they become in helping scientists investigate far-reaching questions..." such as the impact of global climate change. There is a lot of good information on the birdcount.org website including a section on educator's materials. Teachers and others who seek to involve kids will find useful ideas. Enjoy!

FEBRUARY PROGRAM ...Margaret Wilson

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

Historical Dynamics of Southern California Estuaries: Looking Back and Looking Forward with Dr. Travis Longcore

The historical conditions of estuaries in southern California are not widely known, yet many projects have been implemented to restore them. To better understand these unique coastal systems, Dr. Longcore and colleagues have developed a classification scheme that takes into account the landscape processes that produce these features and the range of interaction that they have with the ocean, from perched and dune-dammed lagoons to estuaries open in the sub tidal range. Using these organizing principals, the historical nature of the wetland features of the Ventura County coast will be reviewed, drawing on the historical reconstruction efforts of a multi-disciplinary research team. Historic wetland conditions and their associated biological diversity will then be compared against current and planned restoration projects in southern California.

Travis Longcore is an applied biogeographer who specializes in conservation and management of urban ecosystems and endangered species. He researches and teaches about a range of topics relevant to urban nature, including the historical ecology of now-urban landscapes, monitoring and management of endangered butterflies, and the effects of artificial night lighting and other urban stressors on species and habitats. Longcore was first trained as an urban geographer as an undergraduate at the University of Delaware and then transitioned to biogeography as a National Science Foundation Graduate Fellow at UCLA, where he earned his Ph.D. in 1999. His research has been published in top scientific journals and covered extensively in the popular media. He has been President of the Los Angeles Audubon Society since 2010.

BIRD OF THE MONTH – FEBRUARY 2013

Article and Photo by David Pereksta

Zone-tailed Hawk (Buteo albonotatus)



The winter months are a great time to find species that are rare to Ventura County and southern California. One of these birds that has occurred locally with some regularity is the Zone-tailed Hawk.

The Zone-tailed Hawk is uniformly black with a grayish cast and 3 to 4 light tail bands that appear gray from above and white from below. The cere and legs are yellow, and the bare skin on the face is gray. In flight, the wings and tail appear long and narrow and the black wing linings and fine dark-and-light barring on the flight feathers give the underwing a two-toned look. Adults have a dark trailing edge to the underwings as seen from below. Juveniles are similar to adults but slightly paler, with white spotting on the underparts. Often seen with Turkey Vultures, it mimics them in appearance and flight. It can be distinguished from the Turkey Vulture by its smaller size, less floppy flight, and greater head and tail projection. The voice is a loud descending scream, similar to a Red-tailed Hawk, but lower and clearer.

Zone-tailed Hawks nest in tall trees in riparian woods, desert mountains and wooded canyons, and forage over a variety of open country habitats. Because of their resemblance to Turkey Vultures, they are easily overlooked by birders. This resemblance also fools their prey species that do not see Turkey Vultures as a threat. Zone-tailed Hawks hunt birds, small mammals, and lizards from high in the air while soaring. When they spot their prey, they break into a stoop to make a swift, direct attack that takes their prey by surprise.

The species breeds from southern California (rarely); northwestern, central, and southeastern Arizona; southern New Mexico; and southwestern and central Texas south through Mexico and Central America into South America. It is rare north of Mexico in the winter, but some individuals regularly occur in southern California.

Zone-tailed Hawks are casual fall and winter visitors to southern California, including Ventura County. A few birds are found around southern California every year, primarily between mid-September and the end of March. Many records have involved birds returning for multiple years, including some of the birds found in Ventura County. There have been sightings in the Ojai/Lake Casitas area, sometimes of two birds, regularly since the winter of 1993-1994 so it is possible that they involve long-returning individuals. They have roosted in Ojai and within the Turkey Vulture roosts near Lake Casitas, where most of the local records are from. In addition, there have been multiple observations of Zone-tailed Hawks along Sulphur Mountain and the foothills between Santa Paula and Ventura, including in Wheeler Canyon and Canada Larga. Remember to look up when you are birding; they are best found by searching flocks and roosts of Turkey Vultures.



FEBRUARY 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.

Sunday, Feb. 3, 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.** We will be assisting in restoration on an adjacent property. **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 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).

Tuesday, Feb. 5, 8:30 a.m. Santa Clara River Estuary/ Surfers' Knoll. Leader: Adele Fergusson (415-4304). We should see a wide variety of shore birds. Take Harbor Blvd to Spinnaker and enter Ventura Harbor. Follow Spinnaker as it curves around to the right. Surfers' Knoll is on the left.

Saturday, Feb. 9, 8:00 a.m. Ventura County Game Preserve. Leader: Neil Ziegler (983-7207). Always a very special trip! We will see ducks, peeps, ibis, raptors, and more. We cannot drive the grounds so there will be considerable walking. **Directions:** Take Casper Rd. south from Hueneme Rd. (between Saviers Rd. and Hwy.1). Follow the left curve to the barn/house buildings and park on the road outside the buildings. Please bring scopes.

Saturday, Feb. 16, 8:30-10:30 a.m. Beginners' Walk/ Backyard Bird Count, Lake Casitas. Leader: Allen Bertke (640-9037). The Beginners' Walk will be combined with the Great Backyard Bird Count sponsored by the National Audubon Society & Cornell Lab of Ornithology. To carpool from Ventura, meet at the Ventura Co. Museum (side parking lot) at 8:00 a.m. Take Hwy 33 to Hwy 50, turn left and follow signs to the lake or take Hwy 33, exit Casitas Vista Rd. Turn right and go under freeway past Foster Park to 1st right, Santa Anna Rd. Follow to the gate. Meet outside the gate. Parking is limited.

We hope to see many birds including Clark's & Western Grebes, osprey & sapsuckers. Remember to bring binoculars.

Saturday, Feb. 23, 8:30 a.m. Foster Park & Ventura River Walk. Leader: Jackie Worden (652-0577). We will meet inside the entrance to the park and bird in the park and some of the Ventura Hillside Conservancy land to the south. It will be chilly until the sun hits us. **Directions:** Take Hwy 33 toward Ojai, exit at Casitas Vista Rd, go right & park under the freeway bridge. (Parking is also available inside Foster Park for \$4.) **To car pool,** meet at the Museum of Ventura Co. 100 E. Main St (side parking lot) at 8:10 a.m.

FYI – Feb. 28 – March 3 – San Diego Bird Festival

Mark Your Calendar:

Sat. March 2 – Hedrick Ranch Restoration

Tues. March 5 – Arroyo Verde

Sat. March 23 – Beginners' Walk – Carpinteria Salt Marsh



*Happy
Valentines Day*

HOW VAS WORKS ...Bruce Schoppe, President

Behind the scenes a team of volunteers works to put together the monthly programs, schedule the field trips, assemble the newsletter, recruit classrooms for Audubon Adventures and publicize what we have going on. At VAS, all are volunteers. There is no paid staff!

VAS was formed more than 30 years ago and many of our board members and chairs have been active for a long time. Now, they are retiring. When Jan Lewison, our longtime treasurer retired two years ago, Marianne Slaughter stepped into the role. When Janice Susha gave up her role as program chair, Laura Gulovsen, Margaret Wilson and Audrey Vincent created a triumvirate to do the job. We appreciate their willingness to serve.

This year, we have several others who are stepping down. Judy Dugan will leave as field trip chair in July. A member has expressed interest in that position. Also, Susan Bee has decided to step down as Education/Publicity chair. She coordinates the Audubon Adventures program and keeps the media informed of our activities. She has also coordinated requests from classrooms for a speaker on birds and birding. We all know how important it is to engage kids when they are young. The best part of both positions is that they don't have to be done by one person. A "committee" could work just fine!

And, in 2012, we lost our longtime Science Chair, Reed Smith. Alexis Frangis has taken on that role as well as webmaster. Alexis has a regular full-time job. One of the jobs of the Science chair is to review policy and other proposals from governmental agencies for their impact upon birds and their habitat. We would love to have someone knowledgeable of federal and state environmental laws and the EIR process, etc. to assist Alexis.

The 2013 Nominating Committee has been formed. Members include Sandy Hedrick, Nancy Schorsch, John Connor and Laura Gulovsen. The Board meets once a month (except June, July and August) at a member's home. Board meetings last 1 to 1-1/2 hours – never any longer.

VAS is a great organization. It is the sum of the people willing to dedicate a few hours a month to a worthy organization. Please consider joining with us to keep VAS strong. Contact any member of the nominating committee.

KIDS VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

We all know that kids don't spend enough time in nature. "Nature Deficit Disorder", it's called! Here is an opportunity to help correct that problem.

The Ventura Office of the US Fish & Wildlife Service together with the Santa Clara River Council will conduct an education and outreach program on the Santa Clara River for students in Grades 3 – 5 in the Fillmore Unified School District. In groups of about 10, they will rotate among six stations for a "hands-on" experience to learn about the river and the restoration of habitat. They will learn how pollution hurts the plants, animals and birds that depend upon it. They will learn about native birds, plants, native pollinators and aquatic invertebrates, fish, amphibians and reptiles.

Each station will be staffed by a volunteer to lead a discussion of topics the kids will follow in a Scientist Notebook. The kids will spend about an hour at each station, six hours in all at the river.

Michael Glenn, Fish & Wildlife Biologist in the Conservation Partnership Program is looking for volunteers to staff the "native birds" station (or, any of the other stations). Although Fillmore is outside the VAS territory, we hope that some members might be interested in spending a day to help instill the love for nature and birds that you enjoy in the youngsters who will participate. The program will run in February and, again, several times in the fall. You may volunteer for one or more of the programs.

For more information, please contact Michael Glenn at the Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office: (805) 644-1766, Ext 328 or Michael_Glenn@fws.gov. Mike will also be at our February program (February 12, 2013 at Poinsettia Pavilion) to answer your questions.



NOTES FROM THE FIELD

...David Pereksta

The Ventura CBC was held on 15 Dec and recorded 180 species with an additional 4 species seen during count week. Species rare for the count included **Black-headed Grosbeak**, **Grace's Warbler**, **Dunlin**, **Yellow-headed Blackbird**, and **Wild Turkey**. In addition, observers found 41 of the 70 species considered uncommon for the count. The Thousand Oaks CBC was held on 22 Dec and found 196 species with an additional 3 count week species. Rarities included a variety of species at Point Mugu (see next paragraph), **Marbled Murrelet** (AS), and **White-throated Sparrow**. In addition, twenty-seven species were seen that have recorded on 10 or fewer previous counts including **Greater White-fronted Goose** (BL), **Common Merganser**, **Least Bittern**, **Cassin's Auklet** (TM), **Mountain Chickadee** (DL), **Brown Creeper**, **California Gnatcatcher**, **Golden-crowned Kinglet**, **Varied Thrush**, **Wilson's Warbler**, **Grasshopper Sparrow** (FD), **Black-headed Grosbeak** (DL & MP), **Bullock's Oriole**, **Pine Siskin**, and others.

Point Mugu had an incredible diversity of rare and uncommon species over the last month. New finds in December included a **Ross's Goose** on 21 Dec (DP & DDJ), **Snow Geese** 21-22 Dec (DP et al.), a **Black Scoter** 14 Dec-4 Jan (MR), a **Red-necked Grebe** on 1 Jan (DP), four **Clapper Rails** on Dec 22 (DP, TM & DDJ), a **Stilt Sandpiper** 22 Dec-4 Jan (DP & DDJ), 2 **Vermilion Flycatchers** (the second found on 14 Dec) through 4 Jan (MR), and a **Bullock's Oriole** on 22 Dec (DP). Continuing birds included a **Eurasian Wigeon** through 22 Dec, as many as 12 **Blue-winged Teal** through Jan 4, as many as 8 **Greater Scaup** through 1 Jan, 2 **Common Goldeneye** through 4 Jan, a **Common Merganser** through 22 Dec, the subadult **Reddish Egret** through 4 Jan, as many as 5 **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons** through 4 Jan, a **Ferruginous Hawk** through 4 Jan, as many as 4 **Burrowing Owls** through 4 Jan (MR), and 2 **Red Knots** through 1 Jan.

Perhaps the most outstanding find thus far this winter was a **Grace's Warbler** at Camino Real Park 10 Dec-14 Jan (IT). This bird will almost certainly spend the rest of the winter in the park. Other birds of note at Camino Real included numbers of continuing **Red-breasted Nuthatches**, a **Black-and-White Warbler** on 12 Jan (JT), a **Hermit Warbler** 18 Dec-5 Jan (FD), a **Baltimore Oriole** 8-9 Jan (JC), and 10 **Pine Siskins** on 12 Jan (FD).

Lake Casitas also hosted a number of uncommon or rare species. Although not completely unexpected at this location, a **Zone-tailed Hawk** thrilled a number of observers 29 Dec-9 Jan (LVS), with a second individual there on 1 Jan (DR & BD). One of these birds undoubtedly accounted for a sighting in Oak View on 12 Jan (JCh). Other recent finds at Lake Casitas included a hybrid **Ross's x Snow Goose** 5-9 Jan (DP), as many as four **Greater Scaup** 21 Dec-5 Jan (KK), two **Common Mergansers** 21 Dec-2 Jan (KK), a **Swainson's Hawk** on 6 Jan (KK), a **Red-naped Sapsucker** on 31 Dec (FD), a **Prairie Falcon** on 5 Jan (DP), and a **Black-throated Gray Warbler** on 13 Dec (KK). Continuing species included six **American White Pelicans** through 13 Jan, up to two **Bald Eagles** through 12 Jan, a **Lewis's Woodpecker** through 13 Jan, and a **Swamp Sparrow** through 13 Jan with a second one there 27 Dec-5 Jan (DP). At nearby Canada Larga Road, a **Golden Eagle** and **Burrowing Owl** were found on 13 Dec (KK).

Uncommon waterfowl continued to be reported widely over the last month. The Saticoy Spreading Ponds hosted a continuing **Snow Goose** which increased to three individuals 1-5 Jan (RM & AA), a **Ross's Goose** 20 Dec-5 Jan (FD) with a second found there on 1-2 Jan (RM & AA), as many as two **Cackling Geese** 22 Dec-5 Jan (NG), a **Redhead** on 18 Dec (PJ), a **Common Goldeneye** on 6 Jan (DP), and after only a few individuals were seen earlier in the December, 19 **Common Mergansers** on 22 Dec (RM & AA) increasing to as many as 55 individuals from 1-12 Jan (RM & AA). Elsewhere, a **Greater White-fronted Goose** was at Lake Sherwood 5-10 Jan (MH), a **Snow Goose** was at the Ventura Settling Ponds on 2 Jan (RM & AA), a **Wood Duck** was in the Arroyo Simi on 23 Dec (MC), a **Blue-winged Teal** was at Conejo Creek 22 Dec-9 Jan (B&CL) and two continued through 14 Jan at the Ventura Settling Ponds, two **Redheads** were at RiverPark on 6 Jan (DP) and two were at Oak Park on 11-13 Jan (MC), and five **Common Mergansers** were at RiverPark on 6 Jan (DP). Eight **Hooded Mergansers** continued in the Arroyo Simi through 2 Jan, 3 continued near Foster Park through 5 Jan, and 2 were in Santa Paula on 30 Dec (KK et al.).

In addition to waterfowl, other rare or uncommon waterbirds and shorebirds were reported from around the county. The **Red-necked Grebe** continued at the Saticoy Spreading Ponds through 12 Jan with a second one joining it from at least 22 Dec-12 Jan (RM & AA). Lake Sherwood hosted as many as 9 **American White Pelicans** 22 Dec-10 Jan (MH) and two **Least Bitterns** 22 Dec-10 Jan (MH & KR). Another **American White Pelican** and a **Thayer's Gull** were at RiverPark on 6 Jan (DP). A **Sandhill Crane** was seen flying over Highway 101 in Thousand Oaks on 20 Dec (DL). A **Clapper Rail** continued at the end of Arnold Road through 28 Dec and a **Common Gallinule** continued at the Ventura Settling Ponds through 2 Jan. **Black Oystercatchers** continued at the Ventura Harbor, another was at the Ventura River on 8 Jan (JA), and one of the hybrid **American x Black Oystercatchers** continued in the Ventura Harbor through 6 Jan. Very rarely reported in the county, a **Brown Booby** was seen a mile off the Ventura Harbor on 6 Jan (JB). (Continued on Page 6)

VENTURA AUDUBON SOCIETY

P.O. Box 24198
Ventura, CA 93002

(Continued from Page 5)

Notable passerines were also reported from many locations. Two birds in unexpected locations included a **Mountain Chickadee** in a Ventura backyard on 22 Dec (ETG) and a **Golden-crowned Kinglet** in coastal willows at the Ventura Settling Ponds on 15 Dec (FD). An **American Dipper** was well downstream of last month's report in Santa Paula Canyon on 30 Dec (DP). Rare in winter, two **Wilson's Warblers** were along Conejo Creek 15 Dec-9 Jan (B&CL) and another two continued at the Ventura Settling ponds through 2 Jan, while two **Black-throated Gray Warblers** were at the Ivy Lawn Cemetery on 28 Dec (DVP & LH) and one was at Crestview Park in Camarillo on 11 Jan (DP). **Vesper Sparrows** were reported from several locations including two at Rancho Sierra Vista on 8 Jan (JB) and one in Simi Valley on 13 Jan (MP). **White-throated Sparrows** included one continuing in a Thousand Oaks yard throughout December, one in a Ventura backyard on 23 Dec (ETG), one in Ojai on 1 Jan (JG), and one at Arroyo Verde Park on 12 Jan (ETG). **Pine Siskin** reports tapered off over the last month, but 10 were at Santa Paula Canyon on 30 Dec (KK 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), email or call David Pereksta at pereksta@pacbell.net or 659-5740.

Good birding,
David Pereksta

Observers: James Adams, Allison Alvarado, Joel Barrett, Jeff Cartier, Jeff Chemnick, Madison Christian, Frank DeMartino, Don DesJardin, Becky Donahue, Noah Gaines, Jesse Grantham, Mary Hansen, Laura Harter, Penny Johnson, Karl Krause, Bill and Carol Langford, Dee Lyon, Todd McGrath, Robert McMorran, David Pereksta, Kay Register, David Roine, Martin Ruane, Adam Searcy, Elisa Taylor-Godwin, Ignacio Torres, Jim Tucker, Laurie Van Stee, and David Vander Pluym

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FEBRUARY BOARD MEETING

The Tuesday February 5th Board of Directors meeting will be held at the home of Judy Dugan, 262 Teloma Dr. Ventura at 7:15 p.m. Call 805-642-0842 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: birderrz1@roadrunner.com Call Editor Dee Press at 484-8415 for more information.

THE EXTRA PAGE(s)

RIGHT IN OUR OWN BACKYARDS



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Cedar Waxwing by 2012
GBBC Participant Ben Thomas

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