

The **CALIFORNIA CONDOR**

Ventura Audubon Society **March 2018** Volume 42, Number 7
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CALL NOTES ...Bruce Schoppe, President

Last month, I mentioned the concern that anticoagulant rodenticides would find widespread usage in the aftermath of the Thomas fire leading to the deaths of raptors that prey on the rodents. We urged residents to put up owl boxes to attract barn owls.

Adding emphasis to that idea is a report delivered to the Board of Supervisors in January. The report *Raptor Pilot Study for Levee Protection, Integrated Pest Management Program* was published by Ventura County Public Works Agency, Watershed Protection District (WPD) and was written by Dr. Karl Novak and David Torfeh who also conducted the study. The goal of the study was to compare the extent of ground squirrel damage on a section of levee where raptor perches were installed with a similar section where traditional anticoagulant bait stations were used.

The study showed significantly fewer burrows where the raptors were encouraged to forage. The authors recommended that the WPD develop a system wide raptor program by identifying flood control facilities with adjacent raptor habitat and replacing bait stations with perches.

Here is a link to the [Raptor Pilot Study for Levee Protection](#). If you are interested in putting up a perch on your property, I have information on the design used by the county. Barn owl boxes are available at Wild Birds Unlimited or you can build your own using plans you can find online.

...(Continued on Page 5)

MARCH PROGRAM

Resource Conservation Partners (RCP)... Jessica West

7:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 13 Poinsettia Pavilion, 3451 Foothill Road, Ventura

Since 2009, Resource Conservation Partners 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. They have several active restoration projects in Ventura County including removal of non-native plants from the area of the Ventura Water Treatment Plant Wildlife Ponds. These benefit the public in numerous ways such as improving water quality, increasing water availability, and reducing wildfire hazards. By reaching out to the community through volunteer activities, participating in community events and conducting workshops, RCP strives to promote awareness about the importance of habitat restoration and conservation within our community.

Jessica West is a Biologist with Resource Conservation Partners and Wildscape Restoration in Ventura, CA. Originally from Santa Clarita, CA, Jessica is a graduate of Humboldt State University with a B.S. in Wildlife Biology as well as a graduate of the Exotic Animal Training and Management from Moorpark College's "EATM" program. During college she practiced falconry with a red-tailed hawk and spent a summer in Yosemite National Park as a Bear Management Intern.



NOTES FROM THE FIELD

...David Pereksta

A **Greater White-fronted Goose** and a **Cackling Goose** were among a large flock of **Canada Geese** in Camarillo on 11 Jan (DP). Two **Greater White-fronted Geese** were at Rancho Simi Park 21-30 Jan (AD & TB) and two continued at Lake Sherwood through 31 Jan. As many as six **Snow Geese** were at the Santa Clara River Estuary 3-10 Jan (PL, SK), one was at the Ventura River Estuary on 15 Jan (JF), and another continued along Casper and Arnold Roads through 9 Jan. Waterfowl of note included **Eurasian Wigeons** at Rancho Simi Park on 19 Jan (JT) and Mugu Lagoon through 12 Jan; two **Redhead** at the Ventura Settling Ponds on 3 Jan (DP), and continuing ones at Point Mugu through 4 Jan and Camarillo Regional Park through 20 Jan; the continuing **Black Scoter** at Mugu Lagoon through 26 Jan; and as many as 66 **Common Goldeneyes** at Lake Piru through 30 Jan. A **Red-necked Grebe** was in the Ventura Harbor on 25 Jan (KD) and the wintering individual at off Mugu Lagoon remained through 26 Jan. Continuing waders included the **American Bittern** near Round Mountain through 20 Jan, as many as 3 **Reddish Egrets** in Mugu Lagoon through 26 Jan, 40 **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons** on Point Mugu through 31 Jan, and as many as 2 **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons** at the Ventura Settling Ponds through 30 Jan. A **Common Gallinule** was near Round Mountain 6-7 Jan (JM) and another continued at the Ventura Settling Ponds through 26 Jan. The wintering **Ruff** was still at Point Mugu through 12 Jan.

Continuing **Bald Eagles** included two at Lake Casitas through 28 Jan when they were actively tending their nest, two at Lake Piru through 23 Jan, and another near Point Mugu through 17 Jan. A **Ferruginous Hawk** continued in Piru through 7 Jan.

White-winged Doves included one at Point Mugu on 26 Jan (PG et al), one was at Cal Lutheran on 28 Jan (JB), and two remaining in Camarillo through 22 Jan. Continuing woodpeckers included a **Lewis's Woodpecker** near Lake Sherwood through 27 Jan, as many as two **Red-naped Sapsuckers** at Canada Larga through 30 Jan, and a **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** at Canada Larga through 21 Jan. Flycatchers of note that remained in January included the **Dusky-capped Flycatcher** at CSUCI through 6 Jan, a **Tropical Kingbird** near Round Mountain through 15 Jan, and as many as six **Vermilion Flycatchers** at Point Mugu through 26 Jan. A **Sage Thrasher** was at Emma Wood State Beach on 6 Jan (BH et al.) was likely a northbound migrant. A **Black-and-white Warbler** continued at Valle Lindo Park through 8 Jan. **White-throated Sparrows** included one in an Ojai yard through 26 Jan (JG) and one in a Ventura Yard on 31 Jan (MK). A **Swamp Sparrow** was along Calleguas Creek on 5 Jan (LE) and another was at Lake Casitas on 28 Jan (DP & MR). A **Baltimore Oriole** continued at Chumash Park through 6 Jan. **Western Tanagers** were also found at Chumash Park 1-4 Jan (DP) and Camino Real Park on 27 Jan (KM). Two **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** were on the Oxnard Plain 3-6 Jan (AP) 2 Jan (JM).

A wren reported by many as a **Pacific Wren** at Rincon Creek has plumage characteristics and vocalizations suggestive of a **Winter Wren**. Recorded vocalizations are currently being evaluated (DP).

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: Joe Beck, Thea Benson, Keri Dearborn, Angela Dowling, Linda Easter, Jodhan Fine, Peter Gaede, Jesse Grantham, Bruce Henderson, Sangeet Khalsa, Marv Kwit, Peter Larramendy, Ken Meredith, John Mueller, Andrew Partin, David Pereksta, and Martin Ruane



MARCH 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.

Sunday March 4 2018, 9 a.m. Work Day Fillmore Fish Hatchery

Leader: Sandy Hedrick (805) 340-0478

This is a new venue for restoration planting for the balance of this work season. Planting native plants for a future interpretive center on 5 acres at the entrance to the Fish Hatchery. There will be opportunity to do some birding around the outside of the hatchery structure before work starts at 9. Just like at HRNA long pants and closed shoes are required. Bring water, gloves, and sun protection.

Directions: Meet at the Fish Hatchery which is located to the right off Highway 126 just 1.2 miles East of Fillmore and 26 miles from Ventura.

Saturday March 10, 2018, 8:30 a.m. Malibu Creek State Park

Leader: Tevin Schmitt (661) 904-1563

There are trails through oak and sycamore woodlands on chaparral-covered slopes.

Directions: Malibu Creek State Park is about 45 minutes from Ventura. Take 101 Fwy East, Exit at Las Virgenes Rd. Continue 4 miles south of the 101, past Mulholland Dr, make your first right into Malibu Creek State Park. Continue straight to the first large parking lot on the left, meet here at 8:30 a.m.

Here are the coordinates <https://maps.google.com/?q=34.099464,-118.713582&hl=en&gl=us>

Parking fees: All day – \$12.00 per car, per day, 3 hrs – \$9.00 per car.

2 hrs – \$6.00 per car so hopefully many of you will carpool.

To car pool, meet behind Carrows on Harbor Blvd next to the gas station at 7:30 a.m. sharp.

Wednesday, March 14, 2018 8:30 a.m. Camino Real Park

Leader: Adele Fergusson (805) 415-4304

Camino Real is a grassy park surrounded by pines and eucalyptus and is an excellent Spring migrant hotspot. Target birds will include Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Yellow Warbler, Wilson's Warbler but any number of cool warblers show up at this park during migration!

Directions: We will meet outside the park and walk in. Take Telegraph Road toward Ventura College. Across from Ventura College, 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.

Saturday March 17, 2018, 8:30 a.m. Ventura Settling Ponds

Leader: Jim Howard jimsezhi@gmail.com

The settling ponds at the Ventura Harbor is a reliable place to find ducks, grebes, gulls and terns, as well as songbirds and raptors. We should hear Yellow Warbler, Yellow Rumped Warblers and Blue-gray gnatcatchers.

Directions: Take Harbor Blvd to Spinnaker Dr. and enter Ventura Harbor. The water treatment plant is on Angler, a left turn before Spinnaker curves to the right. Park either across the street from the entrance on Angler or in lot on right hand side of Spinnaker Dr. Use caution in crossing road at blind curve. Meet in front of gate.

...(Continued on Page 5)



The Law That Protects Our Birds Faces Dire Threat

We must uphold the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, writes David Yarnold, president and CEO of the National Audubon Society.

The Trump administration and some members of Congress are ready to give oil and gas companies and other industries a free pass to kill birds with impunity by gutting the nation's most effective bird protection law—a law that has been on the books for a century.

It is the law that saved some of America's most beautiful and beloved birds from mass slaughter by a fashion industry that prized their plumes for hats and clothing in the early 1900s. At one point, an ounce of egret feathers was worth more than an ounce of gold. Today's industrial threat to birds isn't the trade in fancy feathers, but rather oil pits, gas flares from drilling, oil spills, power lines, communication towers, improperly sited wind turbines and solar arrays and other deadly, but avoidable hazards.

The bird protection law—known officially as the [Migratory Bird Treaty Act](#)—is more important now than ever. It protects more than 1,000 species of birds by making it illegal to kill or harm any birds not covered by permits. Stripping the nation's longest-standing bird conservation law of its authority to protect birds contradicts decades of bipartisan support from Republicans and Democrats. If the law is decapitated by the Interior Department and by legislative proposals authored by Wyoming GOP Rep. Liz Cheney, millions of our most iconic and beloved birds will be at huge risk.

Annual bird mortality numbers from industrial causes are sobering:

- Oil waste pits: 500,000 to 1 million birds per year
- Power lines: Up to 64 million birds per year
- Communication towers: Up to 7 million birds per year
- Oil spills: The 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill is estimated to have killed more than 1 million birds

Under either Rep. Liz Cheney's proposal or the Interior Department's legal opinion, BP would have been completely off the hook for the one million birds that died in the Gulf after the Deepwater Horizon spill. Common sense says no one really wants that. The penalties under the bird protection law are critical incentives for companies to take common sense precautions to help reduce bird kills, such as covering oil pits with nets and marking transmission lines so they are more visible to migrating birds. The penalties create just enough of an incentive that companies have to think twice about where and how they work.

They're not onerous; they've proven to be a helpful incentive to remind companies to do the right thing for wildlife. The law is good for both birds and industry innovation. A number of good actors—a coalition of power and utility companies—have come together to identify best practices for preventing bird deaths. That has led to the increased use of bird-safe, money-saving technologies. Wind projects in the west are using video technology to scan the sky and identify eagles as they approach a wind turbine. If the eagle flies too close, the system temporarily shuts off only the turbines in the collision path. And for communications towers, low-tech solutions already in use can be as simple as changing lights on communications towers from steady red lights to flashing lights.

With so many solutions and partnerships between utilities and conservation groups already underway, it is a mystery why just days before Christmas—in the hopes that no one would notice—the Department of the Interior announced it would no longer hold industry responsible for bird deaths. It's even more curious that many of the same industries that have been working on these common-sense solutions for protecting birds were encouraging the department's decision.

The Interior Department announcement followed Cheney's legislative amendment in November that would eliminate all responsibility from companies for bird deaths. The bill with her amendment is awaiting a floor vote in the House. Audubon is one of more than 500 conservation groups and other organizations from all 50 states that have joined to urge Congress to defend country's most important bird conservation law in the United States.

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...CALL NOTES (Continued from Page 1)

Audubon supports a number of initiatives aimed at creating Bird-friendly Communities. The Avian Architecture program encourages feeding stations, birdhouses and perches. The Plants for Birds program encourages planting native plants attractive to birds (Conejo Valley Audubon offers incentives for their members and Surf Rider offers their Ocean Friendly Gardens program). Bird-Friendly buildings eliminate or, at least, minimize the risk of window collisions and, of course, habitat preservation and restoration which Ventura Audubon supports on the Santa Clara and Ventura Rivers and on Ventura County beaches.

March is the beginning of nesting season on the beaches. Training programs for Volunteer Naturalists will begin in March in cooperation with California State Parks. Watch for an announcement of dates, times and places in a Constant Contact email and via social media.

...MARCH FIELD TRIPS (Continued from Page 3)

Saturday March 24, 2018 8:30 a.m. Santa Clara River Estuary

Leader: Tevin Schmitt (661) 904-1563

We hope to see a variety of shorebirds including Snowy Plovers, Ruddy and Black Turnstones and hopefully Surfbirds which are always an exciting treat. We will also tackle some gull and tern identification, so bring your field guides!

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

Sunday April 1, 2018 8:30 a.m. Ojai Meadows

Leader: Raeann Koerner (805) 701-1919

This beautiful preserve is a birding hotspot and includes a restored wetland and native plantings. **Directions:** To carpool, meet at the Museum of Ventura Co., 100 E. Main St. (side parking lot) at 8:00 a.m. Take Hwy 33 toward Ojai and turn left at the Y. The preserve is on the left side. Parking is available in front of the entrance and also at Nordoff High School. We will meet at the entrance. Target birds will include: Western Bluebirds, Sora, Belted Kingfisher, Western Meadowlark, Merlin, Cedar Waxwing, Lark Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow and White-crowned Sparrows.

...THE LAW THAT PROTECTS OUR BIRDS (Continued from Page 4)

Birds are doing their best to find ways to live among people, but they don't know that an oil pit isn't a lake and they don't know how to judge the speed of the blades on wind turbines. With threats to birds escalating, birds need our help more than ever. It is hardly the time for Congress or the administration to eviscerate the nation's most important law protecting birds—because where birds thrive, so do people.



By David Yarnold

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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, **March 6**. Our meetings are 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 Ventura 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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