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

**THIS AND THAT**

First and foremost – Happy New Year! We wish you the best of birding in 2012!

Contributions in support of Audubon Adventures are coming along nicely. We have 23 classrooms this year meaning we have committed more than $1,000 to the effort to get kids interested in birds and conservation. Your continued support is welcome and appreciated.

Tee shirts are again available. For a donation of $15, you can have a short sleeve shirt and, for a donation of $20, a long sleeve shirt in either blue or green. We’ll have them at the meetings and many of the field trips. Thanks to Neil Ziegler and Jim Susha for spearheading this effort.

For the 2012 program year, we are going to need a new **Program Chair**. Jim and Janice Susha are retiring this summer and plan to travel. Janice has very ably handled this important Board function for seven years, scheduling programs that reflect the interests of our membership. Janice says that scheduling programs is actually a very interesting process because of the many and varied topics and the inherent knowledge and passion she finds with each speaker. She has a seven year history documenting every program, program year, speaker and contact information. Program information is shared with Conejo, California, and National Audubon, each of whom also maintains a speaker database. Also, the Board, other members, and local news are sources from which to draw. Anyone who might be interested in filling this interesting role may call Janice at 469-9220. The advantage to starting now is the six month apprenticeship with her for the rest of this program year!

Speaking of the Board, in February, the Nominating Committee will begin work to put together a slate of nominees for the 2012-13 Board. Service on the Board is interesting and fulfilling. It requires attendance at nine monthly Board meetings, lending your knowledge and expertise to the collective decision making plus whatever additional challenges you may choose to take on. The time commitment isn’t huge but a commitment is required. A strong board is essential to fulfilling VAS’ mission of promoting, through education and action, the protection and restoration of bird populations and wildlife habitat for the benefit of humanity and the earth’s biodiversity. If you are interested in serving, please contact me or a member of the Nominating Committee.

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**JANUARY PROGRAM ...Janice Susha, Program Chair**

**UNUSUAL LANDSCAPES by MARK MUENCH**

Marc Muench is a internationally renowned landscape photographer with eleven book titles to his name, ESPN outdoor shows and numerous magazine, calendar and poster titles to his credit. His most recent book is titled “Exploring North American Landscapes” by Rocky Nook Publishing.

Marc is a third generation photographer following in the family tradition started by his grandfather Josef Muench and then his father David Muench, both celebrated award winning landscape photographers as well. His most recent exhibition was titled “Explorations” at the Wildling Art Museum in Los Olivos, California.

Take a look at some of his absolutely stunning photography at  http://muenchphotography.smugmug.com/
Some resident birds of Ventura County have their numbers supplemented in the winter by individuals moving in from northerly latitudes. One of these is a locally declining breeder, the Loggerhead Shrike.

The Loggerhead Shrike is a medium sized predatory songbird. Adults have medium-gray upperparts, a stubby black hooked bill, a broad black mask that extends thinly across the forehead, black wings with a white patch across the base of the primaries, grayish white underparts, and a black tail edged with white. Juveniles are paler with a slightly brownish tint, faint barring, and pale edged scapulars and wing feathers. The song consists of harsh, deliberate chirps, squeaks, warbles, buzzes, and chips; calls include harsh *kee*, *kaak*, and *chek* sounds similar to the song phrases. The Northern Shrike (very rarely occurs in southern California) looks similar, but is larger, paler, larger billed, and its mask does not extend across the forehead. Also beware mistaking the Northern Mockingbird for this species.

Loggerhead Shrikes frequent a variety of open and semi-open habitats including semidesert scrub, grassland, savanna, coastal sage scrub, open riparian woodlands, and agricultural areas. Solitary hunters, they are among the few North American songbirds that regularly kill vertebrate prey. They perch on fenceposts, telephone wires, or exposed branches where they scan for prey. Shrikes kill their prey by severing the neck vertebrae with several quick bites from their hooked beaks. They impale and cache their victims on barbed wire, thorns, or sharp twigs earning them the name “butcher birds.” A shrike’s larder often contains the mummified remains of sparrows, mice, lizards, crickets, and moths.

The Loggerhead Shrike breeds from the central portions of the Prairie Provinces, Minnesota, central Wisconsin, and southeastern Ontario south to Mexico and the Gulf Coast. It winters in the southern half of the United States and Mexico. Numbers have declined in many areas and they are now essentially gone from the northeast. Declines may be related to pesticides and changes in habitat.

Loggerhead Shrikes occur in open and semi-open habitats throughout the lowlands and arid valleys of Ventura County. They are an uncommon permanent resident and now a rare breeder along the coast. They are an uncommon to fairly common transient and winter visitor. Breeding on the coastal plain is now likely limited to the Point Mugu area, but the species apparently still breeds in valleys in the north county including Quatal Canyon. Wintering birds are widespread and can be seen regularly at local hotspots including Canada Larga Road, Lake Casitas, the Saticoy Spreading Ponds, Camarillo Regional Park, Arnold Road, The Ventura County Game Preserve, Point Mugu, Lake Piru, and the Lockwood Valley.
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.

Saturday, Jan. 7, 8:30 a.m. Wheeler Canyon. Leader: Gary Tuttle (525-2327). This canyon provides good birding opportunities. We will be looking for raptors, ground doves, Western Bluebirds and maybe a Lewis’ Woodpecker. Directions: Take Foothill Road from Ventura toward Santa Paula beyond Wells Rd. and past Aliso Canyon Rd. until you come to Wheeler Canyon Rd. on the left. Meet at the beginning of the road where there is parking.

January 8th: Hedrick Ranch Nature Area. Meet at 8:00 for birding, 9:00 for weeding & planting. Long pants and closed toed shoes are required. Rain cancels! Call Sandy Hedrick for more information at 340-0478. Directions: From Ventura, go east on Hwy 126. Exit 10th Street (in Santa Paula). Left at the end of the off ramp. Right on Harvard (first light). Right on 12th street (first intersection). 12th Street turns into South Mountain Road after crossing the Santa Clara River & going around a curve to the left. Go 3.7 miles to #20395 South Mountain Road on the left. Turn left onto the dirt road and follow to the end (~ 1/2 mile) to the kiosk.

Monday, Jan. 9, 8:30 a.m. Camino Real Park, Ventura. Leader: Adele Fergusson (415-4304). A variety of birds can be found here including warblers, juncos & raptors. It is also the season for Monarch Butterflies. Directions: In Ventura take Dean Dr. off Mills Rd. across from the Pacific View Mall. Follow Dean Dr. to the right & the park entrance. Meet between the tennis courts & playing fields.

Jan. 13-16 – Morrow Bay Winter Bird Festival – No VAS trip planned.

Sunday, Jan 15, 8:30 a.m. Saticoy Ponds. Leader: Eric Waian (630-0100). Bring scopes and meet outside the gate. Please be prompt as we need to enter together. Directions: The ponds are located on the northeast side of Hwy 118/Los Angeles Ave. From Ventura take Wells Rd. which turns into Los Angeles Ave./Hwy 118 and cross over the Santa Clara River Bridge. The entrance to the ponds will be on your left just after the Vineyard Ave. intersection. We should see a variety of ducks, such as Teal, Gadwall & Bufflehead.

Saturday, Jan 21, 8:30 a.m. Lake Los Carneros, Goleta. Leader: Betsy Bachman (646-4407) Birding & Lunch. The lake, willows, and surrounding grassy scrub lands with pines, oaks and eucalyptus should provide a wide variety of birds and wintering monarchs. Directions: Meet at the Ventura History Museum (side parking lot), 100 E. Main, at 7:45 to carpool, or at the lake at 8:30 a.m. 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. After birding we will eat lunch at Goleta Beach (Beachside Cafe). Please contact Betsy (646-4407) if you are going to lunch so she can make a reservation.

Saturday, Jan 28, 8:30-10:30 a.m. Beginners’ Walk, Carpinteria Salt Marsh. Leader: Allen Bertke (640-9037). Directions: To car pool from Ventura, meet at the Museum of Ventura Co. 100 E. Main St. (side parking lot) at 8:00 or meet at the marsh entrance at 8:30. The marsh usually has shorebirds, waders, peeps & ducks. There may be kingfishers, kites, and perhaps a shrike. Take Hwy 101 north to Carpinteria, exit Casitas Pass Rd., left on Casitas Pass Rd., right on Carpinteria Ave., left on Linden, right on 3rd St. to the marsh.

Mark Your Calendar:
Saturday, Feb. 4 – Friends of the Santa Clara River Workday
Monday, Feb. 6 – Surfers’ Knoll/SCRE
Saturday, Feb. 18 – Beginners’ Walk/GBBC, Carpinteria Salt Marsh
We walked amongst the birds at Ojai Meadow on our latest Beginners’ Bird Walk. Our highlight of the day started right in the parking area. Two White-tailed Kites were perched high in one of the dead oak trees, sunning themselves. As we walked by, they alternately flew out into the field doing their namesake behavior, kiting, while periodically being harassed by crows and watched by a very tame Great Egret. It was quite a show. These mid-sized raptors used to be called Black-shouldered Kites. Now they are known as White-tailed Kites. Someone once told me that previous to being called Black-shouldered Kites, they were named White-tailed Kites, so now we have come full circle. Why do the great bird namers have to keep us so confused? They should just stick with one name already. I’m sure they are attempting to name them by their most descriptive features. So let’s take it a step further. I think from now on we should all call this kite the White-tailed, Black-shouldered, Gray-backed, Red-eyed, Yellow-legged Kite. Maybe if I repeat it three times, close my eyes, click my heels three times and say hi to Toto it will then become the official name for this beautiful bird – or not.

After the kite show we could have called it a day right there and many people would have been happy. But we pressed on to find another 30 species, including bluebirds, meadowlarks, Red-tailed and Cooper’s Hawk, Say’s and Black Phoebes, Cassin’s Kingbirds, an Orange-crowned Warbler, a Canada Goose and more. One Say’s Phoebe perched on a short weed stalk about 75 feet away from us. The group was asking me how I could tell it was a Say’s Phoebe from that distance. As I was describing the pale rufous colored belly, gray head and back and black under tail, they were all having trouble making out any of those details. I said that if it was closer, all of the markings would be more obvious. Just then, as if to say “I’ll prove it to you” the bird flew right toward us and landed on a wire directly in front of us, making me look like the Pied Piper of Say’s Phoebes! It posed for us for quite a while, satisfying everyone that it indeed had the correct field markings to be worthy of being called a Say’s Phoebe.

The Orange-crowned Warbler was so bright yellow, glowing in the sun, that at first I thought it was a Lesser Goldfinch, before quickly changing gears and identifying it correctly. I used to do that a lot when I first started birding a few years ago. Back then, I was very indecisive, but now... I’m not so sure.

Thanks for coming everyone, and see you on the next adventure.

**BEGINNERS’ BIRD WALK ...Allen Bertke, Leader**

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**GO PAPERLESS!**

Sign up to receive your newsletter via email — get your issues faster, help save natural resources, reduce waste, and help our chapter save money! You can read it online or print out the pages you need to refer to more frequently. It is in pdf format and will look and print exactly like the printed version. **Photos will be in color.** Send an email to Jackie Worden (jbworden7@gmail.com) to start your paper-free **California Condor** delivery today! (Offer good only for chapter, including national, members in good standing.)

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**NEWSLETTER PROBLEMS?**

If you’re experiencing delivery problems with your newsletter, need to change your address, want to change your delivery type, or have questions about your membership renewal date, please contact Jackie Worden at jbworden7@gmail.com or call her at (805)652-0577. In addition to being our new Membership Chair, she also manages our mailing databases, so she’s the one to make the changes.
NOTES FROM THE FIELD

...David Pereksta

A number of uncommon birds were found in the Ventura River watershed/Ojai area over the last month. Mergansers were reported at several places in the Ojai area including 20 Hooded Mergansers and 4 Common Mergansers near the Ventura River and other Hooded and Common Mergansers at Matilija Lake on 19 Nov (KR, MH & BT). Raptors of note included a Bald Eagle at Lake Casitas on 1 Dec (AB), a Zone-tailed Hawk soaring over Foothill Road in Ojai on 24 Nov (BT), and a Prairie Falcon along Canada Larga Road on 10 Dec (AB). A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was at Soule Park in Ojai on 19 Nov (KR & MH) and a Red-naped Sapsucker was there on 27 Nov (KR & BT). Another Red-naped Sapsucker was seen in Ojai on 25 Nov (DP). In a fall where we did not have a great diversity of eastern vagrant warblers, an Ovenbird that was photographed in Ojai on 13 Nov was exceptional (MS). A Varied Thrush and a White-throated Sparrow were found near the end of Avenal Street north of Lake Casitas 9-13 Dec (MA). A second White-throated Sparrow was seen there on 13 Dec (KR).

Point Mugu and adjacent areas hosted a variety of notable species. Several field trips and surveys at the Navy Base turned up a number of uncommon or rare species including 2 Snow Geese on 9 Dec (MR), 33 Blue-winged Teal on 28 Nov (DP & AS), a Greater Scaup on 17 Nov (DP), 3 Common Goldeneyes on 9 Dec (MR), the returning Redhead and 2 Yellow-crowned Night-Herons through 9 Dec, a flock of Red Knots 17 Nov-9 Dec with a high of 40 on 28 Nov (DP & AS), 4 Lesser Yellowlegs on 17 Nov with at least 1 continuing through 9 Dec (DP), a Thayer's Gull on 17 Nov (DP) and another on 28 Nov (DP & AS), a Burrowing Owl 17-28 Nov (MR), a male Vermilion Flycatcher through 9 Dec (MR) and 2 females on 9 Dec (DP), and a Tropical Kingbird 17 Nov-9 Dec (DP & MR). Another male Vermilion Flycatcher returned for its second winter at the Seabee Golf Course in Port Hueneme on 12 Dec (MR). Uncommon along the coast, a Golden Eagle was near the overlook along Highway 1 on 21 Nov (KR & MH). Seawatches near Point Mugu produced a Parasitic Jaeger, two Pomarine Jaegers, a Common Murre and two Rhinoceros Auklets on 24 Nov (DP & TM); two Common Murres and three Rhinoceros Auklets on 28 Nov (DP); and two Common Murres on 9 Dec (DP). Elsewhere on the Oxnard Plain, a Burrowing Owl was along 5th Street near Revolon Slough on 20 Nov (MP) and Bubbling Springs Park in Port Hueneme hosted four Thayer's Gull, two Western Tanagers, and a Bullock's Oriole on 27 Nov (AS).

Waterfowl continued to arrive last month and noteworthy reports included the returning Greater White-fronted Goose at Rancho Simi Park in Simi Valley, two Cackling Geese along Arnold Road on 17 Nov (DP) and another at the Santa Clara River estuary on 1 Dec (AF), four Redheads and three Common Mergansers at RiverPark in Oxnard on 18 Nov (DP), and a Common Merganser at the Saticoy Spreading Ponds on 20 Nov (MP). Waterfowl at Lake Sherwood included a Eurasian Wigeon and a Cackling Goose on 22 Nov and a Wood Duck on 6 Dec (MH). Other visitors to Lake Sherwood included four Violet-green Swallows and a Phainopepla on 6 Dec; and two Least Bitterns on 11 Dec (MH).

Reports of interest also came in from other parts of the county. Shorebirds in the Ventura Harbor included a Ruddy Turnstone, Surfbirds, a Black Oystercatcher, and the American/Black Oystercatcher hybrid on 16 Nov (KR) and five Black Oystercatchers on 21 Nov (AL). A Lewis's Woodpecker and a White-winged Dove were in Santa Paula on 27 Nov with the woodpecker continuing through 2 Dec (CR). The north county is birded little during the winter, but reports included a Ferruginous Hawk and two Mountain Bluebirds at the Corral Creek Ranch and another Ferruginous Hawk in the Lockwood Valley on 25 Nov (DP), and 50-75 Pinyon Jays along Cerro Noroeste Road on 3 Dec (CR).

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

Good birding,
David Pereksta

Observers: Michael Allen, Allen Bertke, Alexis Frangis, Mary Hansen, Andrea Lloyd, Todd McGrath, Matthew Page, David Pereksta, Kay Regester, Martin Ruane, Craig Rudolph, Adam Searcy, Mitch Siemens, and Bob Tallyn.
VENTURA AUDUBON SOCIETY
P.O. Box 24198
Ventura, CA 93002

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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.

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