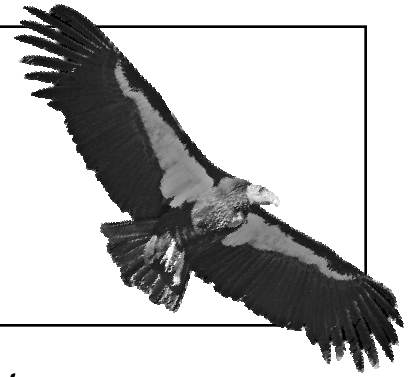


# *The CALIFORNIA CONDOR*

Ventura Audubon Society **MAY 2010** Volume 30 Number 9  
A Chapter of the National Audubon [www.VenturaAudubonSociety.org](http://www.VenturaAudubonSociety.org)



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

In 2009 the first *State of the Birds Report* was issued. Produced by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology for the USF&WS, it was a collaborative effort of many governmental and non-governmental organizations including the National Audubon Society.

The 2010 Report, released in March, looked at the impact of climate change on birds.

The report looked at the potential impact of climate change on birds in different habitats. Birds in every terrestrial and aquatic habitat will be affected by climate change, although individual species in each habitat are likely to respond differently. Of particular interest to us on the coast, it concluded that oceanic and coastal birds were especially vulnerable. Following are excerpts from the report on these two groups of birds.

"All 67 oceanic bird species, including albatrosses, petrels, tropical terns, tropicbirds, frigate birds, and puffins are vulnerable because of their low reproductive potential, use of islands for nesting, and reliance on rapidly changing marine ecosystems. Seabirds such as Laysan Albatross and Bonin Petrel that are restricted to nesting on low-lying islands are in danger of losing their breeding habitat as sea levels rise. To provide oceanic

bird populations with the best chances of adapting to climate change, we must reduce existing threats from overfishing, fisheries bycatch, and pollution. We must also take proactive measures such as removing invasive species and protecting existing or potential breeding colonies on high islands.

Rising sea levels are expected to inundate or fragment low-lying habitats such as salt marshes, sandy beaches, barrier islands, and mudflats. Increasing frequency and severity of storms and changes in water temperatures will impact quality and quantity of coastal habitats and alter marine food webs. Beach-nesting terns, highly specialized Saltmarsh Sparrows, and birds dependent on marine waters are among the most vulnerable species. Migratory species such as shorebirds are also vulnerable to changes in stopover and wintering habitats. Conserving coastal habitats will require planning and management to facilitate birds' movement and resilience."

The concerns expressed mirror those of Ventura Audubon and other like minded organizations. It should invigorate our mission of conservation, preservation and restoration. And, given the ongoing skepticism about global climate change, our mission to educate takes on even greater importance.

## *ANNUAL YEAR-END MAY PICNIC & MEETING*

The annual VAS picnic and meeting will be held on Saturday, **May 8, 2010** at Hedrick Ranch Nature Area in Santa Paula. (See driving directions, Page 3, May 8th)

Sandy Hedrick will get us started on bird walks in this lovely spot beginning around 8:30 am. As we observe abundant bird life, we will also see the progress that has been made in habitat restoration by many volunteer organizations including VAS. Around 11:00 am, we'll conduct a short business meeting to elect the 2010-2011 Board of Directors.

There will be BBQ tri-tip and chicken, garlic bread, salad and beans. Members attending are asked to bring a dessert or appetizer to round out the meal. Please bring your own table service and, if you bring a dish, please bring serving utensils. Beer and wine will be available for a small donation; soft drinks will be provided. The cost of this great feast is still \$10 (half price for children).

Everyone is invited to the picnic. We hope to see new faces as well as old! Please join with other VAS members for this special event to celebrate another successful year.

Please RSVP as early as possible by sending your check (indicating that it is for the picnic) to the VAS post office box, or call Jan Lewison (643-3353) or Bruce Schoppe (658-2396) with your reservation and pay at the picnic.

## ***BIRD OF THE MONTH – MAY 2010***

***Article and Photo by DAVID PEREKSTA***

### ***SNOWY PLOVER (*Charadrius alexandrinus*)***



With summer approaching, our local beaches will become crowded with people pursuing recreational activities. A bird that nests on our local beaches, but is often impacted by these activities, is the Snowy Plover.

The snowy plover is a small shorebird that is pale gray-brown above and white below, with a white eyebrow and hind-neck collar, and dark lateral breast patches, forehead bar, and eye patches. The bill is thin and black, and the legs are grayish. In breeding plumage, males usually have black markings on the head and breast while these markings are usually dark brown on females. Early in the breeding season, a rufous crown may be evident on breeding males, but not typically on females. In nonbreeding plumage, sexes look similar because the breeding markings disappear. Fledged juveniles can be distinguished from nonbreeding adults by the buffy edges on their upperparts. Calls include a low *grr-grr* and a soft *ca-wee*.

Snowy Plovers inhabit sandy coastal beaches and the shores of salt ponds and alkaline lakes where they blend in perfectly with the ground. They feed at the water's edge or among scattered debris on the upper beach and will sometimes forage on open mudflats. They nest on the bare ground and breed in loose colonies or isolated pairs, often close to tern colonies. Females depart after the young hatch, leaving the male to raise the young while she finds another mate. Beachgoers often disrupt nesting plovers because they fail to notice they are keeping the bird away from its nest. Other threats to the species include habitat loss, predation, beach cleaning, and fireworks events.

The Snowy Plover is found worldwide and is known as the Kentish Plover outside of the Americas. The Western subspecies breeds on the Pacific coast from southern Washington to Baja California, and in interior areas from Oregon and California south and east across the interior western states to Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas, including the southern Texas coast and northeastern Mexico. The Cuban subspecies breeds along the Gulf coast from Louisiana to western Florida and south through the Caribbean. The Pacific coast population of the Western Snowy Plover is listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. While some Snowy Plovers remain in their coastal breeding areas year-round, others migrate south or north for winter. Most that nest inland migrate to the coast for the winter.

Within Ventura County, Snowy Plovers nest at the Santa Clara River mouth, Hollywood Beach, Ormond Beach, and Point Mugu. Flocks occur at these same locations during the winter, but can also be found anywhere along the coast in suitable habitat at this time including a regular wintering flock at San Buenaventura State Beach. They can often be seen feeding in small numbers on the mudflats at the Santa Clara River mouth and Mugu Lagoon. Because Snowy Plovers and their eggs are so cryptic, watch your step on the beach during the spring and summer, and give these declining birds enough room to share the beach with us.



## ***MAY 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, please call the trip leader.**

***A special thanks to all our leaders this year!  
You are invaluable!***

**Saturday, May 8, 8:30 a.m. Hedrick Ranch Nature Area. Leader: Sandy Hedrick (340-0478). Annual Meeting and Picnic. \$10 for lunch.** We will bird this lovely area with the possibility of seeing Bell's Vireos and a Thick-billed Kingbird. Take Hwy 126 to Santa Paula, 10<sup>th</sup> St. Exit. Go under freeway, right on Harvard, right on 12<sup>th</sup> and cross S.C. River Bridge. Go 3.7 miles to 20395 S. Mountain Rd. On right hand side you will see a big yellow mailbox. Right after the mailbox, look on **left** side for the balloons & #20395 which is set back a little on a green metal fence. Turn left and go toward the river approximately ½ mile on dirt road and turn right to parking area across the creek.

**Saturday, May 8, 8:00 a.m. Ojai Valley Land Conservancy Wild About Ojai.** walk with Jesse Grantham (\$10 for OVLC non-members which includes Fri. night slide show. Reservations required at 805-649-6842 or [info@ovle.org](mailto:info@ovle.org).) **9:00 a.m. free** bird walk with Allen Bertke which will focus on bird photography. Meet at the Nordoff H.S. parking lot & bring binoculars.

**Saturday, May 15, 9:00 a.m. to noon. Carpinteria Salt Marsh Restoration Day.** Visit, volunteer, bird, plant, and make a big impact at a beautiful coastal wetland! The Land Trust for Santa Barbara Co. is continuing the restoration of the Salt Marsh. Meet at the pedestrian bridge over Franklin Creek and bring your binoculars, gloves, shovels if you've got 'em! Call the LTBS office (966-4520) for volunteer information. To learn more about the Carpinteria Salt Marsh visit <http://www.sblandtrust.org/carpmarsh.html>.

**Sunday, May 16, 8:00 a.m. Camarillo Regional Park. Leader: Eric Waian (671-9913)** Take 101 south to Lewis Rd. and go south to University Rd. (the entrance to Cal. State University Channel Islands) and turn toward the school. Immediately after you cross the bridge over Calleguas Creek (approx. ½ mile) there is a gate on the left. Park outside the gate. We may also want to walk down University Dr where we have more chances for Cactus Wren & there's a Great Horned Owl roost.

**Saturday, May 22, 8:30 – 10:30 a.m. Beginners' Bird Walk, Canada Larga Road. Leader: Allen Bertke (640-9037).** Take Hwy 33 toward Ojai. Exit Canada Larga Rd. Meet near the beginning of the road. We will walk and drive this road where we will find Blue Grosbeaks, Lazuli Buntings, orioles, Cliff Swallows & maybe some leftover Lewis' Woodpeckers. Bring binoculars, a field guide, hat & water.

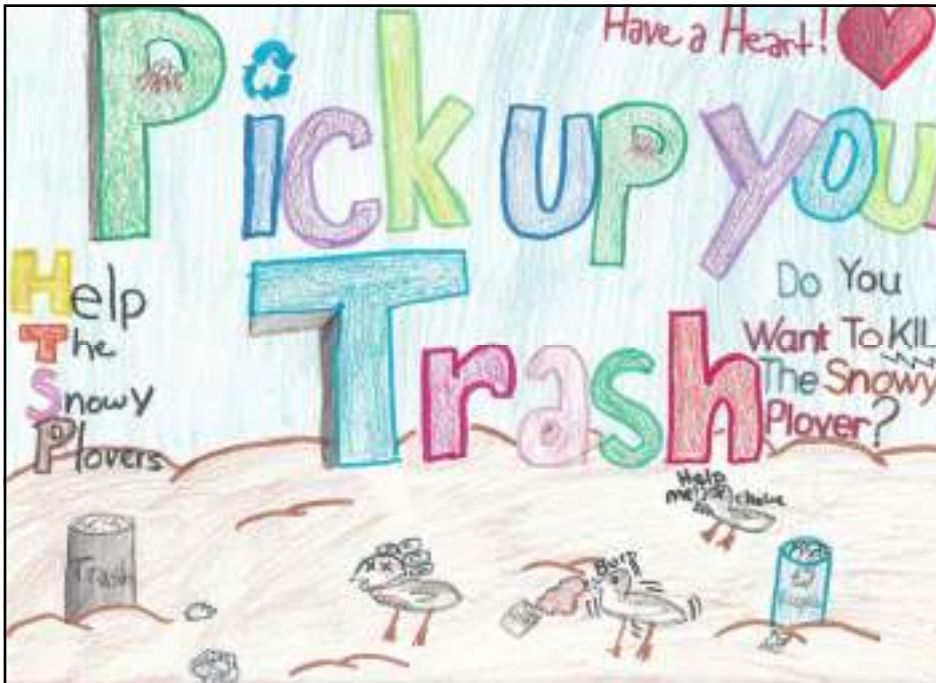
**Sunday, May 23, 8:00 a.m. Rancho Sierra Vista/Satwiwa. Leader: Jack Gillooly (646-3867).** Birds of Spring. Many habitats attract colorful migrants and summer residents: Blue Grosbeaks, Lazuli Buntings, road-runners, warblers, and the elusive grasshopper sparrow. Meet at the main parking lot off Lynn Rd in Newbury Park. Fwy 101 to Wendy Drive south, turn right on Lynn Road (west), turn left on Via Goleta, go ¼ to main parking lot at the end of the road.

### **Mark Your Calendar:**

**July 17 – Carpinteria Salt Marsh Restoration Day –** See May 15 entry.

**Aug. 28, 8:00 a.m. Ventura Wildlife Ponds. Leader: Art Marshall (642-1585).** Traditional kick-off walk for the Audubon year. Take Harbor Blvd to Spinnaker and enter Ventura Harbor. The Water Treatment Plant is on Angler, a left turn before Spinnaker curves to the right. Turn in left and meet inside the gate.

## ***"SHARE THE SHORE" CHILDREN'S POSTER PROJECT ART SHOW***



Twenty-three classrooms, one Girl Scout troop, and a Gull Wings Children's Museum workshop participated in our **Share the Shore Children's Poster Project**, exceeding everyone's expectations. As a result, we have more than 600 works of art from the students.

Studio Channel Islands Art Center executive director and art educator Karin Geiger has assembled a jury that will select posters to be displayed at the Ventura County Maritime Museum from May 1 to June 1. (Ventura County Maritime Museum, Channel Islands Harbor, 2731 South Victoria Avenue, Oxnard, CA 93035, [www.vcmm.org](http://www.vcmm.org).)

The Museum and VAS will host a reception for the artists, their families and the public on Saturday, May 1, 2010 from 5:00 to 7:00 pm. We thank the

museum for providing cheese, crackers and drinks. Some of the posters displayed will be selected to become signs used on the beach where temporary fencing protects Snowy Plover habitat during the nesting season.

Please join us to acknowledge the artists. If you cannot be there for the reception, please visit the museum during the month of May to see the artwork.

*Above: One of the many drawings inspired by the "Share the Shore" project, this one by Diana Garza, a 10 year old, 5th grade student at Parkway Elementary School.*

### ***BEGINNER'S BIRD WALK ...Allen Bertke***

On our latest Beginner's Bird Walk, held at the Fillmore Fish Hatchery, we were greeted by what appeared to be a convention of Great Egrets – I counted over 60 of them, sitting like huge white Christmas tree ornaments in the willow trees. They were serving as prison guards for the trout convicts in the hatchery. I half expected to see them carrying little miniature machine guns. There must be a large number of trout escapees every day to keep all of those hungry egret mouths fed. But the eminent demise of the escaped prisoners never seems to keep the next group from trying. What a shame – after all of that careful planning for their break out, the fish escapees only get a few minutes to celebrate before they are gobbled up by the prison guards! Life is brutal.

After several minutes of close observation (or were they observing us?) of the egrets, herons, ducks and coots, we went on to Piru Lake for the bonus round. Ding! Ding! Ding! Ding! Almost immediately we scored extra points. As we entered the park, I saw several soaring birds in the distance that I initially dismissed as just a group of Turkey Vultures. But something about the flying behavior of two of them caught my eye. I initially thought they might be ravens or hawks, but after getting my binoculars on them I was surprised to see they were California Condors! I counted three all together. They weren't quite close enough to see the numbers on their tags, but they were unmistakably the big giants of the vulture family. What a treat for the group.

Everything after that was kind of anticlimactic, but we did see Lesser Goldfinches, White-crowned Sparrows, Western Bluebirds, two pair of Ring-necked Ducks, some Western Grebes and several other birds, along with the ever-present Coots. Speaking of Coots, on one of my past walks I jokingly told everyone at the start of the walk that I would absolutely guarantee that we would see a Coot that day. Just then, a gentleman that I happen to know pretty well was getting out of his car and walking toward us. Unable to resist this good fortune, I pointed toward him and said "See, I told you. Here comes an old one now!" I was afraid to tell him why we were all laughing so hard as he walked toward us, but once I told him, he joined in with the laughter.





## NOTES FROM THE FIELD

...David Pereksta

Spring migration is upon us and migrant seabirds, shorebirds, and songbirds have been passing through Ventura County in late March and April. Spring arrivals reported widely over the last month included Vaux's Swift, Western Kingbird, several species of swallows, Warbling Vireo, Nashville Warbler, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, Black-headed Grosbeak, Lazuli Bunting, Bullock's Oriole, and Hooded Oriole.

A few notably uncommon migrants were found in early April. Five **Swainson's Hawks** were seen migrating north over east Ventura on 11 Apr (RM). **Swainson's Hawks** are a rare transient through the county, especially in spring. A **Solitary Sandpiper** was in Revolon Slough 13 Apr; a location where they are regularly found during fall migration, but rarely seen in spring (AS).

A number of uncommon birds were found, or continued, in the Ventura River Watershed. The Ventura River estuary hosted a large number of **Brant** last month. Over 180 birds were in the vicinity on 12 Mar with as many as 80 remaining through 12 Apr (KR). A **Glaucous Gull** was seen and photographed in the estuary on 22 Mar (DT). A juvenile **Bald Eagle** continued at Lake Casitas through 12 Mar and a **Sage Thrasher** was found there on 21 Mar (DR & BD). **Lewis's Woodpeckers** continued on Santa Ana Road through 11 Apr with a high count of four on 15 Mar (DR & BD). The wintering **Zone-tailed Hawk** was there on 15 Mar (DR & BD). A probable **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was along Canada Larga Road on 12 Mar (JC) and two **Lewis's Woodpeckers** continued through 9 Apr.

A number of new finds for the season, some wintering birds and others residents or spring arrivals, were scattered throughout the county. One hundred **Brant** and a **Yellow-headed Blackbird** were near the south end of Arnold Road on 12 Mar (DK). Two **Hooded Mergansers** were in Conejo Creek on 17 Mar (AS). **Least Bitterns** were heard at Lake Sherwood on 13 Mar and one was seen on 2 Apr (MH). **California Condor** sightings included three at Lake Piru on 27 Mar (AB) and 2 at Santa Paula Canyon on 14 Mar (RM & AA). An **American Dipper** was also in Santa Paula Canyon on 14 Mar (RM & AA). Unusual in the lowlands was a **Hairy Woodpecker** in Moorpark on 3 Apr (MZ). Notable from the north county was a **Northern Goshawk** and an **Evening Grosbeak** at Mount Pinos on 10 Apr (LN).

Continuing birds included a **Greater White-fronted Goose** and a "**Pink-sided**" **Dark-eyed Junco** at Rancho Simi Park through 11 Mar, and a **Cackling Goose** and seven **Greater White-fronted Geese** at the Olivas Park Golf Course through 11 Apr. A male **Black-and-white Warbler** found at Camino Real Park on 28 Mar, and seen through 2 Apr, may have been a different individual than the one that wintered there (EW). The male **Summer Tanager** continued in the park through 1 Apr.

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

Good birding,  
David Pereksta

Observers: Allison Alvarado, Allan Bertke, Jeff Cartier, Becky Donahue, Mary Hansen, Dexter Kelly, Robert McMorran, Linda Navroth, Kay Regester, David Roine, Adam Searcy, David Trankin, and Michael Zarky.

Have a great summer,  
and remember to...  
...Save Water!

## **VENTURA AUDUBON SOCIETY**

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Ventura, CA 93002

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### ***NEXT ISSUE IN LATE AUGUST***

This is the last newsletter of this VAS year. Special thanks to all who have faithfully contributed articles each month and to our proof readers, Susie Williams and Marianne Slaughter!

*Have a great summer! Dee*

#### ***(Clip and Save)*** ***SUMMER BIRDING ...Laura Gulovsen***

We will meet for 7 Mondays from 8:30-10:30. All levels of birders are welcome. Please clip & save.

\*JUNE 7-Ojai Meadow Preserve- Directions to Ojai Meadow Preserve - Take Hwy 33 toward Ojai and follow it to Nordoff H.S. Park in the north part of the lot.

\*JUNE 14-Canada Larga-Take Hwy 33 toward Ojai. Exit Canada Larga Rd. Meet near the beginning of the road. We will walk and drive.

\*JUNE 21-Steckle Park-Santa Paula. Since there is an entry fee of \$2 we can car pool from Starbucks on Telegraph Rd. in the Victoria Shopping Plaza. We will meet at 8:00 to car pool or at 8:30 at the park. Ojai-Santa Paula Rd.-Santa Paula.

\*JUNE 28-Arroyo Verde Park-Ventura. Day & Foothill Dr. Meet in the back area.

\*JULY 5-Emma Wood State Beach-Cross the bridge and park under the eucalyptus on the right side of road.

\*JULY 12-Surfer's Point-Across from Ventura Harbor.

\*JULY 19-Carpinteria Salt Marsh-To car pool meet at The Pacific View Mall across from the parking structure at 8:00 or meet at the marsh at 8:30. Take Hwy 101 north to Carpinteria, exit Casitas Pass Rd., left on Casitas Pass Rd., right on Carpinteria Ave., left on Linden & right on Sandyland Rd. to Ash. Park along Ash. This will be our last outing for the summer so some may like to eat out after the birding.

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

|                     |                    |          |
|---------------------|--------------------|----------|
| President           | Bruce Schoppe      | 658-2396 |
| Vice-President      |                    |          |
| Secretary           | Joyce Schoppe      | 658-2396 |
| Treasurer           | Jan Lewison        | 643-3353 |
| Conservation        | Sandy Hedrick      | 643-2408 |
| Newsletter          | Dee Press          | 484-8415 |
| Membership          | Art Marshall       | 642-1585 |
| Field Trips         | Judy Dugan         | 642-0842 |
| Publicity/Education | Susan Bee          | 640-0779 |
| Science/Webmaster   | Reed Smith         | 652-0706 |
| Programs            | Janice Susha       | 983-3929 |
| At Large            | Jim Susha          | 983-3929 |
|                     | Jack Gillooly      | 646-3867 |
|                     | Jeff Goldberg      | 649-1132 |
|                     | Marianne Slaughter | 484-8415 |
|                     | Nancy Schorsch     | 643-5825 |

### ***MAY BOARD MEETING***

The Tuesday, May 4th Board of Directors meeting will be held at the home of Susan Bee, 1415 McNell Road, in Ojai. Any VAS member is welcome. Call 642-0779 for information.

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

**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 fundraising 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.