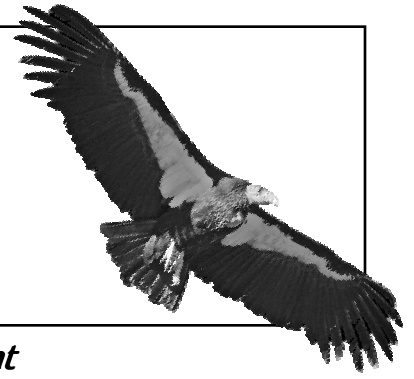


The CALIFORNIA CONDOR

Ventura Audubon Society **FEBRUARY 2011** Volume 31 Number 6
A Chapter of the National Audubon www.VenturaAudubon.org



CALL NOTES ...Bruce Schoppe, President

VAS members enjoyed a successful Christmas Bird Count in December – despite the weather. We counted 166 species including a few of note. Thanks to Reed Smith and the sector leaders for organizing the event and to Karl Krause for his work collecting and tabulating the data. Thanks also to Linda O'Neill and Art Marshall for organizing the potluck. There was plenty of food and we all had a great time.

Those of us who birded in Canada Larga couldn't help but imagine what might happen if the Valley is eventually annexed to the City of Ventura and developed in any manner. That process continues and it is important that we not forget about this threat.

Several scheduled meetings in late January could move the process along. A Scoping Meeting for preparation of the EIR is scheduled for January 12th and, on January 24th, the City Council will vote on the adoption of the Westside Plan WITH the addition of Canada

Larga. At that meeting, the Community Development Department will, likely, ask for more money to hire consultants for the added work on the EIR related to the addition of Canada Larga. Ventura Citizens for Hillside Preservation (www.vchp.org) has taken the lead in opposing the addition of Canada Larga to the Westside Plan. They have engaged the non-profit Environmental Defense Center to aid in that effort. Other environmental groups, including VAS, are in support.

Reed Smith, VAS Science Chair, has submitted comments on behalf of VAS regarding both the Notice of Preparation of a Draft EIR for the Westside Plan and on the Draft Westside Plan itself. There is a long and expensive process ahead for the City. The effort to annex the valley is, likely, an effort to bypass a SOAR vote by citizens. It will be helpful if all of us, especially those VAS members who live in Ventura, let the City Council know that we oppose annexation of Canada Larga. Write or email to council@ci.ventura.ca.us. ...continued p.6

FEBRUARY PROGRAM ...Janice Susha, Program Chair ***Tuesday February 8th, Poinsettia Pavillion, 3451 Foothill Rd, Ventura***

Birding Southeast Asia: Cambodian Charms, Thai Surprises ...by Roy Poucher

Roy Poucher will present his travels to old-world Cambodia and modern Thailand and their diverse cultural and natural riches. Come join us on a photographic tour of these highlights. Ron has been a Sea and Sage Audubon trip leader and field trip assistant in their introductory birding classes for 20 years. He also is an international tour leader and, with his company Bird Odysseys, he has led multi-day trips within the U.S and Central/South America and Africa. He has been presenting programs for 10 years on these adventures.

In Cambodia, you will travel to the enchanting floating village, an international Important Bird Area supporting some of the most significant large waterbird colonies of Southeast Asia, including breeding populations of the globally threatened Spot-billed Pelican, take a walk in the jungle forests surrounding the ancient temples of Angkor Wat, a UNESCO World Heritage site, and see the interesting birds and architectural/cultural wonders of this area.

Next, journey to Thailand and see the birder's dream bird, the Spoon-billed Sandpiper. Walk along a beach and find Malaysian Plover, Black-faced Spoonbill and Painted Stork.

And last, walk in high, chilly mountainous Thai forests and see unbelievable birds such as the Greater Flameback (a huge and brilliantly colored woodpecker). Watch as Great Hornbills swoop down from steep hillsides. View Large-tailed Nightjars, Spotted Owlets, and a Collared Scops Owl on night patrols.

BIRD OF THE MONTH – FEBRUARY 2011

Article and Photo by DAVID PEREKSTA

RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH (Sitta canadensis)



Some winter visitors occur annually in Ventura County, while others are irruptive based on food shortages in their normal range. An irruptive winter visitor that has been seen widely this winter is the Red-breasted Nuthatch.

The Red-breasted Nuthatch is a small, short-tailed, tree-creeping bird that often proceeds head downward as it seeks food in the crevices of twigs, branches, and tree trunks. The cap, nape, and eyeline are black in males, grayish in females; both sexes are plain bluish-gray on the rest of the upperparts and have a prominent white supercilium. The underparts are rust-colored, paling to buff-white on the throat, upper chest, and undertail coverts. The most common call is a slow, nasal, toy horn-like *nyak, nyak, nyak*; also a more rapid series of nasal notes when agitated. It is difficult to confuse with other nuthatches because those species have white underparts and lack the white eyebrow stripe.

Red-breasted Nuthatches primarily occur in coniferous forests. During the breeding season, they are most abundant in deep shady groves dominated by fir and spruce, but will also forage on other conifers and deciduous trees. Breeding birds smear pitch at the entrance of their feather-lined cavity nests, presumably to deter predators and competitors. Seeds and acorns are gathered for winter food caches that, along with insects and spiders, sustain them through long, freezing winters. During the winter, they occur in flocks with chickadees, kinglets, and Brown Creepers.

Red-breasted Nuthatches breed from southeastern Alaska east to Newfoundland and south in mountains to southern California and Arizona; east to South Dakota, northern Michigan, and south in the Appalachians to western North Carolina. They winter throughout much of their breeding range, irregularly south to the Gulf Coast and northern Florida during irruptive movements (every 2-3 years). Northernmost populations are migratory while southernmost are generally resident.

In Ventura County, Red-breasted Nuthatches are uncommon breeders in the Mount Pinos region and on Pine Mountain. They are irregular fall and winter visitants to the coast from mid-September through March where they are common some years, present in small numbers most years, and absent in a few years. After irruptions, they often linger later into the spring. Most birds in the lowlands occur in planted conifers. During the fall and winter, they can be found anywhere there are conifers including local parks and neighborhoods. Reliable places during irruptions include Camino Real Park, Arroyo Verde Park, Foster Park, Rancho Simi Park, and the tamarisk rows on the Oxnard Plain. The best way to find them is to listen for their distinctive calls.



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 leader.

Sunday, Feb. 6, 9:00–11:00 a.m. 8:00 for birding. Restoration Work Day, Nature Conservancy's Briggs Road/Mission Rock property. Leader: Sandy Hedrick (340-0478). We will meet at the gate at the end of Mission Rock Rd. To reach the property, take Briggs Rd off Hwy 126. Take the frontage road on the south side of 126 to Mission Rock Rd and follow it to the TNC gate at the end. Wear safe field attire, including closed-toe shoes, long pants and a hat. Bring tools for weeding if you have them and water. There are no facilities on site.

Saturday, Feb. 12, 8:00 a.m. Ventura County Game Preserve. Leader: Reed Smith (652-0706). 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. 19, 8:30-10:30 a.m. Beginners' Walk/Backyard Bird Count, Carpinteria Salt Marsh. Leader: Allen Bertke (640-9037). The Beginners' Walk this month is combined with the 14th annual Great Backyard Bird Count sponsored by the National Audubon & Cornell Laboratory. **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.

Saturday, Feb.26, 8:30 a.m. Lake Los Carneros, Goleta. Birding & Lunch. Leader: Betsy Bachman (646-4407) 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. We will then go to bird and eat lunch at Goleta Beach (Beachside Cafe) afterwards. **Please let Betsy (646-4407) know if you are coming for the lunch so she can make a reservation.**

Mark Your Calendar:

March 3-6 – San Diego Birding Festival

March 26 – Beginners' Walk – Ojai Meadows

March 27– Tejon Ranch– Registration starts February 1st. Call Judy Dugan, 642-0842 or email her at catmai03@yahoo.com. VAS members have first preference

April 2-3 – Big Morongo Preserve/other area sites



HAPPY VALLENTINE'S DAY!

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

...Susan Bee

The VAS Board expresses sincere appreciation for the generous contribution by Robert and Delores Cathcart of Montecito for our education program Audubon Adventures. Their long term support, along with that of many others, has allowed this program to foster environmental awareness in our local elementary school students. The Board thanks everyone for helping VAS complete this year's funding and for sustaining this outreach effort.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

VAS is seeking a few birder volunteers to assist with its local school education program. The program visits classrooms and teaches students about Ventura's birds and then takes them out into the school yard to identify resident birds. Volunteers would be trained. They would visit schools as a member of a team of two to three. The time commitment would be for approximately 3 hours every month or two during the school year.

Please contact Susan Bee at scbee1415@yahoo.com.

NEWSLETTER READERS ...WE NEED YOUR HELP!! ...Art Marshall ***Go E-Mail Or Web Site for Your Newsletter!***

There are currently three ways to receive your newsletter each month. The newsletter is always posted on the VenturaAudubon.org web site; it can be sent as an attachment to an email; or it can be sent by snail mail – USPS. Because of the ever rising cost of mailing the newsletters, which strains our fragile budget, we want to encourage as many readers as possible to receive the newsletter via electronic means. Aside from our cost, there are two major advantages to viewing the newsletter at the web site or receiving it via email: photos, etc., are in color; and you will receive your newsletter several days before it would arrive in the mail. It is also good environmentally to use less paper.

We realize some may not have Internet service and we will continue to support those readers. However we want to strongly recommend that all others do away with snail mail and view the newsletter on line.

To that end, ***if you want to receive the newsletter by e-mail please forward your e-mail address*** to Art Marshall at artmarsh@jps.net, ***referring to VAS newsletter in the subject line***. If you don't want to receive the newsletter in any form, please tell us by e-mail or postcard to Art Marshall, 4499 Whittier St, Ventura, CA 93003.

VAS FINANCIAL REPORT ...Bruce Schoppe

I'm a little tardy with this but, there hasn't been room for it in the newsletter. In the 2009-2010 Fiscal Year, our expenses again exceeded income by \$2,410. Our largest expense remains the printing and mailing of the newsletter. We plan to renew our efforts to encourage members to subscribe to the electronic edition.

VAS depends upon the generosity of its members for most of our income. We receive less than \$2,000 from National Audubon. The Birdathon is our largest source of funds; so, please keep that in mind when it comes around again in April.

	Revenue		Expense
National Audubon	\$1,962.26	Newsletter	\$5053.49
Donations, General	1,159.14	Programs	1,536.00
Audubon Adventures	920.00	Audubon Adventures	547.80
Birdathon	3,031.00	Donations	1,322.03
Local members	455.00	Ins/Admin	926.18
CBC	500.00	CBC	550.00
Other	463.83	Other	965.73
Total	\$8,491.23	Total	\$10,901.23

Your support, financial and otherwise, is greatly appreciated!



NOTES FROM THE FIELD

...David Pereksta

The Ventura CBC was held on 18 Dec and tallied over 160 species in the rain. Highlights included **Snow Geese** at the Santa Clara and Ventura Rivers; a **Short-tailed Shearwater** off Pitas Point (DP & CR); an **American Bittern** at the Ojai Meadows; individual **Thayer's Gulls** at the Ventura River and Ventura Harbor (DP); a **Black Skimmer** at the Ventura Harbor (DK & DP); a **Burrowing Owl** at the Ventura River; a **Red-naped Sapsucker** along Darling Road (EW); a **Yellow-shafted Flicker** at Lake Casitas (AB); and a **Black-and-white Warbler**, **Nashville Warbler**, **Hermit Warbler**, and a pair of **Bullock's Orioles** at Camino Real Park (KK, EW et al.).

The Thousand Oaks CBC was held on 2 Jan and recorded 184 species on a rainy day including many highlights. The Point Mugu portion of the count tallied 138 species including (all sightings by DDJ, TM & DP or continuing unless noted; first dates in parentheses) 24 **Greater White-fronted Geese**, 4 **Snow Geese** (31 Dec), 2 **Ross's Geese** (28 Dec; DP & MR), 37 **Brant**, 25 **Blue-winged Teal** (RM & MR), 4 **Greater Scaup**, 3 **Black Scoter**, 2 **Long-tailed Ducks**, 4 **Common Goldeneyes** (28 Dec; DP), an **American Bittern** (RM & MR), 5 **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons**, a **Ferruginous Hawk**, 6 **Clapper Rails**, a **Common Moorhen**, 4 **Red Knots**, two **Stilt Sandpipers** (31 Dec; TM & DDJ), a **Thayer's Gull**, a **Burrowing Owl** (31 Dec; DP), a **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** (31 Dec; TM), 2 **Vermilion Flycatchers**, a **Red-breasted Nuthatch** (31 Dec; TM), a **Pacific Wren** (TM), 4 **Yellow-headed Blackbirds**, and 3 **Tricolored Blackbirds**. Birds found at Point Mugu that did not remain until count day included an **American White Pelican** on 31 Dec (DDJ, TM & DP) and 2 **Tropical Kingbirds** 28-31 Dec (DP & MR). Other highlights on count day included a **Wood Duck** at Cal Lutheran (D & LA); a **Eurasian Wigeon** at Lake Sherwood (MH et al.); a **Canvasback** and a **Redhead** at Las Robles Golf Course (D & CK); 4 **Common Mergansers**, a **Violet-green Swallow**, and **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** at Camarillo Regional Park (KK & BT); a **Common Moorhen** on the Oxnard Plain (DK); a **Red-breasted Nuthatch** in Thousand Oaks (RF); and 2 **Grasshopper Sparrows** at Rancho Sierra Vista (LH).

Too late for the Ventura CBC, but an outstanding find, was a male **Broad-billed Hummingbird** at an east Ventura feeder 27 Dec-12 Jan (RM). This is the first record of the species in the county in over 20 years. The **Red-necked Grebe** at the Ventura Harbor was missed on the Ventura CBC, but was later rediscovered on 26 Dec and

continued through 12 Jan. A **Ross's Goose** was also in the Ventura Harbor on 26 Dec (OJ). Two **Common Moorhens** were at the Ventura Wastewater Ponds near the harbor on 6 Jan (CK) and two female **Hooded Mergansers** were there on 12 Jan (KR).

Wintering waterfowl continued throughout the county with a number of uncommon species appearing on the local CBCs. Outside of the count circles, waterfowl of note in Simi Valley included as many as 6 **Blue-winged Teal** and 12 **Hooded Mergansers** in the Arroyo Simi 28 Dec-5 Jan (CR), and the continuing **Eurasian Wigeon** at Rancho Simi Park through 6 Jan. Another male **Eurasian Wigeon** was found at the end of Arnold Road on 11 Jan (WF & BB). Two **Redheads** and **Common Mergansers** continued at RiverPark in Oxnard through 15 Dec.

The Ventura River watershed between Ventura and Ojai had several noteworthy birds that were not found on the Ventura CBC. A pair of **Bald Eagles** building a nest in a large eucalyptus at Lake Casitas (JC) is likely a first nesting attempt at the lake. An immature **Ferruginous Hawk** was also at Lake Casitas on 23 Dec (KK). The wintering **Zone-tailed Hawk** continued in Ojai through 28 Dec. The only reports of note thus far from Canada Larga were a **Prairie Falcon** and a **Lewis's Woodpecker** (continuing?) on 1 Jan (DR & BD).

Red-breasted Nuthatches and **Pine Siskins** continued to be found in lowland areas including individual **Red-breasted Nuthatches** in east Ventura on 25 Dec (EW) and at the Revolon Slough crossing of Wood Road on 28 Dec (DP). **Pine Siskins** continued at a feeder in Ojai and others were found at Soule Park on 15 Dec (BT).

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

Denny and Lynn Allen, Bill Baker, Alan Bertke, Jeff Cartier, Don DesJardin, Becky Donahue, Rick Farris, Walter Fuller, Linnea Hall, Mary Hansen, Oscar Johnson, Chris Kahler, Dexter Kelly, Don and Chrystal Klabunde, Karl Krause, Todd McGrath, Robert McMorran, David Pereksta, Kay Regester, Chris Rios, David Roine, Martin Ruane, Bob Tallyn, and Eric Waian.

VENTURA AUDUBON SOCIETY

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FEBRUARY BOARD MEETING

The Tuesday, February 1st Board of Directors meeting will be held at the home of Joyce and Bruce Schoppe, 4875 Mascagni St., Ventura. Any VAS member is welcome. Call 658-2396 for information.

CALL NOTES (continued from Page 1)

Canada Larga is only one "sprawl project" that, as SOAR noted in their Winter 2010 newsletter, are getting a jump in the down economy. Major developments in Oxnard and Camarillo will result in large loss of agricultural lands. And issues remain regarding the zoning of land near Ormond Beach that must be decided by the Oxnard City Council. Pro-development organizations are quite vocal before city councils and other governmental bodies that make land use decisions. Those of us who subscribe to the Audubon Mission "To conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and earth's biological diversity" must also be heard.

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 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.