In recent years, our expenses have exceeded revenue by $2,000 or more each year. Our local chapter gets very little support from National Audubon (about $1,800 per year). And, even though our membership has increased (more than 800 as of March), most new members join National Audubon directly and all of the membership dues go to them. (We would get the first year dues if the new membership came through VAS but that doesn’t happen very often.)

Surely, many who join are impressed with the conservation work that Audubon is doing nationwide. Joyce and I recently attended the Audubon Assembly and heard from some of the very bright and dedicated people who are working on innovative conservation projects in California. They, too, deserve our support.

But, at the local level, Audubon is the monthly meetings, the field trips, the newsletter as well as the many local conservation projects we pursue. Some of the conservation projects benefit from grants from National but everything else depends on local support. The newsletter is our biggest expense. Many chapters have gone totally electronic or send only to local subscribers. Your Board has decided not to take that route, believing that all members should receive the newsletter in some form.

Thank you for your continued support.

Kim Stroud, Director of the Ojai Raptor Center, will present live, non-releasable ambassador raptors in Ojai Raptor Center's care. She has been working with raptors in rehabilitation since 1992, and is employed full-time at Patagonia in Ventura, and volunteers much of the remainder of her hours taking care of and teaching about raptors.

This past year, the Ojai Raptor Center has taken in 1,300 birds. Through Ojai Raptor Center's Wildlife Education Program, they travel to schools and other organizations to show how birds of prey are an important element in the chain-of-life.

Please join us and get up close to these amazing birds.
BIRD OF THE MONTH – APRIL 2011

Article and Photo by DAVID PEREKSTA

Violet-green Swallow (Tachycineta thalassina)

Numbers of neotropical migrants arrive from their wintering grounds in the spring to breed in Ventura County. A species that is a widespread migrant and local breeder in our area is the Violet-green Swallow.

The Violet-green Swallow is a small swallow with a notched tail. The male is dark velvet green above, more bronze on the crown, and purple or violet on the rump and uppertail coverts. The underparts are white, extending onto the face and behind and above the eye, and onto the sides of the rump. Females are duller than males and are browner above, especially on the head. Juveniles are gray above, their breast often washed with sooty brown and their face shows dusky mottling. Its call is a high-pitched *tweet*, often in long series. The species can be confused with the similar looking Tree Swallow and White-throated Swift, both of which they often mingle with. The White-throated Swift has longer, more pointed wings and black-and-white underparts; the Tree Swallow is larger, entirely greenish blue above, and lacks the white around the back of the eye and on the sides of the rump.

Violet-green Swallows are a widespread migrant and summer resident in a variety of habitats including open foothill oak woodlands, riparian woodlands, and coniferous forest. They are generally a forest and woodland bird and are the most numerous swallow over montane forests. They are less selective in their nest sites than other swallows and nest on rocky cliffs above river gorges, and in holes in bridges, dams, buildings, and trees. Peak breeding occurs from April to July, and by late August they begin their southward migration. The largest numbers of migrants are encountered over bodies of water during storms.

Violet-green Swallows occur throughout western North America from central Alaska to southern Mexico, east to South Dakota, northwestern Nebraska, and west Texas. They winter from coastal California (locally) and southern Arizona (rarely) to Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador.

In Ventura County, Violet-green Swallows are common and widespread spring transients and uncommon in fall migration. The first spring transients appear in late January and early February, and like other swallows and swifts, migrants are most conspicuous during inclement weather. They are common summer residents and are readily seen on Mount Pinos, Pine Mountain, and Frazier Mountain where they nest in cavities in pines. Other reliable places during the breeding season and migration include LaJolla Canyon, Rancho Sierra Vista, Quatal Canyon, Lake Casitas, the Ojai Meadows, Canada Larga Road, the Santa Clara River estuary, the duck clubs near Point Mugu, and the Saticoy Spreading Ponds. They are rare in winter, but are sometimes seen mixed in with other swallows around lakes and ponds in coastal lowlands and foothills.
Beginners are welcome on all field trips. Light drizzle does not necessarily cancel trips, but heavier rain will. If in doubt, call the leader.

Birdathon: Any scheduled trip in April may be used to pledge money per species seen, or you may just send in a donation in any amount and note “Birdathon” on your check.

Saturday/Sunday, April 2 & 3, Big Morongo Canyon Preserve, 8:30 a.m. Saturday. Directions: Big Morongo is located on Hwy 62. Turn on East Dr. Entrance on the left. Meet in the parking lot. Sunday we will bird other spots in the area. Contacts in Yucca Valley: Judy (805-283-4272).

Sunday, April 3, 9:00-12 p.m. Restoration Work Day, Santa Paula. Hedrick Ranch Nature Area Restoration Program. Come at 8:00 for birding! Leader: Sandy Hedrick (340-0478). Long pants and boots or closed shoes are required. Directions: Take Hwy 126 to Santa Paula, 10th St. Exit. Go left under freeway, right on Harvard, right on 12th, cross 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).

Saturday, April 9, 8:30 a.m. Carpinteria Salt Marsh, Leader: Rob Denholtz (805-684-4060). Rob is a naturalist at the marsh and will be able to take us into Basins II & III, the university owned part of the Marsh. This allows access to the outflow of the Santa Monica Creek & a little lagoon that often offers good birding. Note Directions: From the south: exit 101 at Santa Monica Ave. Right onto Via Real. Right at Santa Ynez. Over the Fwy. Right at light at Carpinteria Ave. Left at Estero Way. Park on Estero Way. Be careful not to block driveways, trash bins, etc.

Wednesday, April 13, 8:30 a.m. Bird & Plant Walk, Arroyo Verde Park. Leaders: Carl and Nancy Schorsch (643-5825). Orioles will be abundant and hopefully the wildflowers will be blooming and Carl will identify them. Meet at the last parking lot with restrooms on the left. Directions: Park is at Day Rd. and Foothill Rd. in Ventura.

Sunday, April 17, 8:00 a.m. Camarillo Regional Park. Leader: Reed Smith (652-0706). Directions: 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 will walk the area which should yield spring migrants including Lazuli Buntings. To car pool, meet at 7:30 at the Pacific View Mall in Ventura. Take Coastal View Dr entrance off Mills & park in the lot directly across from the parking garage entrance.

Saturday, April 30, 8:30 – 10:30 a.m. Beginners’ Bird Walk, Lake Casitas. Leader: Allen Bertke (640-9037). We should see Snowy & Great Egrets, Great Blue Herons, spring migrants, and many more. Directions: To car pool, meet at the Museum of Ventura Co., 100 E. Main. (side parking lot) at 8:00a.m. Take Hwy 33 to Ojai; exit Casitas Vista Rd. Turn rt. and go under freeway past Foster Park to 1st rt., Santa Anna Rd. Follow to park. Or take Hwy 33 to Hwy 150, turn left and follow signs to the lake. Bring binoculars, a field guide, hat & water.

Sunday, May 1, 8:30 a.m. Lang Ranch Park, Thousand Oaks. Leader: Eric Waian (630-0100) Directions: Take Hwy 101 So. Take exit 43B to merge onto CA-23N toward Moorpark. Take exit 15 for Avenida De Los Arboles. Turn right on Avenida De Los Arboles. Turn right on N. Westlake Blvd. Take first left onto Lang Ranch Pkwy. Lang Ranch is on the north side of L.R. Pkwy. We will meet at the playground equipment at the east end of the park right across from the Chumash Indian Museum. We will bird Lang Park & then cross the street into woodland & chaparral area. To car pool, meet at 7:45 at the Pacific View Mall in Ventura. Take Coastal View Dr entrance off Mills & park in the lot directly across from the parking garage entrance.
BEGINNERS BIRD WALK CAPTURES

COVETED TEAL TRIFECTA

...Allen Bertke

Cinnamon Teal (left), Blue-winged Teal (center), Green-winged Teal (right)

Our latest Beginners Bird walk foray into the wonderful world of birds led us to the Carpinteria Salt Marsh. This walk was combined with The Great Backyard Bird count. This was my 4th annual of this 14th annual event. We saw a total of 43 species, including a large gathering of Greater Yellowlegs and over 20 Green-winged Teal. We actually saw all three Teal species, thus accomplishing the coveted Teal Trifecta. Besides the Triple Teal Deal, there were the other usual suspects, including egrets, herons, sandpipers and even two Belding Savannah Sparrows.

We didn't get some of the more common species until on the way back, like House Sparrows, California Towhees, and a vociferously singing mateless male Northern Mockingbird. Was he ever hungry for a mate! He was using every voice in his repertoire, including what sounded like a car alarm. We had still not seen a Scrub Jay. Then just as we were headed for the cars I heard that familiar squawk.

To some people, the Scrub Jay call sounds like jayee, jayee, after the very name of the bird. But to me, one of the Scrub Jay calls sounds like eye ain't, eye ain't. It's because it reminds me of an incident during my youth, growing up in Ohio. The James family had just moved next door that year from the Deep South with their 4 year old son Mike. It seems that young Michael had a penchant for getting into his mother’s flower bed. One morning I heard his mother yelling in that wonderful southern accent of hers, “Mackel Jimes, git yer sorry little butt over here raht now! Y'all been in mah flare bed again, ain'tcha? Lookit them flares. They's done been ruined.” It turned out it was the neighbor’s dog that was the culprit that time, so innocent Michael replied in a pleading, desparate screech “Honest Ma, I ain't been in yer flare bed eye ain't eye ain't eye ain't!” So if you ever see me hear a Scrub Jay and then give a little chuckle, now you'll know why.

See you all on the next walk.

WE STILL NEED YOUR HELP ...Art Marshall

We still need your help. We thank wholeheartedly those thirty plus readers who have agreed to begin receiving their newsletter by email or other means. There are three ways to receive your newsletter each month it is published. You can receive it via email, you can get it on the web, at www.VenturaAudubon.org or via USPS mail. This latter method is expensive and we want to encourage as many readers as possible to receive the newsletter by electronic means. By the way, if the newsletter is received thusly the illustrations are in color. 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 receive the newsletter by email.

To that end, if you want to receive it by email please forward your email address to Art 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 email or postcard to Art Marshall, 4499 Whittier St, Ventura, CA 93003, or call Art at 642-1585. Thanks for your help.
NOTES FROM THE FIELD

...David Pereksta

Throughout late February and early March, many of the wintering birds that were reported over the last few months continued with a few new birds of interest being found. With April approaching, it is a perfect time to go out and start looking for migrants moving north through the county. We are already seeing early signs of migration with a big northward push of Violet-green Swallows through the county that was reported by many 12-21 Feb, Common Poorwills calling in Hill Canyon with as many as seven there through 13 Feb, the first Pacific-slope Flycatcher of the spring at Rincon Creek on 12 Mar (KR), and several Lawrence’s Goldfinches flying over Grimes Canyon on 12 Mar (AS).

While most reports were of continuing birds from earlier in the winter, there were several reports of newly discovered birds. Two female Long-tailed Ducks were offshore off Hollywood Beach on 8 Mar (RS). The first Nelson’s Sparrow in the county in nearly 10 years was in one of the duck clubs near Point Mugu on 19 Feb (RB & JM). Reports from Anacapa Island are rare, but two Burrowing Owls were found there on 13 Feb (CG).

Inland parts of the county had a variety of continuing birds with a few new finds. A Blue-winged Teal was in a flooded field near Lake Sherwood on 22 Feb (MH). The Eurasian Wigeon and the Greater White-fronted Goose continued at Rancho Simi Park through 9 Mar, and a Brown Creeper was found in the pines on the north side of the lake on 21 Feb (DP). As many as two pairs of California Gnatcatchers continued in the hills above Cal Lutheran University through 12 Mar. A Hermit Warbler was at Arroyo Vista Park in Moorpark on 19 Feb (CR).

The pair of Bald Eagles that may be too young to breed are still tending to the nest along the Wadleigh Arm of Lake Casitas and were there through 12 Mar. A Snow Goose and a Cackling Goose were at the Lake Casitas marina through 11 Mar. Also of note nearby was a California Condor over Ojai on 21 Feb (KTP).

Continuing birds around Ventura included the Red-necked Grebe in the Ventura Harbor through 9 Mar, as many as four Black Oystercatchers on the breakwaters there through 11 Mar, the Burrowing Owl at Emma Wood through 12 Feb, the Lewis’s Woodpecker along Canada Larga through 27 Feb, and the Hermit Warbler at Camino Real Park through 21 Feb. New at Camino Real Park was a Black-throated Gray Warbler on 22 Feb (MP).

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>

Good birding,
David Pereksta

Richard Barth, Carolyn Greene, Mary Hansen, Jim Moore, Matthew Page, David Pereksta, Kay Regester, Chris Rios, Adam Searcy, Reed Smith, and Kyle TePoel
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: birderz1@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 fund-raising 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.