

The CALIFORNIA CONDOR

Ventura Audubon Society **DECEMBER 2019** Volume 56, Number 13
A Chapter of the National Audubon www.VenturaAudubon.org



CALL NOTES...Frank DeMartino

VENTURA AUDUBON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Audubon Invites You to Join the 120th Annual Christmas Bird Count!

I just want to thank everyone who was involved with the Christmas Bird Count this past year. It takes a lot of people to make this count such a success year after year. Participating this year we had 120 people out scouring for birds, eight hard working sector leaders, several local organizations that allowed us access to private property, and several reporters who helped spread the news of our important citizen science. We also had over a dozen backyard counters this year. Thank you all!

Calling all Birders!

Our Christmas Bird Count is **Saturday, January 4th, 2020**. The CBC is the longest running citizen science effort in existence. Bird counts take place all over North America with a few in the Caribbean and Latin America as well. This will be the 120th Christmas Bird Count conducted by National Audubon. On the Ventura Audubon count last year, we recorded 172 species in spite of the afternoon storms.

Birders of all skill levels are encouraged to participate. The more participants we have, the more areas we can cover and we can cover them more thoroughly. Sector Leaders usually start at 8:00 or 8:30 although some of the more ambitious leaders may start earlier! Those looking for owls need to be out early or stay late! Most counts end by noon; however, it is not necessary to stop at noon. If you have the energy and stamina, go back in the afternoon to search out birds you should have seen but, didn't.

Volunteer counters are assigned to one of the sector leaders who coordinate the count in each of eight areas within the VAS count circle. If you wish to participate in the count, please contact the section leader of the area where you would like to count, directly. He/she will give you the start time, meeting place and other details.

Frank DeMartino is Organizer and Compiler. Please contact Frank at (frank@colynx.com) or (856) 906-8733. (Yes, 856 is the correct area code!) or, you may call the Section Leader with whom you have counted previously or may wish to work with this year. We will update you on the availability of the online registration once we know if it will be active.



CALL NOTES...(Continued on Page 2)

VOLUNTEER SECTOR LEADERS

Section	Location	Section Leader	Section Leader Email Address	Telephone #
Section 1	Ventura River	Kay Register	kayregister@gmail.com	805-258-1025
Section 2	Lake Casitas	Jesse Grantham	ojaiswimmer@gmail.com	805-746-0975
Section 3	Ojai	Rick Burgess	rburgess@toaks.org	805-449-2326
Section 4	Cañada Larga	Linda Easter	Dleaster17@gmail.com	818-519-2833
Section 5	Wheeler Canyon	Gary Tuttle	Gt10k2826@verizon.net	805-525-2327
Section 6	Ventura City	Frank DeMartino	frank@colynx.com	856-906-8733
Section 7	SCRE & Coast	Alexis Frangis	alexisraehamilton@gmail.com	805-217-4833
Section 8	Ocean	David Pereksta	pereksta@pacbell.net	805-404-8265

The map below displays the areas that encompass the Christmas Bird Count.



CALL NOTES...(Continued from Page 2)

CBC POTLUCK DINNER

The end of day review includes a potluck dinner at the Church of the Foothills. 6279 Foothill Road, Ventura at 6:30 PM. The potluck is open to members, friends and guests; you do not have to be a field observer to be included. Those attending are requested to bring the following types of dishes based on the first letter of your last name.

Main Dish: S – Z Salad: K – R Dessert: A – J

Please bring your own place settings, utensils and beverages (water and hot coffee are provided).

DECEMBER PROGRAM

***“From High Seas to Intertidal Mudflat: Audubon Protects Birds on the West Coast.”
...Anna Weinstein***

7:30 p.m. Tuesday, December 10th, Poinsettia Pavilion, 3451 Foothill Road, Ventura



Photo by Alexis Frangis

Audubon's chapter network is a unique and powerful force for conservation. I will share stories of my collaboration with many of our 19 coastal California chapters to win conservation fights, shed light on the ecology and status of charismatic coastal species including the brown pelican and black oystercatcher, and inspire the public to love and care for our coast and ocean.



Anna Weinstein is the marine conservation director for National Audubon and Audubon California, where she has worked since 2008. Anna received a B.A. in biology from Oberlin College and an M.S. in Marine Ecology from Boston University. In 1996 she co-founded Island Conservation, now a global leader in the protection of island ecosystems.

She later worked as a biologist at the San Francisco Estuary Institute, focused on the ecology of marine invasive species. At Audubon, she has focused on protecting seabirds and their habitats, always seeking opportunities for collaboration with chapters. She worked closely with Redwood Region Audubon to defeat a shellfish farm proposal in Humboldt Bay in 2017, and with Sea and Sage Audubon and San Diego Audubon to ensure protection of forage fish on the west coast.



DECEMBER 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. If you have any questions you may contact me at fieldtrips@venturaaudubon.org Adele Fergusson

Saturday, December 7, 8:30 a.m. Ojai Meadows

Leader: Linda Easter 818-519-2833

This beautiful preserve is a birding hotspot and includes a restored wetland and native plantings. Target birds will include: Western Bluebirds, Sora, White tailed Kites, Western Meadowlark, Merlin, Lark Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow and White-crowned Sparrows.

Directions: 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.

Monday, December 9, 2019 8:30 a.m. Lake Casitas

Leader: Adele Fergusson 805-415-4304

Join us for a walk by the lake, We will be looking for hummingbirds, grosbeaks, gnatcatchers as well as ducks, geese and waterfowl. Hopefully we will see the Lewis's woodpecker and the Bald Eagle. Plans are to enter Lake Casitas by car so walking will be less than usual.

Directions: Take Hwy 33 towards Ojai; exit Casitas Vista Rd. Turn right twice and go under freeway past Foster Park to first right, Santa Ana Rd. Follow to park, on left. Or take Hwy 33 to Hwy 150, turn left and follow signs to the lake. Park out front and we will carpool into the park.

Saturday, December 14, 2019 8:00 a.m. Work Day Hedrick Ranch Nature Area.

Leader: Sandy Hedrick 805 340-0478.

Arrive at 8:00 for self-guided birding which usually yields some interesting birds. Work from 9am – noon. Long pants and boots or closed shoes are required. Bring water, gloves & sun protection.

Directions: Take Hwy 126 to Santa Paula, 10th St. Exit. Go under freeway, rt. on Harvard, rt. on 12th and cross the 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). Even a little rain can make the road impassable; if in doubt, call Sandy to check road condition.

Sunday December 15 8:00 a.m. Santa Clara River Estuary/ Surfers Knoll

Leader: Tevin Schmitt 661-904-1563

We will walk along the beach from Surfers Knoll parking lot to the estuary. We will 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.

Saturday, December 21, 8:00 a.m. Ojai Valley Sanitation District and Ventura River

Leader: Kay Regester 805-258-1025

We will walk around the plant and census the birds there, and in the surrounding area. We will also check out Ventura River and Big Rock Preserve, as well as the bridge at Foster Park. Expect 100s of Mew Gulls, sparrows, woodpeckers, Blackbirds, and hawks. Maybe Hooded Mergansers. We may be in that area 3 hours, but you can leave anytime. Open-ended. Bring/wear layers, depending on weather.

Directions: Enter "Ojai Valley Sanitation District" in your map app, 12 minutes from midtown Ventura. Take the 33 N to Canada Larga Exit. Take a left off the exit and go under the 33. Take a right and you are on North Ventura Ave. In a half mile, there is a sharp left turn, past the large vegetable farm. That left is the entrance to the Ojai Water Treatment Plant. 6363 N. Ventura Avenue.



NOTES FROM THE FIELD ...David Pereksta

Warblers are probably the most sought-after family of birds during their migration in October and this year produced a modest number of uncommon to rare species. A **Northern Waterthrush** was at the Ventura Settling Ponds on 26 Oct (JMc & RMc). Bob Kildee Park in Camarillo hosted a **Black-and-white Warbler** 5-17 Oct (FD), a **Tennessee Warbler** 5-6 Oct (FD), a continuing **Chestnut-sided Warbler** through 6 Oct, and a **Blackpoll Warbler** 6-12 Oct (BH & DB). An **American Redstart** was at Rincon Creek on 6 Oct (MB) and another was at Emma Wood State Beach 11-12 Oct (NA). A **Blackburnian Warbler** was at the Laguna Tamarisks on 20 Oct (MB). **Palm Warblers** included one at the Laguna Tamarisks on 5 Oct (MB), one near the end of Arnold Road on 12 Oct (ST & MB), and one at Canada Larga on 13 Oct (MB). A **Painted Redstart** was seen by a few lucky birders at Sycamore Canyon on 23 Oct (JMu).



The most exciting waterbird of October was an adult **Neotropic Cormorant** that spent 17-20 Oct at Lake Sherwood (MH). A flock of 11 **Snow Geese** were at Point Mugu on 21 Oct (J&LM) and were likely the same flock noted on the Oxnard Plain on 29 Oct. A **Red-necked Grebe** apparently returned for another winter at Point Mugu 15-21 Oct (JMu). A **Solitary Sandpiper** was at Edison Road on 1 Oct (SC). A **Franklin's Gull** was at the Santa Clara River Estuary on 13 Oct (DA & TG). The east end of Anacapa Island hosted a few boobies including a **Blue-footed Booby** (perhaps the same individual as last month) on 19 Oct (JH), a **Brown Booby** on 5 Oct (m. obs.), and three **Brown Boobies** on 19 Oct (JH). As many as three **Least Bitterns** continued at Lake Sherwood through 29 Oct. A **Cattle Egret** was at the Ventura Settling Ponds 24-29 Oct (A&RO) and another was at Lake Casitas on 29 Oct (KK). A Pelagic trip out of Ventura on 5 Oct had four **Craveri's Murrelets** and a **Buller's Shearwater** in Ventura County waters south of the Channel Islands (DP et al.).

Rarely seen in fall migration in Ventura County, a **Broad-winged Hawk** was over Round Mountain on 13 Oct (DP). Several **Zone-tailed Hawks** were reported including one over Rincon Creek on 6 Oct (MB) and another (presumably the returning wintering bird) in Ojai on 27 Oct (BS). **Ferruginous Hawks** included individuals at the Arroyo Simi on 29 Oct (BH) and in Camarillo on 29 Oct (SB).



A **Least Flycatcher** was at Sycamore Canyon on 4 Oct (DP). A **Tropical Kingbird** returned to the Camrosa Water Treatment Plant for its apparent seventh consecutive winter and was seen 13-23 Oct (JB). A **Plumbeous Vireo** was singing at Mission Oaks Park in Camarillo on 14 Oct (DP). **Chestnut-backed Chickadees** continued along Rincon Creek through 13 Oct. A **Red-throated Pipit** (JMu) and a **Lapland Longspur** (NA) were on the sod fields along Casper Road on 29 Oct. Migrant **Brewer's Sparrows** away from our local breeding sites included one at Sapwi Trails Community Park on 12 Oct (DC) and another at Canada Larga 14-19 Oct (JMu). The Conejo Mountain Cemetery hosted a **Clay-colored Sparrow** on 14 Oct (NA) and a **Swamp Sparrow** 21-31 Oct (NA).

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: Noah Arthur, Danielle Aube, Joe Beck, Stacey Bergman, Marc Better, David Buettner, Dan Cooper, Sammy Cowell, Frank DeMartino, Timothy Guida, Mary Hansen, Bruce Henderson, Jim Howard, Karl Krause, Jimmy McMorran, Robert McMorran, John Mendoza, Linda Mendoza, John Mueller, Anne O'Donnell, Rob O'Donnell, David Pereksta, Bill Shanbrom, Steve Tucker.

STATE BEACHES REPORT
McGrath, Mandalay and San Buenaventura
Alexis Frangis



Three of our local State Beaches, McGrath, Mandalay and San Buenaventura, provide habitat for the threatened and endangered Western Snowy plover, California Least Tern, and other species of shorebirds. Beach nesting birds face a variety of threats from habitat loss, human disturbance, predators and environmental conditions. The nesting season spans from March-September which coincides with the busiest time for beach recreation. In order to protect these birds and their sensitive habitats during the nesting season, symbolic fencing is installed with signs posted around their nesting areas and are monitored by State Parks Environmental Scientists.

The 2019 nesting season on our State Beaches collectively had 23 snowy plover nests, 15 of which hatched and 8 nests failed or a fate could not be determined. Hatch success for snowy plovers can be attributed to the use of nest exclosures, which resemble small wire cages, and can help protect plover eggs from predators. The plovers can move in and out of the small openings of the exclosure while certain predators, like crows and ravens, can't get in.

Still, getting a nest to hatch is only the first half of the journey. Once the chicks hatch, they leave the nest and protective fencing to feed on invertebrates in the wet sand and amongst the wrack (seaweed and other natural wave cast debris that wash ashore). The small flightless chicks are most vulnerable during the weeks before they are able to fly, or reach fledging age. Fledge rates cannot be accurately determined as chicks are not banded at these sites, although fledgling aged plover chicks were observed early in the season at McGrath.

Mandalay and San Buenaventura State Beaches typically have lower nest numbers and chick survival rates due the increased levels of human activity, dogs (despite not being allowed on State Beaches) and abundant predators like crows. At McGrath within the Santa Clara Estuary Natural Preserve, the California least tern colony established a total of 70 nests this season. Only about 20 least tern nests hatched before skunks found and decimated the colony. Unfortunately, no least tern chicks survived to fledging age at this site. Skunks hit the nesting birds particularly hard late in the season and were the greatest cause of nest and chick loss, but other causes of nest failure include other predators like ravens and gulls, flooding by high tides or rising estuary water, windblown sand and abandonment.

Despite the challenges experienced this season, one success that persisted throughout the year was our volunteer program. Volunteers are an integral part of shorebird recovery and we can't thank them enough for their commitment and contributions. Our volunteers provide invaluable outreach and education to beachgoers, assist with fence installation and removal, data collection, observations and monitoring, and so much more.

This season a keen-eyed volunteer alerted monitors to the presence of plovers in an unlikely location at Marina Park. Dedicated volunteers were present from sunrise until sunset to provide education and outreach to the constant crowds of people visiting the popular beach park over a very busy weekend. Because of the efforts of these volunteers, countless people were introduced to the snowy plover for the first time.

This type of outreach informs people about the birds, but also introduces them to the concept of beaches as habitat and the importance of sharing the beach with other species. Increasing public awareness is a key piece to the recovery of species like the snowy plover and least tern whose survival depends on coexisting on the same beaches that people use for recreation. State Parks would like to sincerely thank Ventura Audubon and the many dedicated volunteers who helped with shorebird recovery this season.


VAS OFFICERS & BOARD MEMBERS 2019-2020		
Officers		Email Addresses
President	Cynthia Hartley	President@venturaaudubon.org
Vice President	Bruce Schoppe	VicePresident@venturaaudubon.org
Treasurer	Sherry Dorris	Treasurer@venturaaudubon.org
Secretary	Alexis Frangis	
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At Large	Jackie Worden	
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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 **January 7th, 2020**. 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. Board Meetings are held bimonthly on the first Tuesday of the month. A membership form is available on the VAS web site. Our May meeting is a barbecue.

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 15th of the month preceding the month of publishing.

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