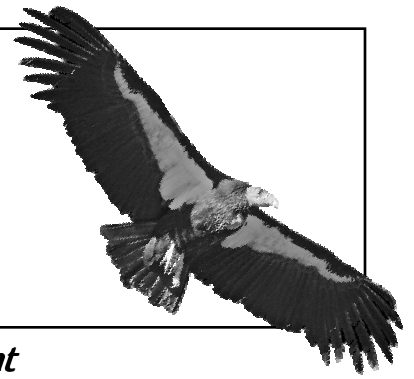


The CALIFORNIA CONDOR

Ventura Audubon Society **MARCH 2011** Volume 31 Number 7
A Chapter of the National Audubon www.VenturaAudubon.org



CALL NOTES ...Bruce Schoppe, President

Dogs on the Beach

During March, the fences will go up on some of the beaches where Snowy Plovers nest – at Ormond Beach and McGrath State Beach, including the section on the Surfer's Knoll side of the river. The fencing is pretty basic, usually plastic construction fence or just a rope strung between posts. The fences will help protect the nests from human intrusion. The plovers will return and, if we are lucky, succeed in fledging a new generation. Later, California Least Terns will use the same beach areas for their nests.

In 2010, VAS received an Audubon grant to fund a Share the Shore Children's Art Project. Led by Jane Spiller and a host of volunteers, the result is nearly 100 beautiful signs using twelve of the artworks created by the children. These signs will be added to the "official" signs at public events to be scheduled for **2:00 PM, Saturday, March 12th at Surfer's Knoll and 9:00 AM, Saturday, March 19th at Ormond Beach (Arnold Road)**. The hope is that these signs will have a greater impact on the public than the official ones that are, often, ignored.

But, as anyone who has ever been on our beaches at any time of the year knows, we have a problem – with dogs. Dogs can't read signs and, apparently, neither can many of their owners! People love their dogs and dogs enjoy running on the beach. Dogs do what they are programmed to do – chase wildlife, including birds. Sometimes, they catch them!

Recently, I got an email from a visitor to Surfer's Knoll complaining about the number of dogs he saw running free and the apparent lack of enforcement. He observed and photographed dogs and several injured birds both here and in Santa Barbara and wrote emails to me (and my counterpart in Santa Barbara) demanding we do something

Enforcement is a problem. Many different agencies share responsibility and all have limited resources; nevertheless, we should expect that those responsible take action to protect these natural resources. The Ventura Port District has authorized signs that will go up soon. Problems at Ormond Beach have been greatly reduced since the Oxnard Animal Control (...continued Page 6)

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

Birdwatching in Lesvos by Paul Doherty and Presented by Don Des Jardin

Don Des Jardin will present a video produced by his long time friend Paul Doherty from the UK. In this video, Paul takes you to the Greek island of Lesvos (Lesbos) during prime spring migration. This video covers portions of April and May.

Lesvos lies in the Aegean Sea and was originally joined to the coast of Asia Minor, present day Turkey, but was detached by powerful geological disturbances. It's roughly 43 miles long by 28 miles wide, with an area of 630 square miles. The basic geography of Lesvos, together with its size and location so close to the Turkish coast and consisting of many varied habitats, including some good wetlands, offers some of the best birding in the Mediterranean basin. Four weeks each spring, birders from across Europe converge on this outpost of Europe, which lies just 5 miles off Turkey and Asia Minor. The birds are a blend of Mediterranean breeding species and migrants moving through to breed in Eastern Europe and Asia Minor, such as Krüper's Nuthatch. Lesvos is probably the easiest place to see this species in the Western Palearctic.

BIRD OF THE MONTH – MARCH 2011

Article and Photo by DAVID PEREKSTA

Common Poorwill (*Phalaenoptilus nuttallii*)



March is a time when some breeding species in Ventura County are arriving from points further south to initiate breeding. A species that may sleep through the winter and become active in spring is the Common Poorwill.

The Common Poorwill is a small, short-tailed, and proportionately large-headed nightjar. Seen in flight (often in the headlights) it has white corners on the tail and rounded wings. The upperparts are speckled brown and gray with fine black markings. A white band crossing the throaty is bordered by black on the breast and face. The rest of the underparts are black and gray with barring. The tail corners and throat of immatures are less distinct and washed with buff. The call for which it is named is *poor-will-o*, with a long first syllable and accent on the second. The third is only audible at close range. When disturbed, it gives a *kweep-kweep* in flight.

Common Poorwills are found in open chaparral, on rocky hillsides, in semidesert scrub, and in coastal sage scrub. They avoid thickly forested or heavily vegetated areas. Like owls, these nocturnal insect-eaters are more easily heard than seen and are difficult to get a good look at. However, they can be glimpsed along dirt roads at night where they flutter up like giant moths in the headlights, or rest on the ground with their eyeshine glowing pink or orange. Unlike nighthawks who forage high on the wing, Common Poorwills forage silently just above bushes or low over openings; often flying up from the ground to capture insects in midair. This species is the first known hibernating bird; in cool weather they may enter a prolonged torpid state characterized by lower body temperature, reduced metabolic rate, and extremely slow heartbeat and breathing.

Common Poorwills occur from interior Washington to California, and in the coastal foothills from central California south to the tip of Baja; and from southern interior British Columbia and southern Alberta, east along the Great Plains to central Kansas, south to central Mexico. They depart from the northern part of their breeding range in fall, and winter from central California, southern Arizona, and southern Texas southward into Mexico.

In Ventura County, Common Poorwills are uncommon to fairly common summer residents. They are very rare in winter, but their status during this season is poorly known because of their ability to enter lengthy torpid states. They are most easily detected between mid-March and the end of June when they are calling. Reliable places include Hill Canyon, Sycamore Canyon, LaJolla Canyon, Rose Valley, Quatal Canyon, Pine Mountain, Lockwood Valley, and areas with suitable habitat throughout the Los Padres National Forest and Santa Monica Mountains. The best way to find them is to listen for their calls at dusk or dawn, or drive dirt roads at these times and look for the distinctive eyeshine of birds sitting in the road.



MARCH 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.

Saturday, Mar. 5, 9:00-12:00 a.m. Restoration Work Day, Santa Paula. Hedrick Ranch Nature Area Restoration Program. Sandy Hedrick: (340-0478). Arrive at **8:00 for birding** which usually yields some interesting birds. We will be doing maintenance work controlling invasive plants. **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).

Saturday, March 12, 8:30 a.m. Taft Gardens, Ojai. Leader: John Pavelko (640-9040). We will bird the beautiful gardens with many large oak trees and a diverse array of plant life from South Africa and Australia. **Directions:** Please carpool, if possible, to avoid additional cars in this area. From Ojai, meet at Nordoff H.S. at 8:15. From Ventura, meet at The Museum of Ventura Co. 100 Main St. (side parking lot) at 8:00. Take Hwy. 33 to Hwy 150 (Baldwin Rd.). Turn onto Hwy 150. Take a right approx. ¼ mile past Rancho Matilija's 2nd gate at the mailboxes. Head due north into canyon; do not take any of the drives off to left or right. Cross over creek, and you will see a metal building w/construction supplies. Take the right fork, go through black metal gate, and cross creek again. Continue right; ignore the guest parking signs and follow paved road into the Gardens which are approx. ¼ miles past the second creek crossing.

Saturday, Mar. 26, 8:30 – 10:30 a.m. Beginners' Bird Walk. Ojai Meadow Preserve. Leader: Allen Bertke (640-9037). **Directions:** To car pool meet at **8:00 a.m.** at The Museum of Ventura Co. 100 Main St. (side parking lot). Take Hwy 33 toward Ojai to Nordoff High School. We will meet at the north end of the school parking lot. We should see a large variety of birds, such as raptors, meadowlarks, sparrows, egrets, and bluebirds.

Sunday, Mar. 27, Tejon Ranch, 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Leader: Ranch Staff. Limit: 30. Judy Dugan (642-0842). Registration began on Feb. 1 and is currently full. I will take names for the wait list through March 8. Preference given to VAS members. This is a short loop where there are usually many wildflowers and birds... with some steep elevation change through the wildflower fields and gullies along the Antelope Valley side of the Ranch which is located off Hwy. 138. There are no restrooms (at least none w/walls or paper). No smoking or dogs. Specific instructions & directions will be given to those registered. **To car pool,** meet in **Ventura** at the Buena H.S. lot directly across from the post office at Telegraph & Wake Forest at 7:00 a.m. & from **Ojai** meet at the Park'n Ride lot at Ojai Ave & Fox at 7:00 a.m.

Saturday/Sunday, April 2 & 3, Big Morongo Canyon Preserve, 8:30 a.m. Saturday. Leader: Neil Ziegler (983-7207). Please email Judy at catmai03@yahoo.com or call at (642-0842) if you are planning to attend. **Directions:** Big Morongo is located on Hwy 62 off Interstate 10. Travel north for 11.5 miles to Morongo Valley. Turn right on East Dr. Entrance on the left. Meet in the parking lot. This preserve is an oasis which attracts migrants moving north from Mexico. We hope to see numerous species of warblers, Summer Tanagers, Yellow-breasted Chats, and Vermilion Flycatchers. Sunday we will bird other spots in the area. Make your own lodging arrangements. A reasonable motel is the Super 8 (760-228-1773) in Yucca Valley. Camping in Joshua Tree at Black Rock Campground (1-877-444-6777). Contacts in Yucca Valley: Neil (208-3149) & Judy (283-4272).

Mark Your Calendar:

April 3 – Hedrick Ranch Restoration Work Day
April 30 – Beginners' Walk – Lake Casitas

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.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The Board has appointed a Nominating Committee composed of the following:

Sandy Hedrick, Chair
Nancy Schorsch
Reed Smith

According to the By-Laws, the Nominating Committee shall nominate candidates for the Board of Directors for the next fiscal year. Their report will be presented to the membership at the April meeting and voted upon at the Annual Meeting in May.

If anyone would like to serve on the Board or wishes to nominate a member for the Board, please contact a committee member by April 1, 2011.



Allen Bertke volunteered to be the field trip leader for the first VAS partnership with a local college. Allen's experience with leading the Beginners' Walks was evident in his expertise, patience, and humor. Under Allen's guidance, the students were able to spot and identify a large number of bird species. Highlights included Blue-winged Teal, Green-winged Teal, Bufflehead, Greater Yellowlegs, and the endangered Belding's Savannah Sparrow. Allen was an outstanding representative of VAS. Reed Smith was a valuable resource for the field biology students in explaining both the fauna and flora of the salt marsh environment.

Special thanks also to the VAS Publicity/Education Chair, Susan Bee, for her efforts to have VAS provide binoculars for VAS education programs. At the Carpinteria Salt Marsh, every student had their own pair of quality binoculars provided by VAS. Based on the success of the first VAS/Ventura College Field Biology joint field trip, Biology instructor Kammy Algiers is looking forward to having future Ventura College Field Biology classes involved in mutual activities with VAS.

VENTURA AUDUBON'S CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT 2010

...Reed Smith

About 90 hearty people gave up a warm house to venture forth throughout the Ventura/Ojai area and count birds. The rain stayed light for the first 2 hours and then came down pretty heavy. We managed to find 166 species. This is only 1 species below our average. For a complete list go to our website.

Some of the highlights included Snow Geese (SCRE and Ventura River), American Bittern (Ojai Meadows), Thayer's Gull (Ventura River), Black Skimmer (Ventura Harbor), Burrowing Owl (Ventura River), Red-naped Sapsucker (Darling Road), Yellow-shafted Flicker (Lake Casitas). Black-and-white Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Hermit Warbler, and a pair of Bullock's Orioles were found in Camino Real Park. Dave Pereksta got a great photo of a Short-tailed Shearwater off Pitas Point. Having a boat to survey from for the first time in many years helped.

Special thanks go to the Sector leaders who signed up people and shepherded them on count morning. They are: Rick Burgess, Allen Bertke, Jan Lewison and Neil Ziegler, Gary Tuttle, Kay Regester, David Pereksta, Nancy Schorsch and Eric Waian and me.

Thank you also to Linda O'Neil and Art Marshall who organized the potluck dinner where everyone enjoyed the camaraderie and good food.

VAS PARTNERS WITH VENTURA COLLEGE

...John Connor

On February 11, 2011, Ventura Audubon Society (VAS) partnered with the Field Biology class of Ventura College (VC) in a field trip to the Carpinteria Salt Marsh. VC Biology instructor, Kammy Algiers, developed a field biology program that applies the scientific method to field studies of our local environment.



NOTES FROM THE FIELD

...David Pereksta

A number of notable birds were found or continued along the coast over the last month. The **Snow Goose** at the Ventura River Estuary continued through 30 Jan and a **Brant** was there 26-30 Jan (KR). The wintering **Red-necked Grebe** continued in Ventura Harbor through 23 Jan, but has become more difficult to locate. All the expected "rockpipers" continue to be seen on the Ventura Harbor breakwaters, including as many as 3 **Black Oystercatchers**, 1 **Wandering Tattler**, 19 **Surfbirds**, and 2 **Ruddy Turnstones** through 4 Feb. Also there on 4 Feb was a "Large-billed" **Savannah Sparrow** on the outer breakwater (DP). The **Burrowing Owl** found during the Ventura CBC at Emma Wood State Beach was seen by many through 31 Jan.

Several uncommon waterfowl and raptor species were found at inland lakes and ponds. The **Tundra Swan** remained at the Saticoy Spreading Ponds through at least 5 Feb. Also there were 2 **Ross's Geese** 22-30 Jan (KR), 3 **Cackling Geese** on 30 Jan (DP), as many as 54 **Canvasbacks** 22-30 Jan (KR & DP), and as many as 5 **Common Mergansers** 22-30 Jan (KR). The wintering **Eurasian Wigeon** continued at Rancho Simi Park through 7 Feb. Three **Common Goldeneyes** and a **Common Merganser** were along the eastern shore of Lake Piru on 14 Jan (DP). **California Condor** sightings included two at Lake Piru on 14 Jan (DP), four at Lake Piru on 22 Jan (WS), and another above Fillmore on 28 Jan (KK). The pair of **Bald Eagles** continued on a nest at Lake Casitas through 12 Feb.

The Point Mugu area had a number of continuing birds and a few new reports. Rare south of Point Conception were two **Marbled Murrelets** off Mugu Rock on 7 Feb (JB & JCu). Continuing birds at Point Mugu included 7 **Brant**, 10 **Blue-winged Teal**, a **Long-tailed Duck**, 3 **Black Scoters**, 2 **Common Goldeneyes**, a **Ferruginous Hawk**, a **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron**, a **Burrowing Owl**, male and female **Vermilion Flycatchers**, and a **Tropical Kingbird** on 21 Jan (DP et al.). Perhaps a different female **Vermilion Flycatcher** was along the Boundary Fence there on 12 Feb (KR). An **American Bittern** was in the wetlands adjacent to Point Mugu on 12 Feb (RS et al.). Seven **Tricolored Blackbirds** and seven **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** continued at the end of Arnold Road through 19 Jan.

Early signs of spring were apparent in the hills north of Thousand Oaks. **Common Poorwills** were calling earlier than normal in Hill Canyon with as many as nine birds

vocalizing 6-13 Feb (LH). The warm weather may have stimulated torpid birds to wake up and start calling. Three **California Gnatcatchers** were at Cal Lutheran University in Thousand Oaks on 30 Jan (JC).

Traditional birding hotspots within the Ventura River watershed hosted several notable species. Three female **Hooded Mergansers** were in the Ventura River near Foster Park on 5 Feb (DP & TM). The only **Lewis's Woodpecker** reported locally this winter continued along Canada Larga Road through 6 Feb and at least 10 **Tricolored Blackbirds** were there on 5 Feb (DP & TM). A **Red-naped Sapsucker** was at Foster Park on 23 Jan (EW & MP) and another was along Wheeler Canyon Road (outside of the Ventura River watershed) on 24 Jan (KK).

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 pereksta@pacbell.net or 659-5740.

Good birding,
David Pereksta

Jean Brandt, Jeff Cartier, Janet Cupples, Linnea Hall, Karl Krause, Todd McGrath, Matthew Page, David Pereksta, Kay Regester, Reed Smith, Walter Szeliga, and Eric Waian



VENTURA AUDUBON SOCIETY

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CALL NOTES (continued from Page 1)

people began writing tickets! If you observe someone on the beach letting their dogs run, speak to them. Many may not be aware that dogs are not permitted at all on beaches that are part of a State Park. In other locations, dogs on leashes may be permitted. Nowhere should they be running free!

The problem isn't unique to Ventura County. It is everywhere there is a beach! Morro Coast Audubon printed a very colorful brochure that shows areas of their coastline where dogs are permitted on a leash and where they are not permitted at all. Perhaps something similar for our area would be useful in educating more people about the problem and their responsibility to help solve it. If there are any graphic designers among our members who would like to help me with such a project, I'd be grateful. Please call or email me.

And, please check the website for the details of the Share the Shore sign installation events.

MARCH BOARD MEETING

The Tuesday, March 1st Board of Directors meeting will be held at Dee & Marianne's, 1656 Riente St, Camarillo. Any VAS member is welcome. Call 484-8415 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 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.