CENTRAL COAST BIRDING TRAIL
Ventura County
February 2020

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California Least Tern
Alecia Smith

California Condor
Coastal Habitat
Beaches, Estuaries, Wetlands and Lagoons
along our coast

1. Mugu Rock Overlook and Mugu Lagoon
Services: None
Habitat: Part of Mugu State Park but at the Pacific Ocean backed by cliffs.
Location: Mugu Rock overlook is on the beach side of PCH where the road cuts through the cliffs. The Mugu Lagoon is on the coast ½ mile North of the Overlook.
Highlights: Lagoon waders, shorebirds, ducks, terns, swifts, murrelets, shearwaters, scoters, phalaropes. And at sea: whales, porpoise, and seals in season.
Best Season: Winter, spring.

2. Ormond Beach Wetlands, Oxnard
Services: Parking available at the end of Arnold Road. Portable potty at the entrance.
Habitat: 1,500-acre area composed of agriculture, industry, and wetlands and on the Pacific Flyway. A two-mile-long beach extends from Port Hueneme to the southwestern boundary of Pt. Mugu Naval Air Station, which encompasses Mugu Lagoon.
Location: Off Pt Hueneme Road turn west on Arnold road and follow this narrow road to the end. You’ll find a Kiosk at the entrance.
Highlights: The Ormond Beach area hosts over 200 migratory bird species and more shorebird species are known to use Ormond Beach than any other site in Ventura County. This is a nesting site for the endangered California Least Tern and the threatened Western Snowy Plover. Shorebird species include terns, Brown Pelican, bitterns, Red-tailed and Red-shouldered hawks with rare migrants often found. Also hosts Willets, Whimbrels, Black-necked Stilts, Black-bellied Plovers and occasionally Yellow-headed Blackbirds, Peregrine Falcon, and Blue-grey Gnatcatchers.
Best season: All year, especially summer for shorebirds; early spring and summer for nesting species.

3. Santa Clara River Estuary
Services: Restrooms are available at Surfers Knoll and McGrath State Beach (fee)
Habitats: Coastal estuary, salt marsh, riparian.
Location: North side of estuary can be reached from the parking lot at Surfers Knoll. Walk South approximately 400 yards to the estuary. South side of the estuary can be reached from McGrath State Beach Park.
Highlights: Terns, plovers (California Least Tern and the Western Snowy Plover next here), Peregrine Falcon (winter), avocet, Black Skimmers (rare), and many other shorebirds such as grebes, turnstons, willets, gulls, cormorants and sandpipers, along with many ducks and geese.
Best Season: All year.

4. Ventura River Estuary, River Trail and Ocean Shore Trail
Services: No services, but restrooms are available on the promenade.
Habitat: Coastal inlet, estuary, dunes, riparian
Location: From the West Main Street Parking Lot located at the West end of downtown Main Street just before crossing the bridge over the Ventura River. Park your vehicle there and walk down the path along the river to the estuary. You will find Ventura Audubon Society signage overlooking the site and the ocean is a short walk from there.

Inland Habitat
Riparian, chaparral, woodland, hillside, and grassland

6. Arroyo Simi at Madera
Services: None
Habitat: Arroyo and suburban interface.
Location: 101 to 23 north to the 118. Exit the 118 at Madera; proceed south and turn left on Easy street, park on street; enter Arroyo Simi entrance at Madera.
Highlights: Waterfowl, ibis, herons, egrets, shorebirds, gulls, swallows, warblers and rock wrens.
Best Season: All year, esp. spring and fall.

7. Arroyo Verde Park, Ventura
Services: Restrooms and Parking
Habitat: Varied city park oak woodland, grassy areas, chaparral, in a long broad canyon stretching into hiking trails that extend into the back country.
Location: Park entrance at Foothill Road and Day Road.
Highlights: Kingbirds, hummingbirds, finches, orioles, raptors and early spring migrants.
Best Season: Year-round.

8. Briar Bluff Open Space
Services: None
Habitat: Riparian corridor and chaparral hillsides at the end of a road.
Location: Hwy 101 to the Lynn Rd. Exit and travel north 3.8 miles to Mountaifeld Blvd. (Lynn Rd. becomes Olsen Rd. near the CU campus). Travel north on Mountaifeld Blvd. to the end of the road.
Highlights: Cactus Wren, the endangered California Gnatcatcher, quail, meadowlarks, runniers, warblers and thrashers.
Best Season: All year, esp. spring and fall.

9. Camino Real Park, Ventura
Services: 38 acres, including sporting arenas, restrooms, picnic facilities and children’s play areas. The many trees provide much needed shade and a rustic feel.
Habitat: The bird the grassy area ringed by pines. Eucalyptus trees along the barnaaca and Aurora Drive forming north border of park are nesting places for migrating monarch butterflies in late fall and winter.
Location: Dean Drive and Varsity Drive in Ventura. Entrance to the park will be on your left about six blocks from Estates Avenue.
Highlights: Osprey, Cormorants, pelicans, gulls, terns, plovers, sandpipers, and even more shorebirds along the beach.
Best Season: All year, especially during early spring and early fall.

5. Ventura Water Treatment Plant Wildlife Ponds
Services: None
Habitat: Coastal dunes, ponds, willows, reeds, habitat varied. Open Monday through Sunday, 7 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Location: From Highway 101 in Ventura, take Seaward toward the beach. Turn left onto Harbor Blvd. Continue on Harbor to Spinnaker Dr. Turn right. Make a left onto Angel Court and you will see the chain link fence and entrance to the ponds immediately on your right. Park across the street from the entrance.
Highlights: Bonaparte’s and many other gulls and terns, ducks, Sora, Common Moorhen, Marsh Wren, Green Herons, Phalaropes, warblers, grebes, Peregrine Falcon, and spring swallows.
Best Season: All year, especially spring, fall, winter.

Highlights: Hot spot for migrants, vagrants, and rarities. Allen’s Hummingbird and Red-Shouldered Hawk are residents.
Best Season: All year, especially early spring and winter. Early morning is best.

10. Cañada Larga Road
Services: No services or fee
Habitat: 5-mile dead-end road. This is an oak woodland/savanna, running through private ranch land. Please respect the private property and be alert for faster traffic on this two-lane road.
Location: Take Highway 33 off 101. Exit at Cañada Larga Road. Turn right and park off road as you bird the canyon road to the end. Be careful to stay off the road because there is a local traffic.
Highlights: Early morning or late evening for owls, Golden Eagle (regular), hawks, Mountain (rare) and Western Bluebirds; and a variety of sparrows in winter. Also Phainopepla, grozbeaks, and orioles are here in the spring.
Best Season: All year, especially in spring, winter.

11. CSU Channel Islands University Park
Services: None and parking may have a fee
Habitat: The Park site is currently undeveloped and open to the public on the weekends with a week access by foot or bicycle. Parking permits are required and available for self-pay on site or a daily permit from the CI Parking office on campus. No restrooms, water, benches or tables at the Park site. The ponds where the birds reside are slightly Southwest of the park itself.
Location: From Highway 101 head South on Lewis Rd and then turn left into CSUCI on University Drive. You will pass some fields left and right until you see the sign for Parking Lot A3. Turn into the lot and park. You can reach the ponds by following a dirt path that continues on a berm around the ponds.
Highlights: Chapparal birds, Cactus Wrens, ducks and shorebirds on the ponds.
Best Season: Winter, early spring.

12. Foster Park/Ventura River
Services: Restrooms in the Park
Habitat: The Ventura River flows through this green park with lots of shade trees.
Location: From Ventura, take 101N to Hwy 33. Exit Casitas Vista Rd. Make two quick right hand turns and park under the freeway bridge or enter the Park for a small fee.
Highlights: With winter rains, you may see some interesting species at the river, such as Green Heron or Hooded Mergansers. Inside the park, you will see species such as the Oak Titmouse, California Quail, Western Bluebird and several species of woodpeckers.
Best Season: Year round.

13. Happy Camp Regional Park, Moorpark
Services: None
Habitat: Happy Camp Canyon Regional Park offers visitors 12.5 miles of trails in 3,000 acres of wilderness area frequented by hikers, equestrian riders, and mountain bikers. The open grasslands and deep forests are abundant with wildflowers and wildlife including rabbits, bobcats and golden eagles. The park is underlain by complex geology ranging from deep water shale outcroppings to oyster and clam rich shale and sandstones. This is a passive, natural open space park with no support facilities. Rustic Canyon Golf Course is located at the entrance of the park.
Location: The entrance to the park is adjacent to the Rustic Canyon Golf Course.
Highlights: Phainopepla, Roadrunner and Shrike as well as nesting owls and hawks, California Quail, and California Thrasher. Even a Golden Eagle flyer is possible.
Best Season: All year, esp. spring and fall.

14. Hill Canyon/Santa Rosa Park
Services: Parking and Restrooms at the Park
Habitat: Riparian corridor and chaparral hillsides.
Location: Hill Canyon/Santa Rosa Park (10241 Hill Canyon Road) is at the north edge of Thousand Oaks off of Santa Rosa Road.
Highlights: Cactus and Canyon Wrens, towhees and woodpeckers as well as migrating warblers, vireos and sparrows.
Best Season: All year, esp. spring and fall.
15. Lake Casitas Recreation Area
Services: Restrooms and parking with a fee or park outside main gate.
Habitat: Low coastal mountain park, open meadows, chaparral and agriculture. There are many pockets of habitat for excellent birding.
Location: From Ventura take Highway 101 to Highway 33 north to Ojai. Turn left at Maricopa Highway (Highway 33). Continue on 33 for 30-35 miles to Pine Mountain Summit. Continue past Ojai Reservoir Station (Good birding there, too.). About 1/2 mile beyond is Lockwood Valley Rd. To bird Laguna Valley, continue on Highway 33 past Lockwood Valley Rd.
Highlights: Valley good for many sparrows, several raptor species. Camps yield nuthatches (including Pygmy Nuthatch), Brown Creeper, Mountain Bluebird, White-headed Woodpecker in high camps and a rare Pygmy Owl.
Best Season: Winter, spring, late fall.

27. Mount Pinos Frazier Park Area (elevation 8,831 ft)
Services: Few services and only in camps or at stores along the route. Start with a full gas tank. Take water and snacks. Be prepared for snow in winter. This is a full day trip from Ventura.
Habitat: This is a mix of high desert, montane, valleys, open grassland, and agriculture. There are many pockets of habitat for excellent birding.
Location: From Ventura take Highway 101 to Highway 33 north to Ojai. Turn left at Maricopa Highway (Highway 33). Continue on 33 for 30-35 miles to Pine Mountain Summit. Continue past Ojai Reservoir Station (Good birding there, too.). About 1/2 mile beyond is Lockwood Valley Rd. To bird Laguna Valley, continue on Highway 33 past Lockwood Valley Rd.
Highlights: Valley good for many sparrows, several raptor species. Camps yield nuthatches (including Pygmy Nuthatch), Brown Creeper, Mountain Bluebird, White-headed Woodpecker in high camps and a rare Pygmy Owl.
Best Season: Winter, spring, late fall.

16. Lake Piru Recreation Area
Services: Restrooms, parking, camping, fee per vehicle
Habitat: Riparian corridor with oaks, eucalyptus and sycamore groves. Easy walking in the camp areas, but some sections are steep.
Location: From Ventura, go north on Hwy 33 then 150 through Ojai. Pass Soule Park Golf Course turning right on Boardman Rd. Travel about 15 miles. Turn right into park entrance.
Highlights: Thrashers, towhees, migrant flycatchers and warblers, and large trees provide cover for woodpeckers and raptors. Shady bushes hide thrushes & thrashers. This is easy flat walking around one of our most scenic birding spots.
Best Season: Year round, but summer can be very hot.

28. Pine Mountain Lockwood and Cuyama Valleys (elevation of 6,650 ft)
Services: Few services and only in camps or at stores along the route. Start with a full gas tank. Take water and snacks. Be prepared for snow in winter. This is a full day trip from Ventura.
Habitat: This is a mix of high desert, montane, valleys, open grassland, and agriculture. There are many pockets of habitat for excellent birding.
Location: From Ventura take Highway 101 to Highway 33 north to Ojai. Turn left at Maricopa Highway (Highway 33). Continue on 33 for 30-35 miles to Pine Mountain Summit. Continue past Ojai Reservoir Station (Good birding there, too.). About 1/2 mile beyond is Lockwood Valley Rd. To bird Laguna Valley, continue on Highway 33 past Lockwood Valley Rd.
Highlights: Valley good for many sparrows, several raptor species. Camps yield nuthatches (including Pygmy Nuthatch), Brown Creeper, Mountain Bluebird, White-headed Woodpecker in high camps and a rare Pygmy Owl.
Best Season: Winter, spring, late fall.

17. Las Llajas Canyon Trail
Services: None
Habitat: Riparian corridor with oaks, willows and willow-chaparral. Rescue the Chumash Trail and to Evening Sky Drive. It provides amazing views of Simi Valley and the surrounding hills.
Location: The trailhead of Las Llajas Canyon is at approximately 5715 Evening Sky Drive in Simi Valley. From Highway 118 in Simi Valley exit at Ymseme and head north. Turn right on Evening Sky Drive and proceed to the trailhead.
Highlights: Roadrunners, hawks, woodpeckers, flycatchers, bluebirds, phainopepla, grosbeaks and Lazuli Buntings
Best Season: All year, esp. spring and fall.

29. Wheeler Gorge Campground, Ventura County (elevation of 1,755 ft)
Services: Restrooms, interpretive Center, Parking, Fee
Habitat: Mountain Park with a variety of trees, small gorges, and chaparral. Visitors to the area enjoy hiking, viewing wildlife, birding along nature trails, and exploring the North Fork of the Matilija Creek.
Location: From Highway 101, take Highway 33 north towards Ojai for about 14 miles which then turns left and continues on as Highway 33 for about 8 miles to the campground.
Highlights: Orioles, Olive-sided Flycatchers, Steller’s Jay, dipper (rare), thrashers, Solitary Vireo, Golden-crowned Kinglet (rare).
Best Season: Spring and summer.

18. Ojai Meadow Preserve
Services: None
Habitat: The Meadow is a flat, two (2+) mile trail along a restoration area, riparian wetland, and a pond.
Location: From Highway 101 take Hwy 33 toward Ojai and turn left onto Maxico Highway (Hwy 33). The preserve is down past Nordoff and proceed to the trailhead.
Highlights: 223 acre park offers open grasslands with mature shade trees throughout.
Best Season: Fall round, but summer can be very hot.

25. Wheeler Canyon Road, Santa Paula
Services: None
Habitat: Dead-end canyon roads lined with private ranches, pastures, orchards, oak woodland and chaparral. Respect private property and bird from road only.
Location: From Ventura 101 take Victoria Ave inland until it dead ends at Foothill Rd. Turn right and follow Foothill several miles east toward Santa Paula. Turn left at the Wheeler Canyon Road intersection. Park at convenient and safe spots along Wheeler canyon road and bird from the road only.
Highlights: Orioles, warblers, sparrows, raptors, a wintering Zone-tailed Hawk (farily regular), bluebirds, kites and owls are out early morning or evening.
Best season: All year, especially early spring.

19. Rancho Sierra Vista/Satwiwa
Services: Restrooms, interpretive center, parking.
Habitat: Low coastal mountain park, open meadows, chaparral and sage scrub, same riparian, small ponds.
Location: From Highway 101 to the Lynn Rd exit. Head South on Lynn Rd 5.25 miles to Via Goleta. Park entrance is on the left.
Highlights: The park (10241 Hill Canyon Road) is at the north edge of Thousand Oaks, off of Santa Rosa Road.
Highlights: Chucks and Canyon Wrens, towhees and woodpeckers as well as migrating warblers, vireos and sparrows.
Best Season: All year, esp. spring and fall.

Services: Parking, Restrooms, Camping, Fees.
Habitat: This is a very large canyon with coastal sage scrub, eucalyptus and sycamore groves. Easy walking in the camp areas, but the canyon trails are more difficult.
Location: Follow Highway 1(PCH) South past Mugu Rock about 4 miles. Park on highway or pay a day use fee.
Highlights: Thrashers, towhees, migrant flycatchers and warblers, and large trees provide cover for woodpeckers and raptors. Shady bushes hide thrushes & thrashers. This is easy flat walking around one of our most scenic birding spots.
Best Season: Year round, but summer can be very hot.

26. Wildwood Regional Park, Thousand Oaks
Services: Restrooms at bottom of canyon only, parking, benches and 3 drinking fountains
Habitat: Varied city park oak woodland, grassy areas, chaparral, in a long broad canyon stretching into hiking trails that extend into the back country. 14 trails covering 17 miles.
Location: 928 W. Avenida de los Arboles, Thousand Oaks
Highlights: Kingbirds, hummingbirds, finches, orioles, raptors and early spring migrants.
Best Season: Year-round.

Mountain Habitat
A broad term that defines the terrain rising above the foothills.
WELCOME TO CALIFORNIA’S CENTRAL COAST

Ventura County provides many recreational opportunities in a beautiful natural setting. Good birding is one of the Central Coast's finest recreational features. The Central Coast is strategically located on the Pacific Flyway and provides habitat to many resident and migratory birds. This publication is your guide to the Central Coast Birding Trail in Ventura County. Checklists are available from the Audubon chapters listed on the back of this brochure. When birding, please respect private property and be careful not to disturb birds. Wildlife and natural areas lure visitors to the Central Coast and benefit local businesses. Please help us work for the preservation of habitat for birds and other wildlife.