Hey, let’s go see some birds! And, enjoy the Audubon programs. Birds are migrating. Nesting on the beaches is done or, nearly done. So, time to become active again!

It has been a busy summer. Nest monitoring programs have been in full swing on both Ormond and Hollywood Beaches. Nesting at Ormond was quite successful as even Port Hueneme began enforcing its “No Dogs on Sand” rule. California Least Terns nested in significant numbers at the north end near the lagoon. Cynthia Hartley has enlisted a number of CSUCI students to aid her efforts at Ormond Beach. Hollywood Beach continues to be more problematic as the “No Dogs” and/or “Dogs on Leash” rules are regularly ignored and not enforced.

Almost weekly Action Alerts from National Audubon highlight the ongoing efforts of the current administration to undo environmental protections established by both Republican and Democratic administrations over decades. National Monument and National Marine Sanctuary designations established in the last 10 years are under review with the intent to open these areas to oil and gas exploration. If you are not getting the Action Alerts, please go to the Audubon website and sign up. It is important to make our concerns known.

National Audubon released its report Water and Birds in the Arid West: Habitats in Decline presenting the first comprehensive assessment of the complex and vital relationships that exist among birds, water, and climate change in the region. It focuses on two of the most imperiled and irreplaceable Western ecosystems: 1) the Colorado River Basin; and 2) the West’s network of saline lakes—including the Great Salt Lake and Salton Sea as well as other smaller but vitally important lakes.

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SEPTMBER PROGRAM
7:30 p.m. Tuesday, September 12 Poinsettia Pavilion, 3451 Foothill Road, Ventura

The Russian Far East: Birding in a Sea of Sorrow
By David Pereksta

The Sea of Okhotsk in the Russian Far East is little known outside of Russia and seldom visited by westerners. This sea dominates the Northwest Pacific. Nearly landlocked, it is bounded to the north and west by the Russian continent, the Kamchatka Peninsula to the east, and the Kuril Islands and Sakhalin Island to the south. Its upper regions remain frozen much of the year and winter storms make it an inhospitable place, but the “Sea of Hunters” as it is translated provides a clue to the abundance of wildlife found there. Despite historical exploitation of wildlife, marine mammals and seabirds still thrive there in numbers that boggle the mind. Seabird numbers can only be described as spectacular with numbers rarely seen elsewhere in the world, including one small island with an estimated 7 million birds! However, this little known sea also has a dark history that up until recently has been suppressed and not spoken about, and perhaps no other sea in the world has witnessed as much human suffering and misery. David had a rare opportunity to explore this incredible region in June of 2016 and will share some of his experiences with the wildlife, culture, and history in a lavishly illustrated talk with the highlights of the 10,000 plus photos he took while there. You will not want to miss this presentation!

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The National Marine Sanctuary System brings together a collection of some of America's most significant and treasured places. Taken together, the sanctuary system conserves a network of ocean and Great Lakes environments with extraordinary biodiversity, scenic beauty, cultural heritage and economic opportunity. Within the system, each national marine sanctuary has unique ecosystems, resources and human uses. And while all sanctuaries emphasize resource protection and decision-making based on the best available scientific and socioeconomic data, they are managed per their own individual issues and opportunities.

In 1980, a portion of the Santa Barbara Channel was given that special protected status with the designation of Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary (CINMS). It is one of four sanctuaries off the California coast. The others are Monterey Bay, the Greater Farallones and Cordell Bank.

Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary, located off the coast of Santa Barbara and Ventura counties, is one of 14 federally designated marine protected areas administered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), within the Department of Commerce. The sanctuary encompasses 1,110 square nautical miles (1,470 square miles) of water from mean high tide to six nautical miles offshore of Santa Barbara, Anacapa, Santa Cruz, Santa Rosa, and San Miguel islands.

The sanctuary is a special place for species close to extinction, sensitive habitats, shipwrecks and maritime heritage artifacts. Many valuable commercial and recreational activities, such as fishing, shipping, and tourism occur in the sanctuary. A comprehensive ecosystem-based management approach is used to promote long term conservation of sanctuary waters, wildlife, habitats, and cultural resources, while allowing compatible human uses.

The sanctuary’s remote, isolated position at the confluence of two major ocean currents creates remarkable biodiversity. The mingling of cool, nutrient-rich waters from the north with warm currents from the south form a dynamic transition zone that is home to a myriad of sea life from microscopic plankton to blue whales.

In April, President Trump signed an executive order calling for a Commerce Department review of all marine sanctuaries designated or expanded in the last ten years with the express intention of exploiting them for oil drilling, mining, and other activities. These sanctuaries are essential for the survival of species such as the Brown Pelican, Ashy Storm-petrel, Black-footed Albatross, Sooty Shearwater, and dozens of others. Marine birds are among our most threatened, and the human activities described by Trump in his executive order would further imperil them.

These places also provide direct support to California’s economy. A multitude of jobs rely on expenditures by visitors from around the globe who come to enjoy these protected coastal areas for boating, recreational fishing, and wildlife viewing. These sanctuaries are vital for California’s local, sustainable seafood including squid, salmon, halibut and tuna.

If you have been on a whale-watching trip from Ventura or Channel Islands Harbors or have visited any of the Channel Islands, you have visited the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary. VAS supports preservation of CINMS and the other sanctuaries as is and rejects the notion of more oil development off the coast.

National Monuments, including the incredible Carrizo Plain are also threatened by a parallel Executive Order. Many of these special areas also protect birds and their habitat. Audubon rejects any effort to change national monument designations or to reduce their size, especially to exploit resource extraction.
NOTES FROM THE FIELD

...David Pereksta

APRIL—JULY 2017

Summering or late-staying geese included a Snow Goose at the Santa Clara River Estuary 3 Jun-11 Jul (NS), a Brant at the Ventura River Estuary through 30 Jul (m. obs.) and one at the Santa Clara River Estuary 12-29 Jun (AS), and a Greater White-fronted Goose at Lake Sherwood on 1 Jun (MH). Common Mergansers were in Sespe Gorge on 28 Apr (AS, DP & DM) and 3 Jul (AS & JP) and several continued Lake Casitas through 1 May. An unseasonal flock of as many as 13 American White Pelicans was at the Santa Clara River Estuary through 30 Jul (m. obs.). Least Bitterns were at Lake Sherwood through 27 Jul (MH), Ojai on 28 Apr (JG), and Matilija Lake on 28 Apr (AS, DP & DM). An American Bittern was at Lake Casitas on 28 Apr (JG). Away from their local stronghold at Point Mugu, a Yellow-crowned Night-Heron was at the Ventura Settling Ponds 22 Apr-30 Apr (MT). A Solitary Sandpiper was at the Ojai Meadows on 21 Apr (JG). Shorebirds of note at various wetlands on the Oxnard Plain included two Pacific Golden-Plovers 22-23 Apr (LS), an American Golden-Plover 4-5 May (LS), a continuing Ruff through 23 Apr and a different one 26 Apr-5 May (AS & DP), and individual Semipalmated Sandpipers on 28 Apr (AS, DP & DM), 7 Jul (LS), and 28 Jul (DP).

Raptor reports are often scarce through spring and summer, but arguably the most outstanding bird of the period was a Mississippi Kite seen soaring over the Santa Clara River in Santa Paula on 20 May (KK & CR). This constituted the first record of this species for Ventura County. Away from their local breeding sites, California Condors were seen regularly at Lake Piru 1 Apr-20 Jul (m. obs.) and one was over Quatal Canyon on 18 Apr (JB & DM). The nesting Bald Eagles continued at Lake Casitas through 13 Jun and as many as two continued at Lake Piru through 16 Jul. Swainson’s Hawks were seen at several locations including Ojai on 28 Apr (JG et al.), Ventura on 27 Apr (RM), and Pine Mountain on 20 May JM et al.), Owls of note included individual Northern Saw-Whet Owls in the north county on 21 April and 19 May (DP), and two recently fledged Long-eared Owls at Rancho Sierra Vista 14-17 May (DKB).

The wintering Lewis’s Woodpecker continued in Thousand Oaks through 15 Apr. Migrant Hammond’s Flycatchers were at Wheeler Gorge Campground on 7 Apr (DP), Matilija Canyon on 14 Apr (JB), Quatal Canyon on 21 Apr (DP & CM), and the Chumash Trail on 21 Apr (JB). Some of our local montane breeding Empidonax flycatchers are rarely seen locally in migration and are difficult to identify away from breeding areas. Therefore, a Gray Flycatcher on the Oxnard Plain on 16 Apr (DP) and a Dusky Flycatchers in Ojai on 14 Apr (JG) were notable. Away from Point Mugu where they now nest, Vermilion Flycatchers were at Buenaventura Golf Course on 15 May (RS) and Conejo Community Park on 26 May (RSw). A Tropical Kingbird was near Calleguas Creek on 4 Apr (DP). Two Bank Swallows were at the Ventura Settling Ponds on 28 Apr (DP, AS & DM). Four Purple Martins and a Bank Swallow were on the Oxnard Plain on 16 May (CM et al.). Townsend’s Solitaires are scare breeders in our local mountains so a juvenile on Pine Mountain on 2 Jul (AS & JP), and others reported regularly near the top of Mount Pinos 10 May-3 Jul (m. obs.) were notable.

Several singing Northern Parulas were found locally this spring including one at Barranca Vista Park on 7 May (JM) and one at Arroyo Verde Park 30-31 May (DM). A Tennessee Warbler was also at Barranca Vista Park 13-16 May (FD). American Redstarts included one on the Oxnard Plain on 16 Apr (DP) and another at the Conejo Community Park on 28 May (RSw). Rare away from their limited breeding areas in the dry montane valleys of Ventura County, two Brewer’s Sparrows were at the Ojai Meadows on 21 Apr (JG). A Rose-breasted Grosbeak was in Oxnard on 24 May (CM) and an Indigo Bunting was singing on Frazier Mountain 20 Jun-1 Jul (AS). Summer Tanagers included one at Conejo Community Park on 1 Apr (RSw) and two in Ventura 14-15 May (ETG). Yellow-headed Blackbirds reports included as many as 15 from the Ojai Meadows on 21-28 Apr (JG), 27 at Lake Casitas on 30 Apr (JG), as many as 50 at Arnold Road from 29 Apr-4 May (BH, JM), and 35 at McGrath State Beach on 2 May (DC).

American Oystercatchers on Anacapa Island included one on 30 Apr (DP) and possibly the same bird on 4 Jul (JP). Crossings of the Santa Barbara Channel produced a Franklin’s Gull on 26 Apr (JB) and a Sabine’s Gull on 19 Jun (JB). An outstanding pelagic trip to waters around San Nicolas Island on 16 Jul produced a Black-footed Albatross, 14 Cook’s Petrels, 3 Brown Boobies, 2 South Polar Skuas, and 31 Craveri’s Murrelets (DP, JB et al.).

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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. Questions/suggestions about an organized trip? Email Adele Fergusson at adelefergusson@yahoo.com.

Sunday September 3, 8:30 am. Camino Real Park. Leader: Raeann Koerner 805-701-1919. Camino Real is a grassy park surrounded by pines and eucalyptus and is an excellent fall migrant hotspot. Target birds will include Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Yellow Warbler, Wilson’s Warbler, Western Tanager and Black-headed Grosbeak, but any number of cool warblers show up at this park during migration!

Directions: We will meet outside the park and walk in. Take Telegraph Road toward Ventura College. Across from Ventura College, turn onto Estates, take a right on Aurora, go to the grass beltway across from the mobile home park. Park closest to the last house in the residential tract. We will start birding along the barranca and go into the park.

Saturday September 9, 8:30 AM Arroyo Verde Park. Leader: Linda Easter 805-482-7537. Enjoy birding the oak woodland, grassy areas, and chaparral in this long, broad canyon. Early fall migrants may include Western Tanager, Rufous Hummingbird, Ash-throated Flycatcher, and Phainopepla.

Directions: Take Victoria Ave. north, left on Foothill Rd., right on Day Rd. entrance to the park. Meet at the last parking lot by the restrooms. On Saturdays there is a $2 per hour fee to park at Arroyo Verde, if you want you can park outside and walk in.

Sunday, September 17, 8:00 a.m. Santa Clara River Estuary/Surfers Knoll. Leader: Tevin Schmitt 661-904-1563

We 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.

Tuesday September 19, 8:30 am
Leader: Adele Fergusson 805-415-4304

The entrance to Emma Wood State Beach, searching the scrub for sparrows and warblers. We will follow the path that leads through the willow forest (often finding wrentit and other secretive birds here) and finally across the sand dunes to the Ventura River Estuary. The estuary is always an exciting place to bird, and target birds will include: Snowy, Black-bellied and Semipalmated Plovers, Willet, Whimbrel, Black Turnstone, Red-necked Phalarope and Forster’s Tern. There will be a fair amount of walking, so please dress appropriately in layers and comfortable shoes.

Directions: From US-101, exit California St, turn right and then make a quick left onto Thompson Blvd. Follow Thompson (becomes Garden St) and turn left on W. Main St. Follow W. Main St until just before it enters the northbound 101 freeway. Emma Wood is on the left. There is ample street parking along the outside of the park on W. Main St (we must park outside and walk in). Please do not leave valuables in your car, and be sure to lock your vehicle.

Saturday September 23, 8:00 a.m. Ventura Settling Ponds. Leader: Frank DeMartino 856-906-8733. The Settling Ponds at the Ventura Harbor is a reliable place to find summer gulls and terns, as well as songbirds and raptors. We should hear Yellow Warbler and orioles, possibly even tanagers!

Directions: Take Harbor Blvd to Spinnaker Dr. and enter Ventura Harbor. The water treatment plant is on Angler, a left turn before Spinnaker curves to the right. Park in lot on right hand side of road. Use caution in crossing road at blind curve. Meet in front of gate.
I would like to introduce two new members of our Board of Directors. Many of you know Frank DeMartino who has led the Christmas Bird Count for the last few years and will continue to do so. He lives in Ventura and, in July, he and his wife, Cia, opened a Wild Birds Unlimited store in the Bed, Bath and Beyond shopping center on East Main Street. Some may have met David Lee on field trips he has led. David has also joined the Board. He, too, lives in Ventura and is an Urban Wildlife Biologist, Author and Photographer. He will continue to lead walks and work with us to expand our outreach efforts to recruit a younger and more diverse membership.

We have lined up some interesting programs for the first half of the new season but, we still need a Program Chair. The first program features David Pereksta with stories and photographs of his trip to the Sea of Okhotsk in the Russian Far East. Programs are presented on the second Tuesday of each month at 7:30 PM at Poinsettia Pavilion located at 3451 Foothill Road in Ventura. The first program is September 12th.

David Pereksta is an Avian Biologist with the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, where he studies and analyzes the effects of offshore oil and gas, and renewable energy development on birds off the Pacific coast and Hawaii. Prior to his position at BOEM, Dave spent 16 years working on endangered species issues with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Ventura. Throughout his career with various Federal and State agencies, he has studied several imperiled bird species including snowy plovers, piping plovers, least terns, ospreys, northern goshawks, brown pelicans, spotted owls, and ivory-billed woodpeckers. An avid birder for 40 years, Dave has traveled throughout North America, South America, the American tropics, the South Pacific, and East Asia including leading trips to Belize, Costa Rica, Peru. He has seen over 1,700 species of birds in his travels; photographing in excess of 1,100 species along the way.

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:
Joel Barrett, Dave Compton, Frank DeMartino, Jesse Grantham, Mary Hansen, Bruce Henderson, Deven Kammerichs-Berke, Karl Krause, James Maley, Curtis Marantz, Dan Maxwell, Robert McMorran, Cheri Miller, John Mueller, David Pereksta, Jeremiah Psiropoulos, Craig Rudolph, Larry Sansone, Naresh Satyan, Adam Searcy, Richard Still, Roger Swanson, Elisa Taylor-Godwin, and Michelle Townsley
**VAS OFFICERS and CHAIRS**

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- President: Bruce Schoppe (805) 658-2396
- Vice President: Cynthia Hartley (805) 795-4115
- Treasurer: Marianne Slaughter (805) 484-8415
- Secretary: Joyce Schoppe (805) 658-2396

**Board Members**
- Conservation: Sandy Hedrick (805) 643-2408
- Publicity: Jim Susha (805) 983-3929
- CBC: Frank DeMartino (805) 906-8733
- Field Trips: Adele Ferguson (805) 415-4304
- Membership: Deborah Burns (805) 933-0647
- Newsletter: Janice Susha (805) 983-3929
- WSP/CLT Team: Debra Barringer Unlisted
- Outreach: David Lee (805) 451-3504
- Programs: Vacant
- At Large: John Connor (805) 654-1805, Jackie Worden (805) 657-2837

**Chairs**
- Webmaster: Christi Lester (310) 722-9557
- Education: Betsy Bachman (805) 646-4407
- Social Media: Rachael Cavanagh
- Social Media: Jessica Ventrone

**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, September 5. The location will be at Marianne Slaughter’s home at 1656 Riente Street, Camarillo, 805-484-8415. 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 Oxnard at 7:30 p.m., September through April. The May meeting is a barbecue. Call the President for information. Board Meetings are held bimonthly on the first Tuesday of the month. A membership form is available on the VAS web site.

**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 12th of the month preceding the month of publishing.*