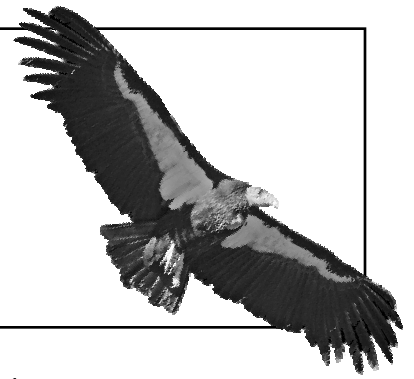


The CALIFORNIA CONDOR

Ventura Audubon Society **SEPTEMBER 2012** Volume 33 Number 1
A Chapter of the National Audubon www.VenturaAudubon.org



CALL NOTES ...Bruce Schoppe, President

It's September. Back to school -- although, I think that begins in August these days! Most importantly, it is the start of another program year for the Ventura Audubon Society! We hope that you will enjoy the programs that Laura Gulovsen, Audrey Vincent and Margaret Wilson have planned for you. They will be interesting and informative. Judy Dugan will schedule field trips each month including a Beginner's Bird walk. All are led by top-notch birders!

Conservation and restoration efforts will continue on the Santa Clara River, at Ormond Beach, and along the Ventura River. While most of these efforts are under the direction of other organizations, they are strongly supported by VAS. We purchased signs that will soon be installed at three locations around Ormond Beach. These signs highlight the threat to Western Snowy Plovers, California Least Terns, and other Pacific Coast shorebirds. VAS published a brochure to inform people about the rules for dogs on Ventura County beaches. And, we continue to support *Audubon Adventures* for classrooms. Interested teachers may contact Susan Bee.

Friends of the Ventura River has been reorganized as a coalition of environmental groups and individuals that support the Ventura River Parkway Plan for the lower portion of the river. Preservation and restoration of the entire watershed are goals. *Ventura Hillsides Conservancy* received a gift of land in the riverbed between the Main Street and Highway 101 bridges. Restoration has begun. *The Coastal Conservancy* and *The Trust for Public Land* funded development of a vision plan by Cal Poly Pomona students. In July, the Board of Supervisors gave conceptual support to the parkway plan and to streamlining the process for approving conservation subdivisions. Restoration of the lower river depends upon the success of efforts to relocate homeless camps, which the City of Ventura, *Project Understanding*, and the *Salvation Army* lead.

All of the participating groups, like VAS, depend upon volunteer efforts. When you are not birding, perhaps you could help one or another of these groups.

SEPTEMBER PROGRAM ...Janice Susha

7:30 p.m. Tuesday, September 11th, Poinsettia Pavilion, 3451 Foothill Road, Ventura

"What is your Plastic Footprint?" by Dave Weeshoff

Plastic debris is proliferating in the world's marine environments, and is causing numerous problems for humans and wildlife. The recent Japanese tsunami has exacerbated the problem in our own Pacific Ocean. Because it is durable and light-weight, plastic debris travels over vast distances and accumulates on beaches and in the oceans. The majority of marine debris is plastic, which releases chemical additives and plasticizers into the ocean, and adsorbs pollutants like PCBs, and pesticides like DDT. These pollutants bioaccumulate in the tissues of marine organisms, biomagnify up the food chain, and find their way into the foods we eat. Although plastic products benefit our lives it is imperative that we eliminate the flood of post-consumer plastic waste into the environment.

At present, Dave is President of the San Fernando Valley Audubon Society. He is also the Chairman of the Board of International Bird Rescue, dedicated to the rehabilitation of aquatic birds both in California and worldwide in the event of an oil spill. Post-retirement from IBM, Dave became a volunteer and docent with the Los Angeles Oiled Bird Care and Education Center, San Pedro, managed by International Bird Rescue. Dave joined the Speaker's Bureau of Heal the Bay. and, in July 2008 he joined the Speakers' Bureau of the Algalita Marine Research Institute.

BIRD OF THE MONTH – SEPTEMBER 2012

Article and Photo by David Pereksta

Ruff (Philomachus pugnax)



The southbound migration of shorebirds starts during the early summer and numbers feed and rest at local wetlands through the fall. A Eurasian species that can be found with some luck during the fall is the Ruff.

The Ruff is a large shorebird that is tall with long legs, plump body, small head, and small bill. The species is size dimorphic with males averaging 20 percent larger than females. Breeding males are ornately plumaged with elongate facial tufts and breast feathers that vary from white, rufous, or black. These feathers are erectile but often flattened. Breeding females have black-and-brown upperparts and white underparts with a scaly pattern of black-and-brown tips to the feathers of the foreneck and breast. Nonbreeding birds are gray-brown above with white around the base of the bill and white underparts with a scaly, gray-brown wash to the breast. Juveniles (pictured above) have dark brown upperparts with rufous edges to the mantle feathers and wing coverts giving them a scaly appearance. The underparts are white with a buffy foreneck and breast. The legs and feet vary from greenish to yellowish orange. In flight, all plumages exhibit a narrow white wing stripe and a distinctive white “U” shaped band on the rump. The slightly drooped bill is black with a paler base to the lower mandible. The rarely heard call is a short whistled *tu-whit*.

Ruffs are one of the most regular and widespread Eurasian shorebirds that stray to North America. They are best known for their bizarre courtship plumage and rituals that males perform on leks to attract females during the breeding season. Their preferred habitat is grassy marshes, mudflats, and flooded fields that are a short distance inland. On the coast, they favor estuaries, lagoons, mudflats, and salt marshes. Ruffs are often found with yellowlegs, dowitchers, or Pectoral Sandpipers. They are often readily recognized by their “loose” mantle feathers and tertials, which can be evident when hunched over feeding.

The species breeds in northern Eurasia and winters in southern Eurasia south to tropical Africa, the Middle East, India, Indochina, and southern Australia. In North America, they are a rare migrant along the Pacific coast, Great Lakes, and Atlantic coast. In the western US, it is mostly a rare migrant in the fall with small numbers that winter in California between mid-September and early May.

In Ventura County, Ruffs are very rare fall transient and winter visitors that are occasionally seen at the Santa Clara River estuary and the private game preserves near Point Mugu where they are near annual at the latter. They occur less frequently at the Satcoy Ponds and in the concrete-lined ditches on the Oxnard Plain. Adults may be found during July and August while Juveniles are more likely from September-November. Your best chance of seeing one is to go on an Audubon-sponsored field trip to the game preserves in the fall.



SEPTEMBER 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 trip leader.

Welcome to another fun season of birding!

Etiquette: Stay behind the leader & move quietly. When socializing stay behind the group, as many birds are found and identified by their songs & calls. Ask questions, but also listen to what people are pointing out.

Saturday, Sept. 8, 8:00 a.m. Lake Casitas. Leader: John Pavelko (640-9040). We will kick off the birding season at the lake which always offers a wide variety of birds including ducks, shorebirds, & raptors. You will have the opportunity to learn more about Ventura Audubon & meet some of the leaders. **Directions:** Limited free parking - to car pool from Ventura, meet at the Ventura Co. Museum (side parking lot) at 7:30 a.m. Take Hwy 33 to Hwy 150, turn left and follow signs to the lake or take Hwy 33, exit Casitas Vista Rd. Turn right and go under freeway past Foster Park to 1st right, Santa Anna Rd. Follow to the lake. Meet outside the gate.

Tuesday, Sept. 11, 8:30 a.m. Camino Real Park, Ventura. Leader: Adele Fergusson (415-4304). Many good birds on this walk with its barranca & eucalyptus trees. **Directions:** In Ventura take Dean Dr. off Mills Rd across from the Pacific View Mall. Follow Dean Dr. to the right & the park entrance. Meet at the parking lot between the tennis courts & playing fields. Bring binoculars and a field guide. Note: Adele's Tuesday Walks will normally be the 1st Tues. of each month.

Sept. 13-16: Monterey Bay Birding Festival (No VAS trip planned).

Sunday, Sept. 16, 8:00 a.m. Santa Clara River Estuary/ Surfers' Knoll. Leader: Alexis Frangis (217-4833). We hope to see a variety of shorebirds including Snowy Plovers, terns, & phalaropes. 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.

Saturday, Sept. 22, Beginners' Bird Walk, 8:30-10:30 a.m. Emma Wood and Ventura River Estuary. Leader: Allen Bertke (640-9037). A good area for shorebirds - herons, egrets, sandpipers, ducks and also riparian species. Park at the far west end of Main St. beyond the bridge over the Ventura River. The Beginners' Walks are designed to acquaint you with common birds in a specific area. Bring binoculars, hat & water. A field guide is helpful.

Mark Your Calendar:

Oct. 2 – Conejo Botanical Gardens

Oct. 27 – Lake Los Carneros – Beginners' Walk

NOTES FROM THE FIELD (..from Page 5)

Mountain on 11 May (DP). Two **Gray Flycatchers** were on historical territories in Quatal Canyon on 27 Apr (DP). **Dusky Flycatcher** reports included four on Frazier Mountain on 11 May (DP), eight on Mount Pinos on 8 Jun (DP), and two on Pine Mountain on 1 Jul (DP & TM). A pair of **Townsend's Solitaires** was exhibiting nesting behavior on Mount Pinos on 8 Jun (DP). **MacGillivray's Warblers** are unrecorded as breeders in Ventura County, but three in suitable breeding habitat on Mount Pinos on 8 Jun were likely doing that (DP). Three **Scott's Orioles** were in the little birded Ballinger Canyon on 27 Apr (DP) and three **Red Crossbills** were on Frazier Mountain on 11 May (DP).

Thank you to those who reported sightings during the spring and summer. 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

Observers: John Adams, Bernardo Alps, Allison Alvarado, Anthony Bevilacqua, Jeff Cartier, Katy Delaney, John Diener, Alexis Frangis, Lizzie Goodrick, Jesse Grantham, Mary Hansen, Penny Johnson, Dexter Kelly, Karl Krause, Peter Larramendy, Todd McGrath, Robert McMorran, Lindsey Mercer, Jim Moore, Kris Ohlenkamp, Becky Oliver, David Pereksta, Gavin Platt, Kay Regester, Chris Rios, David Roine, Paul Rosso, Martin Ruane, Craig Rudolph, Larry Sansone, Adam Searcy, Mike Sos, Elisa Taylor-Godwin, Michael Tiffany, and Michelle Townsley.

MONDAY SUMMER BIRDING TRIPS SUMMARY

by Allen Bertke

The summer Monday bird walks have become increasingly popular. They are organized by Laura and Ernie Gulovsen and yours truly got drafted -- I mean volunteered -- to lead them. Check last May's newsletter for the various locations. Here are some highlights from this summer.

At the Carpinteria Salt Marsh we saw the usual contingent of birds, such as herons, egrets, sandpipers, hawks, a White-tailed Kite and a Belding's Savannah Sparrow. A resident black cat was also present, as well as the non-native Red Fox that has been eluding capture for the last few years. It's awfully cute, but since its diet includes birds, eggs and nestlings it is not exactly a welcome guest. We also came across a plant with a lovely lavender flower, which was identified as a type of mallow. Given the fact that we were observing it at the Salt Marsh, I immediately dubbed it a "marshmallow".

Canada Larga, as usual, offered up a large variety of birds, including a roosting Barn Owl with many owl pellets on the ground below, a Blue Grosbeak, Red-tailed Hawks, Turkey Vultures, Ravens, Western Bluebirds, Lesser Goldfinches, Peacocks, and more. We were captivated by four beautiful male Lazuli Buntings, calling and flying back and forth across the road. They were very aggressive and territorial, although I'm not sure why they were posturing so fiercely because there wasn't a female in sight!

Laura found a new venue this year for one of our Monday hikes - a place called Ennisbrook. While I thought the capital of Austria was a particularly far away and unusual destination for a Ventura Audubon bird trip, I was still game. Reading the driving directions, however, I found that Ennisbrook is actually in Montecito. It is a hidden gem of a place; a purposely untouched area of woods and streams, surrounded by a series of splendid estates. It also has a decent variety of birds, including Spotted Towhees, Downy and Nuttall's Woodpeckers, Hutton's Vireos and others. We were entertained for some time by two very vocal Common Yellowthroats, staking out their territories. I am told that Oprah Winfrey lives in one of the homes there. I was hoping she would come out and offer us all new cars, but no such luck.

We did go to four other places during the summer, but due to limited space and my limited creative writing skills, I elected to just give you a taste of our summer adventures. You are all welcome to come and join us next summer on any of the Monday walks.

SAN LUIS OBISPO WEEKEND BIRDING TRIP REPORT

by Peg Stevens

Led by Neil Ziegler, an enthusiastic group of 15 birdwatchers trudged along the trails of several different parks and wild life refuges in the San Luis Obispo area on the weekend of April 20, 21, & 22, 2012.

Saturday morning bright and early we birded **Laguna Lake City Park**. We saw lots of grebes, cormorants, herons, egrets, several duck species, and numerous hawks, various warblers and other passerines. The best birds there were the Chestnut-backed Chickadee and the possible Merlin soaring over the fields in front of the distant mountains. At **El Chorro Regional Park**, near a golf course, we birded for an hour or so. This is a place to see and hear Wild Turkeys, and they did not disappoint us.

At **Morro Rock** we had wonderful views of 2 pairs of nesting Peregrine Falcons, regally perched atop the ledges high on the Rock near their nests. A few of us actually were able to see a couple of nestlings in the nests.

Sunday morning we all met at 7:15 for breakfast and check-out and then headed out for another half day of good birding at **Montana de Oro State Park**. We birded the beach cove and the campground for about 2 hours before we headed for Sweet Springs Audubon Sanctuary and did some quick birding of Morro Bay from another angle. Some of the best birds in those areas were Black Oystercatchers, Pigeon Guillemots, Wandering Tattlers, and Pelagic and Brandt's Cormorants.

All in all, we saw 82 live species of birds as well as one dead Yellow-billed Magpie in the road near Laguna Lake. We spent many hours birding with good friends, had great meals, and had tons of fun. I would go again next year if that turns out to be the plan!



NOTES FROM THE FIELD

...David Pereksta

Another summer is nearly in the rearview mirror and the time has come to summarize the highlights of the spring and summer. There are lots of birds to cover so let's get to it.

Most of our waterfowl and other waterbirds usually summer far north of Ventura County, but there are usually a few stragglers around. Summering **Brant** included one at the Santa Clara River estuary (SCRE) 27 May-2 Jul (BA), two at the Ventura River Estuary (VRE) on 13 Jul (JA), and two at Mugu Lagoon on 30 May (DP & AS) with one also there on 24 Jul (PR). A **Wood Duck** was at Bubbling Springs Park on 10 Jul (PJ) and two **Blue-winged Teal** were at SCRE 16-20 Jun (JM). Rare in the summer was a **Common Gallinule** at McGrath Lake on 7 June (KO).

Uncommon to rare waterbirds, waders, and shorebirds were observed at a variety of local wetlands. **Brown Pelicans** wandered widely this summer as young birds dispersing up from Mexico were having difficulty finding food. While there were many along the coast where expected, an individual at Lake Casitas was a rare inland sighting (DR & BO). **Least Bitterns** were at the Ojai Meadows 16-22 Apr (JG). Two **Least Bitterns** were at McGrath Lake on 7 Jun (KO) and an **American Bittern** was there on 19 Apr (AF). The **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons** continued at Point Mugu with three adults seen together there in the rookery near a nest with two chicks 6-10 Jul (MR). This is the furthest north nesting has ever been confirmed for this species along the Pacific coast. **Black Oystercatchers** continued to be widely reported along the mainland coast including two at VRE on 9 May (KR), one near the Channel Islands Harbor on 14 May (MS), 1 at VRE on 20 Jul (KR), 2 at the Ventura Harbor on 24 Jul-8 Aug (PR). An **American Oystercatcher** was on San Nicolas Island on 30 May (DP & MR). The hybrid **American x Black Oystercatchers** continued with one at the Ventura Harbor on 16 Jul (PJ) and two at SCRE on 29 Jul (AS & DP). Three **Solitary Sandpipers** were at the Ojai Meadows on 18 Apr (JG) with one continuing through 20 Apr. A southbound **Solitary Sandpiper** was near Point Mugu on 1 Aug. Other shorebirds of note there included a **Baird's Sandpiper** and a **Stilt Sandpiper** on 3 Aug (LS & DP) and a **Semipalmated Sandpiper** on 6 Aug (LS).

A **Franklin's Gull** was a nice find at Ormond Beach 13-15 May during the expected late-spring window for the species locally (DK). A **Laughing Gull** was seen flying near Ivy lawn Cemetery on 30 May (MT). An adult **Herring Gull** at SCRE on 11 Jul was unseasonal (DP). One of the most exceptional reports of the spring was of two **Gull-billed Terns** near McGrath Lake on 22 May (AF). While they appeared to be courting, they were never seen subsequently. **Common Terns** along the coast included individuals at SCRE on 27 May (BA) and 29 Jul (DP & AS) and at Mugu Lagoon on 30 May (DP & AS). While **Royal Terns** are regularly seen along the coast in the winter, late spring and summer records are unusual. This year **Royal Terns** were widely reported along the coast including 16 at SCRE on 27 May (BA) with at least 4 remaining until 11 Jul, and 3 at Point Mugu on 5 Jul (DP). **Black Skimmers** were also reported widely including 1 at SCRE on 27 May (BA), as many as 8 at SCRE 31 May-20 Jun (KK), 4 at Ormond Beach 6 Jul (JA), 2 at Marina Park on 21 Jun (KR), and 37 at Mugu Lagoon on 5 Jul (DP) with 26 continuing through 27 Jul.

Migrant **Swainson's Hawks** continued along the coast in April with one moving north over Cal State Channel Islands on 15 Apr (DP, LM & DK). **Bald Eagles** were at Lake Piru on 13 Apr (GP) and Lake Casitas on 12 Aug (DP).

Reports of **White-winged Doves** included one in an East Ventura yard 7-8 Aug (RM), one on San Nicolas Island on 12 Aug (JD & LG), and another in a Ventura yard on 13 Aug (MT). A **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** was a surprise visitor to a Santa Paula backyard on 20 Jul (CR). The only **Calliope Hummingbird** report was not from the mountains, but at a backyard feeder in east Ventura on 22 Apr (AA & RM).

There were a number of interesting passerine reports, including some late spring eastern vagrants and out-of-place western species. A very rare summer record was an adult male **Vermilion Flycatcher** at the Saticoy Golf Course 3 Jun-13 Jul (JC). After several years of breeding range expansion in Ventura County, **Bell's Vireos** were scarce this year away from their Santa Clara River stronghold so one in the Moorpark Arroyo in late May was notable (CR). The wintering **Plumbeous Vireo** in Mae Boyer Park in Oak Park continued through 14 Apr. **Red-breasted Nuthatches** are unheard of as a breeder in the lowlands, so a bird excavating a cavity at the Ojai Meadows 15 - 17 Apr (JG) and another bird nearby at Krotina and Taormina 16-21 Apr (JG) were an indication of possible breeding in the Ojai area. The **Black-and-white Warbler** continued in Port Hueneme through 18 Apr and another was found in a Ventura yard on 25 Apr (ETG). Unexpected on a Cactus Wren survey was a **Hooded Warbler** at Cal State Channel Islands on 22 Apr (DP). Sparrows of note included a very unseasonal **Clay-colored Sparrow** at the Ojai Meadows on 2 Jul (JG) and the continuing **White-throated Sparrow** at Lake Sherwood through 27 Apr. **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** reports included one at a feeder in Ventura on 17 May (PL) and one on San Nicolas Island 2-5 Aug (JD & LG). A singing male **Indigo Bunting** thrilled local birders at Rancho Sierra Vista 7-13 Jun (AB, KD). **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** were scarce last winter but spring migrants were seen along the coast including 10 at McGrath Lake on 19 Apr (AF), 2 at Arnold Road on 21 Apr (MB & AS), 1 at VRE on 9 May (KR), and 35 at Arnold Road on 9 May (DP).

A number of uncommon species were reported from the mountains and dry canyons of the north county over the spring and summer. **Northern Goshawks** are seldom seen residents of the mountains in northern Ventura County and reports this spring included three on Mount Pinos on 27 Apr (DP) with one seen there through 1 Jul, while another was on Frazier Mountain on 11 May (DP). Two **Gray Flycatchers** were on historical territories in Quatal Canyon on 27 Apr (DP). **Dusky Flycatcher** reports included four on Frazier

VENTURA AUDUBON SOCIETY

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IMPORTANT ...VAS NEWSLETTER PRINTING AND MAILING CHANGE

As announced in May, VAS will **discontinue printing** the monthly newsletter in January 2013. It has become increasingly expensive to print and mail; so, we join many other Audubon chapters in making the newsletter available only in electronic form. The money previously used for printing will, instead, be available to further advance our educational and conservation efforts. We'll send you a copy as soon as it is published **IF** we have your email address. If you are **NOT** currently receiving the newsletter **VIA EMAIL**, please **send an email to Jackie Worden**, Membership Chair, at jbworden7@gmail.com. The newsletter will always be available on the website each month. If you **do not** have access to the internet, please call or write to Jackie or any Board member and we'll make arrangements to print and mail a copy to you each month.

FROM YOUR NEW PROGRAM COMMITTEE

A big thank you to Janice Susha for her 7 years of providing VAS with informative, interesting and timely programs. Jim Susha too has been so accommodating on the technical side. In the future 3 of us will be responsible for the programs: Audrey Vincent,; Margaret Wilson; and Laura Gulovsen. I you know of speakers, photographers, or programs you would be interested in, please contact one of us . Our phone numbers appear in the "Program Committee" in the Officers and Chairs table below. We aim to please!

VAS OFFICERS AND CHAIRS

President	Bruce Schoppe	658-2396
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	Margaret Wilson	647-7962
	Audrey Vincent	525-5826

OCTOBER BOARD MEETING

The Tuesday, October 2nd Board of Directors meeting will be held at the home of Bruce & Joyce Schoppe, 4875 Mascagni St in Ventura, at 7:15 p.m. Call 805-658-2396 for more information. Any VAS member is welcome.

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 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.

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.