People join Audubon for many reasons but, mainly, because they enjoy birds. They attend the programs and participate in our many field trips. Yet, because we know the main threat to birds is loss of habitat caused by human activity, conservation and restoration are important parts of our mission. A number of issues that VAS has been concerned about continue to be active and merit our attention.

A recent article in the Star related that the USFWS is proposing expansion of critical habitat for the western snowy plover all along the west coast. A prime mover is the anticipated impact of climate change including sea level rise. The plover (and least terns which use some of the same beaches) are threatened by habitat loss and human activity. VAS has commented in favor of the expansion and the public is invited to add their comments. Go to http://www.regulations.gov and enter FWS-R8-ES-2010-070.

The issue of sea level rise is addressed by the California Coastal Conservancy in a document titled Guidance for Addressing Climate Change in California Coastal Conservancy Projects. http://scc.ca.gov/2011/04/06/guidance-for-addressing-climate-change-in-california-coastal-conservancy-projects/ It relies, in part, on a resolution of the California Ocean Protection Council recommending that the state consider potential sea level rise of as much as 69” by 2100 when implementing projects and programs. That’s 5-feet 9-inches!

The Oxnard Planning Commission recently approved a 1500+ home and commercial development long under consideration north of Hueneme Road. Where will the “beach” be if sea levels do rise by 69” in the Ormond Beach area? VAS has commented on the DEIR and Oxnard’s 2030 Draft General Plan recommending against approval of this development, in part, because of the added human disruptions it would bring to Ormond Beach. Oxnard residents should keep informed of this project as it moves along.

And, in Ventura, the proposal to annex Canada Larga to build “executive homes” will be front and center again by the time you read this. The fiscal report on the development of the Westside, North Avenue, and Canada Larga was released in early April. Analysis by VCHP and other members of the coalition of environmental groups opposing annexation indicate that annexation of Canada Larga (and the North Avenue) will cost the city money especially when considering debt service on the capital improvements that would be needed. Instead, the coalition is urging the Council to implement the Ventura River Parkway Plan that they previously supported. http://www.cityofventura.net/westside . Stay tuned. There’s a lot happening!

All members are invited to the Annual Meeting & BBQ on Saturday May 14, 2011. IT WILL BE HELD THIS YEAR AT ARROYO VERDE PARK (5000 FOOTHILL RD. IN VENTURA, VISTA BLUFF PICNIC AREA). NOTE THE CHANGE IN LOCATION. The cost is $10.00 per person (half price for children). There is a parking fee on weekends ($2.00 per hour, maximum of $5.00 per day – collected as you leave. Consider car pooling.

Nancy and Carl Schorsch will get us started with a bird walk beginning around 8:30 am. Around 11:00 am, we’ll conduct a short business meeting to elect directors and amend the by-laws. Then, we’ll eat! There will be BBQ tri-tip and chicken, garlic bread, salad and beans. Members attending are asked to bring an appetizer or dessert to round out the meal. Please bring your own table service and, if you bring a dish, please bring serving utensils. Soft drinks will be provided. Unfortunately, beer and wine will NOT be available and we cannot bring our own. The City requires insurance which VAS does not have and which is very expensive to buy.

Everyone is invited to the picnic. We hope to see new faces as well as the stalwarts! Please join with other VAS members to celebrate another successful year – and to enjoy the birds and wildflowers of Arroyo Verde Park.

Please RSVP as early as possible by sending your check (indicating that it is for the picnic) to the VAS post office box, or call or email Marianne Slaughter (484-8415, birderz1@roadrunner.com) or Bruce Schoppe (658-2396, bschoppe6698@sbcglobal.net). You may also pay at the door but please do RSVP so that we will have enough food.
Summer is a great time to explore the coniferous forests on the mountains of northern Ventura County. A species that requires traveling to the tops of our local mountains to find it is the Clark’s Nutcracker.

The Clark’s Nutcracker is a member of the Corvidae family making it a relative of jays, magpies, crows, and ravens. It is a short-tailed, long-winged ash-gray bird about the size of a flicker. The sharply contrasting black wings show a large white patch on the secondaries while the tail is white with black central tail feathers. The forehead, throat, and undertail coverts are white. The long, pointed bill is black; the legs and eyes are also black. The voice is a harsh, loud, throaty kra-a-a. Northern Mockingbirds and shrikes have similar coloration, but are smaller, longer-tailed, and shorter-billed. Pinyon Jays are similar in shape, but smaller and all blue.

Clark’s Nutcrackers live in high montane forests, generally above the Yellow Pine belt on arid slopes and rocky timberline areas with firs and pines such as Limber, Lodgepole, Bristlecone, and Jeffrey. In these places they seek out their preferred food, pine seeds. They are known for caching as many as 30,000 pine seeds in the ground (150 of which they can store in their mouth at once while gathering them) that they later find and dig up during the winter. Like crows, they are noisy, gregarious, bold and intelligently wary of man. Some concentrate around campgrounds and picnic areas within suitable habitat where they can often be seen stealing food scraps. They are often seen in small groups perched in snags, breaking the silence with their harsh, grating calls. During irruptive corvid flights that are correlated with major pine seed crop failures, they can occur in areas well outside of their breeding range.

Clark’s Nutcrackers occur throughout the mountains of southern Canada and the western United States south to southern California, Arizona, and New Mexico. There are also two isolated populations in northern Mexico and Northern Baja California. Occasional invasions occur during the nonbreeding season to lower mountains and lowlands beyond the breeding range into central Alaska, the Pacific coast to southern California, western Great Lakes, and the upper Mississippi River valley.

In Ventura County, Clark’s Nutcrackers are local residents on the higher mountains. They are fairly common residents on Mount Pinos and Frazier Mountain, and rare on Pine Mountain. They can also be found on Mount Abel and at Mil Potrero Park just over the border in Kern County. During the fall and winter of irruption years, they have been seen near Mutah Flat, in the Lockwood Valley, and elsewhere in the northern part of the county, with the potential to also appear in the coastal lowlands. During the last irruption in the winter of 2000-2001, a flock of 150 Clark’s Nutcrackers was seen on Pine Mountain!
Beginners are welcome on all field trips. Light drizzle does not necessarily cancel trips, but heavier rain will. If in doubt, call the leader.

**Sunday, May 1, 8:30 a.m. Lang Ranch Park, Thousand Oaks. Leader: Eric Waian (630-0100). Directions:** Take Hwy 101 So. Take exit 43B to merge onto CA-23N toward Moorpark. Take exit 15 for Avenida De Los Arboles. Turn right on Avenida De Los Arboles. Turn right on N. Westlake Blvd. Take first left onto Lang Ranch Pkwy. Lang Ranch is on the north side of L.R. Pkwy. We will meet at the playground equipment at the east end of the park right across from the Chumash Indian Museum. We will bird Lang Park & then cross the street into woodland & chaparral area. **To car pool,** meet at 7:45 at the Pacific View Mall in Ventura. Take Coastal View Dr. entrance off Mills & park in the lot directly across from the parking garage entrance.

**Sunday, May 8, Rescheduled Tejon Ranch.** Open to those previously registered

**Saturday, May 14, 8:30 a.m. Annual VAS Picnic, Arroyo Verde Park. Leaders: Carl & Nancy Schorsch (643-5825). Bird/Plant Walk followed by the Annual Meeting & Picnic! $10.00 for lunch. Meet at the last parking lot with restrooms on the left. The park is at Day Rd. and Foothill Rd. in Ventura.

**Saturday, May 21, 8:00 a.m. Hedrick Ranch Nature Area, Santa Paula. Leader: Sandy Hedrick (340-0478).** We will bird this lovely area with the possibility of seeing Least Bells Vireos, Yellow-breasted Chats, & a Thick-billed Kingbird. We will also look at the progress made during the past year on the restoration program. **Directions:** Take Hwy 126 to Santa Paula, 10th St. Exit. Go left under freeway, right on Harvard, right on 12th, cross 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).

**Sunday, May 22, 8:00 a.m. Rancho Sierra Vista/Satwiwa. Leader: Jack Gillooly (646-3867).** Birds of Spring. Many habitats attract colorful migrants and summer residents: Blue Grosbeaks, Lazuli Buntings, roadrunners, warblers, and the elusive Grasshopper Sparrow. Bring binoculars. Beginners welcome! **Directions:** Meet at the main parking lot off Lynn Rd. in Newbury Park. Fwy 101 to Wendy Drive south, turn right on Lynn Road (west), turn left on Via Goleta, go ¼ to main parking lot at the end of the road. **To car pool,** meet at 7:15 at the Pacific View Mall in Ventura. Take Coastal View Dr. entrance off Mills & park in the lot directly across from the parking garage entrance.

**Saturday, May 28, 8:30 – 10:30 a.m. Beginners’ Bird Walk, Canada Larga Road. Leader: Allen Bertke (640-9037). Directions:** Take Hwy 33 toward Ojai. Exit Canada Larga Rd. Meet near the beginning of the road. We will walk and drive this road where we will find Blue Grosbeaks, Lazuli Buntings, orioles, Cliff Swallows & maybe some leftover Lewis’ Woodpeckers. Bring binoculars, a field guide, hat & water.

**Check the Newsletter for informal summer birding on Mondays.**

**Mark Your Calendar: Saturday, Aug. 20, 8:30 – 10:30 a.m. Ventura Wildlife Ponds Clean-up Work Day. Leader: Neil Ziegler (983-7207).** It is essential that we clear vegetation to make better birding observation points. We need a lot of help so if you enjoy birding around the ponds, join us & bring cutting tools. Directions below.

**Saturday, Aug. 27, 8:00 a.m. Ventura Wildlife Ponds. Leader: Neil Ziegler (983-7202).** Traditional kick-off walk for the Audubon year. Take Harbor Blvd to Spinnaker and enter Ventura Harbor. The Water Treatment Plant is on Angler, a left turn before Spinnaker curves to the right. Turn in left and meet inside the gate.
There were only about half as many birdwatchers as usual in attendance at our latest beginners bird walk that occurred at Ojai Meadows. The reason is because it was cold, gray, ugly, and inhospitable – basically, it was day old weather from Cleveland. But the birds didn’t seem to mind. There was the usual contingent of blackbirds, Acorn Woodpeckers, Turkey Vultures, Western Bluebirds, Song Sparrows, goldfinches, Red-tailed Hawks, ducks, etc.

A good teaching illustration moment happened as I was explaining the meaning of GISS – General Impression of Size and Shape, after I had just pointed out a Western Bluebird in silhouette and someone asked how I was able to do that. On a wire behind us were five different bird species lined up, in order of size – a Red-winged Blackbird, a Western Bluebird, a House Finch a Lesser Goldfinch and a Hummingbird. What are the odds!

Along with the birds, the Meadow was full of gopher mounds. It reminded me of when I met a young boy there a few weeks earlier. On that day I stopped at one point at what looked like a small gopher city. While talking with a man and his young son, I began to absent-mindedly flatten out the loose dirt of one of the mounds, while describing how I was seriously thinking of starting a Great Blue Heron and Barn Owl farm at my property to control all of the gophers there. Noticing what I was doing to the mound, the boy asked if he could flatten some mounds too, so his dad and I told him to go-pher it. He gleefully proceeded to knock down every gopher mound in the area. Little did he know they would probably all be back by the next morning, but for the moment he was proud and content with his utter destruction of Gophertown. That brought to mind the oft quoted saying: “It takes a child to raze a village.”

Anyway, despite the weather, we all had a good time and managed to see a large number of species. My next walk will be for the fair weather people. See you then.

**VAS BOARD OF DIRECTORS NOMINATIONS**

The Nominating Committee that included Sandy Hedrick, Nancy Schorsch and Reed Smith make the following recommendations for the 2011-2012 Board of Directors:

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<th>Susan Bee</th>
<th>Joyce Schoppe</th>
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<td>John Connor</td>
<td>Bruce Schoppe</td>
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<td>Judy Dugan</td>
<td>Nancy Schorsch</td>
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<td>Jack Gillooly</td>
<td>Marianne Slaughter</td>
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<td>Alexis Hamilton</td>
<td>Reed Smith</td>
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<td>Sandy Hedrick</td>
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All are incumbents with the exception of Alexis Hamilton and Neil Ziegler. You all know Neil who served many years as president. Alexis is an Environmental Scientist with California State Parks currently involved with the Snowy Plover Monitoring Program. She was an important contributor to the Share the Shore Children’s Art Project.

The total of 17 is two more than currently permitted under our by-laws. As a result, the Board voted unanimously to amend Article III, Section 1 of the by-laws of the Ventura Audubon Society to read as follows:

**Number of Directors:** The Board of Directors may consist of not more than seventeen (17) members until changed by amendment of these By-Laws as hereinafter provided; however, in no event shall said Board consist of less than five (5) members. A majority of the Board shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

Under the By-Laws, an amendment of the By-Laws must be approved “by the vote of Members entitled to exercise a majority of the voting power at any Annual Meeting of the Members....” Accordingly, the proposal to amend the By-Laws will be voted on at the upcoming Annual Meeting on May 14, 2011 at Arroyo Verde Park.
NOTES FROM THE FIELD

...David Pereksta

Migrants continued to arrive in late March and early April while some wintering birds still continued through at least the end of March. May is the perfect time to get out looking for migrants and local breeders throughout the county so get out birding and let us know what you see.

A number of notable waterbirds were found along the coast last month or continued from the winter. The wintering Red-necked Grebe was in the Ventura Harbor through 26 Mar. A male Wood Duck was flying north over the harbor and five Blue-winged Teal were at the Ventura Wildlife Ponds on 10 Apr (DP & JC). The two Long-tailed Ducks at Hollywood Beach were joined by a third bird on 17 Mar (JL) and all continued through 26 Mar. Black Oystercatcher reports included one on the jetties at the Channel Islands Harbor on 21 Mar (AS) and four at Mussel Shoals on 17 Mar (DP). Uncommon waterfowl seen inland from the coast included a pair of Blue-winged Teal on a pond near Lake Sherwood 23-29 Mar (MH) and the continuing Eurasian Wigeon at Rancho Simi Park through 21 Mar.

Several uncommon species were found or continued at Point Mugu and on the Oxnard Plain. A field trip to Point Mugu on 18 Mar saw a Snow Goose, 2 Blue-winged Teal, an adult Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, 12 Red Knots, a Black Skimmer, and a Tropical Kingbird (DP). An American Bittern and several Yellow-headed Blackbirds continued at the wetlands adjacent to Point Mugu on 27 Mar.

Lake Casitas and other areas near the Ventura River and Ojai produced several interesting species. Birds found near Lake Casitas included three Lewis’s Woodpeckers north of the Lake on 26 Mar (DR & BD) and a male Vermilion Flycatcher north of Wadleigh Arm on 8 Mar (J & PP). The pair of Bald Eagles continued to tend the nest at Lake Casitas through 19 Mar. Elsewhere, two singing Bell's Vireos were on Canada Larga Road on 10 Apr (MP & EW, DP & JC), a Black-throated Sparrow was in Ojai on 4 Apr (BK), and two Pine Siskins were at Soule Park on 3 Apr (MP & EW).

A trip to the mountains in the north county on 26 Mar found a lot of snow and road closures, but also yielded a few noteworthy birds including a California Condor and a Golden Eagle along Cerro Noroeste Road and two Prairie Falcons near the western end of Lockwood Valley Road (DP & TM).

Other reports included a male Red-naped Sapsucker at a private ranch off Balcom Canyon Road in Somis on 19 Mar (CR) and the continuing Hermit Warbler at Camino Real Park through 26 Mar.

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

Jeff Cartier, Becky Donahue, Mary Hansen, Bob Kilpatrick, John Luther, Todd McGrath, Matthew Page, David Pereksta, John and Pam Peterson, Kay Regester, Chris Rios, David Roine, Adam Searcy, Reed Smith, and Eric Waian

Look for VAS activities and the newsletter to resume in September!

Have a wonderful summer!

See you at the Annual Picnic ...
May 14, 2011
Arroyo Verde Park
(see Page 1)
**AUDUBON SUMMER BIRDING**

We meet for 7 Mondays from 8:30-10:30. All levels of birders are welcome. Please clip and save. Alan "LeaderBird" Bertke will lead.

*June 6-Our first trip will be to Alan's home, 481 Saddle Lane, Ojai. We can car pool from downtown museum, 100 E. Main. Park in back lot at 8:00. Take Hwy 33 toward Ojai, make a rt. turn at Creek Road (big brown sign says Camp Comfort), go about 5.2 miles to a hairpin turn, in about 1 block make a right at Saddle Lane.*

*June 13-Ojai Meadow Preserve. If you want to car pool meet at downtown museum parking lot at 8:00. Take Hwy 33 toward Ojai & follow it to Nordoff H.S. Park in north part of lot.*

*June 20-Canada Larga-Take Hwy 33 toward Ojai. Exit Canada Larga Rd. Meet near the beginning of the road. We will walk and drive.*

*June 27-Arroyo Verde Park in Ventura-Day & Foothill Road. Meet in the back area.*

*July 11-Surfer's Point-Across from Ventura Harbor.*

*July 18-Emma Wood State Beach-Cross the bridge and park where the eucalyptus trees used to be on the rt. side of road.*

*July 25-Carpinteria Salt Marsh-To car pool meet at the downtown museum back lot at 8:00. Take Hwy 101 north to Carpinteria, exit Casitas Pass Rd., left on Casitas Pass Rd., rt. on Carpinteria Ave., left on Linden and rt. on Sandy Lane Rd. to Ash. Park along Ash. This will be our last outing and we have been invited to bring a sack lunch & beverage to Debby Burn's ocean front home. Details later.*

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**VAS OFFICERS AND CHAIRS**

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<th>Officer</th>
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<td>President</td>
<td>Bruce Schoppe</td>
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<td>Vice-President</td>
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<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Marianne Slaughter</td>
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<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Sandy Hedrick</td>
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<td>Field Trips</td>
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<td>Publicity/Education</td>
<td>Susan Bee</td>
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<td>Science/Webmaster</td>
<td>Reed Smith</td>
<td>652-0706</td>
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<td>Programs</td>
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<td>Nancy Schorsch</td>
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**MAY BOARD MEETING**

The Tuesday, May 3rd Board of Directors meeting will be held at Susan Bee's, 1415 McNeil Rd, Ojai. Any VAS member is welcome. Call 640-0779 for information.

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**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.

**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.