

The CALIFORNIA CONDOR

Ventura Audubon Society **APRIL 2013** Volume 33 Number 8
A Chapter of the National Audubon www.VenturaAudubon.org



CALL NOTES ...Bruce Schoppe, President

Birdathon!

Birdathon is Ventura Audubon's only major fundraiser of the year. With your generous response, VAS can continue to provide outstanding monthly programs and publish a monthly newsletter. We can also continue to develop educational outreach programs, fund local conservation and environmental projects and help inform the public on important birding and wildlife issues.

Any scheduled trip during the month of APRIL may be used as the basis for your pledge of an amount per species seen. Or, if you prefer, you may make a donation in any amount. All contributions are tax deductible. Please use the pledge form on Page 6 of this newsletter, and send your pledge or donation to P.O. Box 24198, Ventura, CA 93002. Or, even easier, go to our website (www.venturaaudubon.org) and make a donation using PayPal. A separate spot is available for this purpose.

The Annual Meeting and BBQ ...SAVE THE DATE!

The Annual Meeting and BBQ is scheduled for Saturday, May 18, 2013. We are going to do something a little different this year – different location and different chef! The meeting will be at Camp Comfort, 11969 North Creek Road in Ojai at 11:00 am. There is a \$4 per vehicle parking fee on weekends; so, plan on carpooling! As usual, we shall do some birding beforehand starting around 9:00 am. The meeting will start at 11:00 am. This is the meeting at which you, the members, elect the board of directors to lead VAS for the next program year. More information will appear in the May newsletter. Cost will be \$12.00 per person (children \$6.00).

In January, Ernie & Laura Gulovsen celebrated their 60th Anniversary. For that, they engaged a catering service (Q-Time BBQ Grill & Catering) who brought the grill and cooked some outstanding BBQ chicken and tri-tip. We decided to try this approach because we will not have to buy the food, we will not need to haul backyard BBQ's to the park or cook! Of course, sadly perhaps, there will not be leftovers, either! There will also be a vegetarian meal available. Because it is a county park, we can have alcohol. BYOB! Water will be provided.

APRIL PROGRAM

7:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 9th, Poinsettia Pavilion, 3451 Foothill Road, Ventura

***"Eyes in the Sky Wildlife Program"
with Gabriele Drozdowski ...and Max, the Owl***

The resume of Gabriele Drozdowski, our speaker, is fascinating. You name it, she has done it: actress, dance instructor, clown, mime, juggler, magician, and story teller. Gabriele comes to us this evening in yet another role - wildlife rehabilitator and the guardian of Max, the owl. We will meet Max and learn his story as well as Gabriele's work with the Eyes in the Sky Wildlife Program. You won't want to miss our **final program of the year!** Hope to see you there! ***...Laura Gulovsen***



BIRD OF THE MONTH – APRIL 2013

Article and Photo by David Pereksta

Blue Grosbeak (Passerina caerulea)



April brings a variety of neotropical migrants back to Ventura County, a number of which stay through the summer to breed. One of these migrants that breeds locally in brushy areas is the Blue Grosbeak.

The Blue Grosbeak has a large, heavy conical bill and a long, rounded tail. The male is uniformly deep blue, slightly paler on the rump, with two rufous wing bars; the upper bar is broad and the lower one narrow. It also has black in the face and chin and indistinct black streaking on the upperparts. The female is pale grayish brown, darker above, with two rust to buff-colored wing bars; the rump is tinged with blue. The immature male resembles the female but has a mixture of blue and brown plumage. The species has a tendency to nervously twitch and spread its tail. The song is a series of sweet warbled phrases that rise and fall, resembling the song of Purple Finch while the call note is a sharp metallic *tink* or *chink*. The species looks similar to the Indigo Bunting, which shares the same habitat (although rare locally), but the bunting is smaller with a smaller bill and no wing bars.

Blue Grosbeaks are a fairly common bird of the southern United States. Closely related to the North American buntings, it is found along hedgerows and roadsides, in thickets, shrubby areas, farmlands, and near wooded borders and stream and ditch banks. They usually hide in thickets, but do frequently perch on utility wires and fences, where the male may sit for long periods of time singing.

The species breeds from central California, northern Nevada, Utah, southern Colorado, central South Dakota, western Iowa, central Illinois, southern Ohio, northern Kentucky, and southern Tennessee to southeastern Pennsylvania and southern New York; south to Texas, the Gulf Coast, and central Florida, south into Mexico. It winters from Mexico south to Panama, and rarely in the Bahamas and Cuba.

Blue Grosbeaks are fairly common but local summer residents in riparian thickets and brushy areas bordering weedy fields and pastures in lowlands throughout southern California. Small numbers of transients move through in the spring and fall and coastal winter visitors are very rare. They generally arrive in the spring by mid-April and breed through August; fall transients occur primarily in late August and early September. Local sites where they can be found during the breeding season include Canada Larga, Rancho Sierra Vista, Rancho Potrero, Lake Casitas, the Santa Clara River, Ojai Meadows, Hill Canyon, the Saticoy Ponds, and Camarillo Regional Park.



APRIL 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.

Birdathon: Any scheduled trip in April may be used to pledge money per species seen.

Tuesday, April 2, 8:30 a.m. Ojai Meadow Preserve. Leader: Adele Fergusson (415-4304). 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 and follow it 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.

Saturday, April 6, 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Oxnard Earth Day – VAS booth. Plaza Park, Oxnard. Join us anytime to make bottle bird feeders, provide information on birds & conservation & answer questions.

Sunday, April 7, 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.** We will be assisting in restoration on an adjacent property. **Long pants and boots or closed shoes are required.** Bring water, gloves & sun protection. 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, April 13, 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.

Saturday/Sunday, April 20/21, Carrizo Plain & Wind Wolves Preserve. Leader: Neil Ziegler (983-7207). Saturday: Carrizo Plain. 9:00 a.m. Directions: Take Hwy 33 north of Ojai to Hwy 166. Turn right on Hwy 166, continue to Soda Lake Rd. (old 76 station). Turn left/north on Soda Lake at the sign for Carrizo. Meet by the sign. There are several birding areas in the preserve. There are no food facilities so bring snacks & lunch depending on how long you want to bird.

Sunday: Wind Wolves Preserve is a private preserve and limits the number of participants on each tour. If interested, contact Judy at catmai03@yahoo.com or 642-0842 for availability & directions. Two possible accommodations in Taft: Holland Inn & Suites (661-763-5211) & the Caprice (661-765-2161).

Saturday, April 27, 8:30 – 10:30 a.m. Beginners' Bird Walk, Ojai–Persimmon Hill area. Leader: Allen Bertke (640-9037). Join us at Allen's place. We should see Hooded & Bullock's Orioles, Western Bluebirds, hummingbirds, and many more. Bring binoculars, a field guide, hat and water. From Ventura, take Hwy 33 to Creek Rd. Turn right and follow Creek Rd. for about 5 miles. Just past the 10mph left hand curve, take 1st right onto Saddle Lane (Look for Persimmon Hill sign; Saddle Lane sign is difficult to see.) Once on Saddle, go straight at the stop sign. 481 Saddle will be the 4th house on the right past the stop sign.

Mark Your Calendar

May 7, Lake Los Carneros
May 18, Annual BBQ – Camp Comfort
May 25, Beginners' Walk – Canada Larga

Birding Etiquette Reminder: As our walks have many participants, here are some reminders to insure a good experience for all: Stay behind the leader, keep up and 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.

BEGINNERS' BIRD WALK ...Allen Bertke

As we all gathered in the parking lot at Lake Casitas, I explained that we were going to incorporate this Beginner's Bird Walk with Cornell University's annual citizen science event, in which everyone can participate even from their own back yard. It is not known as just a regular, everyday backyard count, but rather the **Great** Backyard Bird Count. I can't vouch for how great it is, but having the ability to designate Lake Casitas as our back yard for the day was great in and of itself.

We were able to document 49 species during our brief time at the lake, with some diehards continuing on after the walk to tabulate another 10 or so. Off in the distance, in the middle of the lake, some of us were even able to see the mating dance of two Western Grebes as they "ran" across the water together with their heads held high. Too bad it wasn't closer and didn't last very long. It was way out there, but one photographer got a pretty good picture.



Of course, there was the usual collection of coots, grebes, herons, ducks and egrets, as well as Cedar Waxwings, a Phainopepla, Yellow-rumped Warblers and the ever present Black Phoebe. A Red-shouldered Hawk put on a spectacular display of posing, dropping to the ground and then flying up to another perch, showing us its beautiful colors and field markings. This prompted Ellen, one of our participants, to state that a couple of weeks ago she was observing a Red-shouldered Hawk pluck and devour a fellow raptor, an American Kestrel that it had caught. Her thought was "Whatever happened to professional courtesy?" I give credit where credit is due, so thanks Ellen for a great line.

Another Ellenism: I was explaining how to tell the difference between Snowy Egrets and Great Egrets when Ellen said "How do you remember all of these little things?" I said, "I have a mind that's good at retaining trivia. You know. Trivial thoughts come from a trivial mind." "Oh you don't have a trivial mind" she said, "But you do have a bird brain." Guess I walked into that one. Maybe I should hire her as my writer.

See you all on the next walk.

VAS OFFICERS AND CHAIRS

President	Bruce Schoppe	658-2396
Vice-President	Neil Zeigler	983-7207
Secretary	Joyce Schoppe	658-2396
Treasurer	Marianne Slaughter	484-8415
Conservation	Sandy Hedrick	643-2408
Field Trips	Judy Dugan	642-0842
Publicity/Education	Susan Bee	640-0779
Webmaster/Science	Alexis Frangis	217-4833
At Large:	Jim Susha	983-3929
	Jack Gillooly	646-3867
	John Connor	654-1805
	Jan Lewison	339-0644
	Nancy Schorsch	643-5825
	Janice Susha	983-3929
Membership	Jackie Worden	652-0577
Newsletter Editor	Dee Press	484-8415
Program Committee:	Laura Gulovsen	642-6544
	Margaret Wilson	647-7962
	Audrey Vincent	525-5826

APRIL BOARD MEETING

The Tuesday April 2nd Board of Directors meeting will be held at the home of Bruce & Joyce Schoppe, 4875 Mascagni St., Ventura, at 7:15 p.m. Call 805-658-2396 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.

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: deepr2@gmail.com Call Editor Dee Press at 484-8415 for more information.



NOTES FROM THE FIELD

...David Pereksta

While late February and early March can often be one of the slowest birding times of the year because wintering species are leaving and spring migrants are barely starting to arrive, this year has been exciting due to a number of new finds. Some of these may be northbound migrants, while others may be wintering individuals that were not discovered until late in the season.

Uncommon or rare passerines continued to dominate the notable sightings over the last month. After a 12-year absence of sightings from the county, two **Harris's Sparrows** were reported over the last month. The first was found in a flock of sparrows in upper Sycamore Canyon that also contained a **White-throated Sparrow** 16-20 Feb (RB), while the second was at the Saticoy Spreading Ponds 23 Feb-2 Mar (RM & AA). A **White-throated Sparrow** was also in Camarillo 17-18 Feb (JH) and another continued in Thousand Oaks through 7 Mar. The **Eastern Phoebe** continued at CSUCI through 5 Mar and a **Palm Warbler** was there on 10 Mar (CM). A **Brown Creeper** was at Rancho Simi Park on 8 Mar (DP) and A **Varied Thrush** was at Oakbrook Regional Park 10-12 Mar (MP). “**Pink-sided**” **Dark-eyed Juncos**



Swainson's Hawk

were reported from several locations including Rancho Simi Park 11-14 Feb (MH & KR), Camino Real Park on 24 Feb (AS & DM), and Erringer Park on 5 Mar (AB). This subspecies is rare locally and difficult to identify. Other continuing birds included a **Green-tailed Towhee** near Oak View through 24 Feb, a **Hermit Warbler** at Camino Real Park through 10 Mar, A **Swamp Sparrow** at Lake Casitas through 5 Mar, and a **Baltimore Oriole** at Camino Real Park through 5 Mar. **Red-breasted Nuthatches** and **Pine Siskins** continued in numbers and were reported from numerous locations.

Several exciting waterbirds were found late in the season including a **Long-tailed Duck** near the Ventura Harbor 6-10 Mar (JB) and a **Glaucous Gull** at the Agromin plant on Arnold Road 5-6 Mar (JB). Late season geese included a **Greater White-fronted Goose** at Bubbling Springs Park in Port Hueneme 5-6 Mar (DC) and 61 **Brant** at the Ventura River estuary 20-21 Feb (KR). Two **Common Mergansers** and four **Hooded Mergansers** continued in the Arroyo Simi through 8 Mar, a **Common Merganser** continued at the Saticoy Spreading Ponds through 1 Mar, and a **Hooded Merganser** was in Santa Paula on 8 Mar (DP). In addition, nine **Black-legged Kittiwakes** were reported from a whale watching boat on 23 Feb (JB).

New finds in the Point Mugu area included a **Swainson's Hawk** 11-15 Feb (FF) and a **Golden Eagle** on 16 Feb (LS et al.). The **Swainson's Hawk** had a transmitter on it and its origins were traced back to a nest near Sutter Butte last summer. Continuing birds included 95 **Brant**, a **Snow Goose**, and 3 **Common Goldeneyes** through 18 Feb; a **Reddish Egret** through 19 Feb; and at least two **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons** and a **Vermilion Flycatcher** through 8 Mar.

A **Ferruginous Hawk** and **Golden Eagle** continued along Canada Larga Road through 21 Feb and two **Burrowing Owls** were there on 24 Feb (ETG). Early vocalizing **Common Poorwills** were in the Santa Susana Mountains on 13 Feb (LB), Decker Canyon on 9 Mar (DP), and continued at Rancho Sierra Vista through 18 Feb.

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.



Ferruginous Hawk

Observers: Allison Alvarado, Joel Barrett, Lance Benner, Amy Bracy, Ryan Burnett, Dennis Cabral, Francesca Ferrara, Mary Hansen, Jean Hulberg, Curtis Marantz, Dan Maxwell, Robert McMorran, Matthew Page, David Pereksta, Kay Regester, Larry Sansone, Adam Searcy, and Elisa Taylor-Godwin

VENTURA AUDUBON SOCIETY

P.O. Box 24198
Ventura, CA 93002



**VENTURA AUDUBON SOCIETY
BIRDATHON 2013 PLEDGE/DONATION FORM**



Giving is easy! Simply make a donation using this form, or pledge a certain amount per species seen for any VAS field trip in April. We will let you know how many species were seen on the field trip, or, come on the field trip of your choice and donate based on the number of species you see.

Name_____

Address_____

City_____ Zip_____

Telephone Number_____ Email Address_____

My tax deductible gift of \$_____ is enclosed.

I pledge \$_____ per species seen on field trip_____.

I will join one of the Birdathon field trips and pledge \$_____ per species.

Make checks payable to: **Ventura Audubon Society. IMPORTANT: Write BIRDATHON on the memo line**, and mail to: **Ventura Audubon Society, P.O. Box 24198, Ventura, CA 93002.**