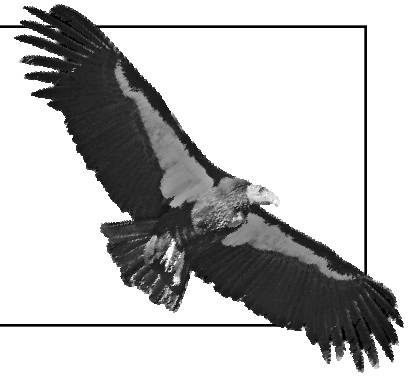


The CALIFORNIA CONDOR

Ventura Audubon Society **MARCH 2010** Volume 30 Number 7
A Chapter of the National Audubon www.VenturaAudubonSociety.org



CALL NOTES

...Bruce Schoppe, President

Ventura Audubon is more than great monthly programs and interesting field trips. We are, at heart, an organization dedicated to the conservation and restoration of "natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity", to quote Audubon California. Behind the scenes, there is a lot of hard work going on year after year.

For 30 years, VAS has worked with State Parks, USF&W and others to protect the nests of Western Snowy Plovers and Least Terns on Ventura County beaches. For most of that time, volunteers have erected fences during nesting season at Ormond, McGrath and other beaches. But, protecting the nests is an ongoing challenge because people don't get it! They would rather let their dogs run on the beach and chase the birds. Fences and signs are, too often, ignored.

It is clear that we need to work to instill a conservation ethic in people at an early age. To that end, VAS applied for and received a grant from Audubon

California for a program called *Share The Shore* Children's Poster Project. Originated by the Audubon groups of Morro Coast and Mendocino, it enlists children in grades K – 5 to create original artwork for a sign with the theme of sharing the beach with Western Snowy Plovers. An art show will select about twelve of the best posters to be made into actual signs that will be placed around the local nesting areas. Studies have shown that people (adults and kids) are less likely to deface such original art and more likely to respect the protected areas than if the usual, official looking signs, are used.

Our program is led by Jane Spiller (creator of the Ventura River Estuary interpretive panel) with support from Reed Smith, Susan Bee, Betsy Bachman and others. As of this writing, 15 classrooms are participating. In addition a workshop was held on February 20 at the Gull Wings Children's Museum in Oxnard. We're looking forward to the show (location to be announced) and to seeing the signs on the beach!

Snowy plover nesting season begins in March. Respect the fenced areas and encourage friends and neighbors to keep their dogs on a leash if they visit the beach or, better yet, off the beach altogether.

MARCH PROGRAM ...Janice Susha, Program Chair ***Tuesday March 9th, 7:30 p.m., Poinsettia Pavilion, 3451 Foothill Rd, Ventura***

Blake Massey ...Current Status of the California Condor Recovery Program

Blake Massey, a US Fish and Wildlife Service biologist, will discuss the current status, management, and research efforts of the California Condor Recovery Program.

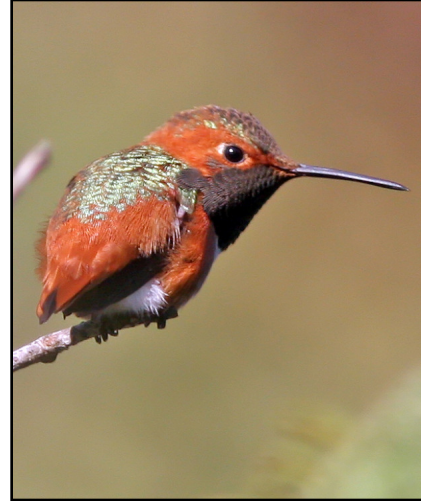
Blake earned a B.A. in Biology from Vanderbilt University and a M.S. in Wildlife Conservation from the University of Massachusetts - Amherst. He has worked on wildlife research projects with a variety of species including black bear, Northern Harrier, Gyrfalcon, Island fox, Golden Eagle, and Mariana Crow. He has worked with California Condors in Arizona/Utah and California and is currently a field crew leader on the condor project at Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge.

Blake will compare the historic and current range, population size, and demographics of the species. He will explain the recent successes of the nest-guarding program in southern California and share video footage and first-hand accounts of nest entries. He will present maps with the latest GPS transmitter data and explain how this information provides key insights into seasonal foraging patterns, reproductive efforts, and on-going range expansions. Lastly, he will describe the Program's research into potential future habitat needs for condors and predicted changes in their landscape.

BIRD OF THE MONTH – MARCH 2010

Article and Photo by DAVID PEREKSTA

Allen's and Rufous Hummingbirds



March is a time when some birds are moving north through the county while breeding is getting underway for others. Two identical looking hummingbirds are evident at this time, the migrant Rufous and breeding Allen's.

Allen's and Rufous Hummingbirds are often inseparable from one another except for adult males. Adult males of both species have buffy orange flanks, extensively orange tails, and orange-red gorgets. The adult male Allen's (pictured right) is extensively rufous with a green back and green crown, while the male Rufous is usually rufous from crown to tail, although some (5 percent) can be as green as Allen's. Juvenile males and adult females (pictured left) of both species look very similar with green backs, buffy flanks, small red to golden-green spots on the throat, and extensive rufous at the base of the tail. The best way to reliably distinguish between the two species is that Rufous has broader and more rounded outer tail feathers while Allen's has more pointy and tapered outer tail feathers. Both species have identical buzzy wing whistles and calls. Calls include a soft *tchup* and excited, buzzy *zeeee-chuppity-chup*.

Rufous and Allen's Hummingbirds frequent blooming eucalyptus trees, native and exotic shrubs (e.g., bottlebrush), and hummingbird feeders during spring migration, which occurs from early February through mid-April. Southbound migrants appear as early as late June or early July and finish passing through during September. Allen's migrate slightly earlier than Rufous and adult males of both species are the first to pass through during both migrations. For Rufous, spring migration is primarily along the coast while fall migrants are more numerous through montane meadows where they feed on blooming penstemon, columbine, etc. Allen's Hummingbirds are largely restricted to coastal slopes and lowlands where they breed in coastal sage, willows, oak-riparian woodlands, gardens, and eucalyptus groves. Locally, two races of Allen's breed; the migratory *sasin* or the nonmigratory *sedentarius*. The latter race originated on the Channel Islands and moved over to the southern California mainland in the mid-1900s.

Rufous Hummingbirds breed farther north than any other hummingbird. They migrate north through our area to breed from southeastern Alaska and southern Yukon to southern Oregon and east to western Montana. Allen's Hummingbirds breed from sw. Oregon to southern California. Rufous and *sasin* Allen's both winter in Mexico.

In Ventura County, migrants of both species can be seen anywhere in the coastal regions during the spring where there are favored nectar producers as described above, including feeders. Allen's (presumed of the *sedentarius* race) can be found throughout the year along the coast. They can be seen most frequently in riparian areas, and local parks and gardens. Two reliable locations for both species are the barranca at Camino Real Park and the eucalyptus trees behind the Olivas Adobe. Southbound Rufous Hummingbirds can be seen from late June through August in montane meadows and flower-covered slopes on Mount Pinos. While some southbound Allen's may migrate through the mountains, the majority of birds passing through that area are Rufous.



MARCH 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, please call the trip leader.

Sunday, March 7, 9:00-12 a.m. Restoration Work Day, Santa Paula. Hedrick Ranch Nature Area Restoration Program. Come at 8:00 for birding! Leader: Sandy Hedrick (340-0478). Long pants and boots or closed shoes are required. **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).

Saturday, March 13, 8:30 a.m. Lake Los Carneros, Goleta. Leader : John Pavelko (640-9040) The lake and surroundings provide a great range of habitats and species. We should see some late-winter feeding flocks, early spring migrants, raptors, ducks, and always a few of the uncommon or rare. **Directions:** Take 101 north and continue past Santa Barbara & Goleta. Exit at Los Carneros offramp. Turn right and go ¼ mile to the Stow House/Lake Los Carneros entrance. Turn right just before the fire station into the driveway and parking lot. **To car pool,** meet at 7:15 at the Pacific View Mall. Take the Coastal View Dr. entrance off Mills & park in the lot directly across from the parking garage entrance.

Saturday, March 20, 8:30 a.m. Meher Mt., 9902 Sulphur Mountain Rd. Leader: Allen Bertke (640-9037). Celebrate the first day of Spring on this beautiful property which is a mixture of oak woods and open fields at 2900 ft. With a water source, natural habitat & feeders, there should be a large variety of birds. **Directions:** To car pool, meet at 7:30 at the Pacific View Mall. Take Coastal View Dr entrance off Mills & park in the lot directly across from the parking garage entrance and/or at the Park'n Ride lot at Ojai Ave & Fox St in Ojai at 8:00. Access to Sulphur Mt. Rd. is from Hwy 150 in Upper Ojai (not Hwy 33 in Casitas Springs). Driveway is on the left side of the road & clearly marked. Parking is on the right, inside the gate, not at the house. No smoking, and as usual, no dogs allowed.

Saturday, March. 27, 8:30-10:30 a.m. Beginners' Bird Walk. Fillmore Fish Hatchery/Lake Piru Area. Leader: Allen Bertke (640-9037) The Fish Hatchery usually produces several good species of herons, egrets and other birds that come to feed on the leftovers from the fish feeding, as well as several other species of birds. Remember to bring binoculars, a field guide, and water. **Directions:** Meet at the fish hatchery which is located to the right off Hwy 126 just 1.2 miles east of Fillmore and 26 miles from Ventura. **To car pool,** meet at 8:00 at the Pacific View Mall. Take Coastal View Dr. entrance off Mills & park in the lot directly across from the parking garage.

Mark Your Calendar:

April 3 – Hedrick Ranch

April 10 – Earth Day – Oxnard

April 24/25 – Kern River Preserve – For info on lodging, email or call Judy (catmai03@yahoo.com/642-0842)

STEP ON UP!!

The VAS year is more than half over and it's time again to call on you, our members, to consider stepping forward in a leadership capacity. There will be a couple of vacancies on the Board for the 2010 – 2011 year, and we are seeking members who would be willing to donate their time and energy to serve on the Board because they love VAS and what it stands for, love birds and birding, and are proud of the work the chapter does in the community. Nominating committee members are Jeff Goldberg, Reed Smith, and Marianne Slaughter. Please contact one of us if you would like to serve on the Board next year!

VAS ESTUARY PANEL PROJECT DEDICATION

...Bruce Schoppe, President

Ventura Audubon unveiled and dedicated an interpretive panel on Friday at the Ventura River Estuary. Bruce Schoppe, VAS president, presided. County Supervisor Steve Bennett and City Councilman Brian Brennan assisted with the unveiling (left). Ventura Park & Recreation Commissioner, Ed Wegan who was instrumental in getting city approval for the location spoke of his longtime association with the estuary.



The 30 x 40-inch laminate panel is located adjacent to the foot and bike path at the mouth of the Ventura River. It is a work of art, featuring a drawing of the estuary and the birds commonly found there. It was designed by Jane Spiller of Ojai, and the artwork done by noted Santa Barbara wildlife artist, Peter Gaede, both of whom spoke of how the image evolved (below).

The panel project began several years ago under the leadership of former VAS presidents Neil Ziegler and Marianne Slaughter. A committee composed of VAS Board members Reed Smith, Nancy Schorsch and Susan Bee saw the project through to completion. Reed Smith, who is the Science Chair for Ventura Audubon, spoke about the estuary, its value and its protection.

As the project neared completion, it was decided to dedicate the panel to the memory of Terry O'Neill, a charter member of Ventura Audubon and one of its early presidents who passed away in early 2009.



BEGINNER'S BIRD WALK ...Allen Bertke

Last month's Beginner's Bird Walk at Ojai Meadow Preserve drew 18 birding enthusiasts. We observed a good variety of species, 38 in all by my unofficial count. There were bluebirds, blackbirds, phoebes, finches, sparrows, egrets, ducks and most of the other usual species. We even tried to morph a young Turkey Vulture, sitting on a distant fence and backlit, into the Black Vulture that had been seen recently nearby, but no such luck – it insisted on being a Turkey Vulture. Don't you just hate it when birds don't cooperate like that?

As we got to the pond it was rather quiet except for some coots, mallards, one female Bufflehead and a female Ring-necked Duck. Suddenly three Snowy Egrets flew in and starting poking around in the shallows. They were quickly followed by four Turkey Vultures. The vultures walked up very close to, and were seemingly stalking the foraging Snowys. Someone asked if the egrets were in any danger from the vultures, but I told them no, not unless one of them dies in the next minute or two. After realizing that none of the egrets were going to suddenly drop dead, the vultures lost interest and went off to look for a stationary, smelly, non-living meal.

After our designated two hour time frame was up, I put in some overtime with five other stragglers. When asked if I didn't mind putting in the extra time I told them no problem, I would bill them later for my overtime hours. Let's see. My going volunteer rate of \$0 per hour at time and one half for two hours equals how much? No matter – the extra time was well worth it when we came across three bold and beautiful male Lawrence's Goldfinches on the way back. They flew from a low tree in front of us where I first spotted them to some bushes right next to us, putting on a great show. And me without my camera!

See you on the next walk, and this time I will make sure to bring my camera.



NOTES FROM THE FIELD

...David Pereksta

The Oxnard Plain continued to produce notable birds over the last month. Intriguing was an unconfirmed report of a possible **Swallow-tailed Kite** at Point Mugu 3-5 Feb (fide MR). There are nearly no winter records for this species in the U.S. so further documentation/sightings is sought for this record. A **Ruff** was found near Point Mugu on 8 Feb (RN). Two **Cattle Egrets** were at Miranda Park in Port Hueneme on 22 Jan with one remaining through 6 Feb (JC). A **Blue-winged Teal** and five **Thayer's Gulls** were at Ormond Beach on 8 Feb (AS). The **Stage Thrasher** near the end of Casper Road continued through 6 Feb.

Other birds of interest were found elsewhere along the coast. A **Brant** was at the Ventura River estuary on 22 Jan (KR) and a **Hairy Woodpecker** and **Lawrence's Goldfinch** were in the vicinity on 7 Feb (EW). A **Glaucous Gull** was at the Santa Clara River estuary on 23 Jan (KR). A **Thayer's Gull** was at the Ventura Wildlife Ponds on 2 Feb (DP). Five **Black Oystercatchers** were at Marina Park on 22 Jan and, after a brief absence, the **Red-necked Grebe** reappeared in the Ventura Harbor 31 Jan-4 Feb.

A number of uncommon passerines were found in local parks and yards. A female **Vermilion Flycatcher** was at the Buenaventura Golf Course on 11 Feb (DP). A **Mountain Chickadee** was at Grant Park in Ventura on 3 Feb (DVP & LH). The pair of **California Gnatcatchers** continued at Cal Lutheran through 13 Feb, with three additional birds found there on 13 Feb (RN). An **Indigo Bunting** was at a backyard feeder in Thousand Oaks on 24 Jan (DL). A **Hooded Oriole** was at Camino Real Park on 24 Jan (DT) and the **Black-throated Gray Warbler**, **Black-and-white Warbler**, and **Brown Creeper** continued there through 6 Feb.

Traditional birding hotspots within the Ventura River watershed hosted several notable species. A **Common Moorhen** and **Red-naped Sapsucker** were at Lake Casitas on 29 Jan (KK) and three **Bald Eagles** were there on 10 Feb (DR & BD). The **Black Vulture** returned to the lake and was seen 16-24 Jan and three **Lewis's Woodpeckers** continued through 29 Jan. The Ojai **Zone-tailed Hawk** was seen in Mira Monte on 16 Jan. Five **Lewis's Woodpeckers** continued at Canada Larga through 30 Jan.

Other inland water bodies produced some uncommon species. A **Bald Eagle** and 27 **Common Mergansers** were at Lake Piru 23-31 Jan (RM). Continuing waterfowl at the Saticoy Spreading Ponds included a **Snow Goose**, 10 **Cackling Geese**, and 40 **Common Mergansers** on 16 Jan. Fourteen **Cackling Geese** and a season high 210 **Common Mergansers** were there on 24 Jan (RM).

The escaped **Lesser Flamingo**, last seen at Point Mugu on 15 Jan, turned up in Elkhorn Slough near Monterey in late Jan, which is 250 miles north of Point Mugu.

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, call or e-mail David Pereksta at pereksta@pacbell.net or 659-5740.

Good birding,
David Pereksta

Observers:

Jeff Cartier, Becky Donahue, Mary Hansen, Lauren Harter, Karl Krause, Dee Lyon, Robert McMorran, Richard Norton, David Pereksta, Kay Regester, David Roine, Martin Ruane, Adam Searcy, David Trankin, David Vander Pluym, and Eric Waian.



Brown Creeper

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HAPPY ST. PATRICK'S DAY!

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	Marianne Slaughter	484-8415
	Nancy Schorsch	643-5825

MARCH BOARD MEETING

The Tuesday, March 2nd Board of Directors meeting will be held at the home of Art Marshall, 4499 Whittier St, Ventura. Any VAS member is welcome. Call (805) 642-1585 for information.