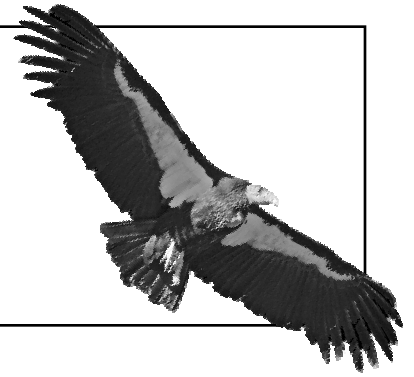


The CALIFORNIA CONDOR

Ventura Audubon Society **SEPTEMBER 2010** Volume 31 Number 1
A Chapter of the National Audubon www.VenturaAudubon.org



CALL NOTES ..Bruce Schoppe, President

Hope everyone had an enjoyable summer.

We watched with a combination of anger, frustration and, finally, relief, as the largest oil spill in history polluted the Gulf of Mexico. We learned, again, that oil and birds (and other wildlife) don't mix. Fewer birds than expected have needed rescue but that doesn't account for the thousands of animals that probably died at sea. Yet America and the rest of the world continue their insatiable demand for oil and other fossil fuels. When and how will that ever change?

This latest disaster just emphasizes the threats facing birds and other wildlife and, hopefully, renews our commitment to habitat preservation and restoration. Not to mention, the need for education because there are people who still don't get it.

Ventura Audubon has an ongoing commitment to all of these priorities. We'll continue to help State Parks and others monitor and protect nesting snowy plovers and least terns on the beaches. Next season, we'll have 100 new signs that feature the artwork of some of the 700 young people who participated in the Share the Shore art program.

Audubon Adventures will be available to Grades 3 – 5 classrooms in area school districts. VAS funds these programs thanks to the generous support of members.

We will continue to offer interesting monthly programs (2nd Tuesday of each month at Poinsettia Pavilion at 7:30 p.m.) and field trips, more than 30 during the year. The newsletter will provide an update each month. Our membership grew in the last year to nearly 750 members and (continued on Page 6)

SEPTEMBER PROGRAM ...Janice Sussha, Program Chair
Tuesday September 14th, 7:30 p.m., Poinsettia Pavilion, 3451 Foothill Rd, Ventura

The GULF OIL SPILL and the NATIONAL PARK SERVICE'S ROLE
...Stephen Whitaker

Stephen Whitaker is a marine biologist at Channel Islands National Park working on the rocky intertidal and kelp forest monitoring programs. Before joining the National Park Service in 2009, he did marine biology consulting in Orange County and recently completed his master's thesis on rockweed restoration.

In June, Stephen was detailed to Fort Jefferson in Dry Tortugas National Park in the Florida Keys to assist with surveys and preparations for the oil spill. The 2010 oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico is the largest in U.S. history whereby thousands of workers were mobilized to clean up. Several national park units were on the front line of the spill. These areas support nesting shorebirds, seagrass beds, coral, and sea turtles. Visitor safety and protection of cultural resources were also of prime concern. Along with other federal agencies, the National Park Service personnel were called in to assist with wildlife surveys, damage assessments, and protection of the resources. As a result, the shorebirds at the Gulf Islands National Seashore, a 150-mile stretch of barrier islands and coastal mainland in Mississippi and Florida, had a successful nesting season. Experiences with the oil spill will help in planning for future disasters in our area.

BIRD OF THE MONTH – SEPTEMBER 2010

Article and Photo by DAVID PEREKSTA

Warbling Vireo (*Vireo gilvus*)



Many southbound passerines are migrating through Ventura County during September. One of the widespread migrants that can be found at this time is the Warbling Vireo.

The Warbling Vireo is a small, plain-winged vireo that is smaller and stockier than some of the larger vireo species. It is olive-brown above with a slightly contrasting darker crown, yellowish sides, whitish underparts, a whitish line above the eye, and pale lores that create a “blank-faced” look. Some juveniles and fall adults have more yellow on the flanks and undertail coverts. The song is a husky, rambling warble that sounds like a Purple Finch, often ending abruptly on a rising note. Similar looking species that it can be confused with include the Philadelphia Vireo and Tennessee Warbler, the former can be distinguished by its pale yellow underparts and dusky lores and the latter by its greener upperparts and tiny, pointed bill. The two western subspecies of Warbling Vireo (especially *swainsoni*) differ from the eastern subspecies (*gilvus*) in vocalizations, habitat preferences, and molt strategies, suggesting that they may be separate species.

Warbling Vireos are found in deciduous forests of cottonwoods, alders, willows, and oaks, especially in riparian areas along streams and meadows. However, they also occur in deciduous trees within mixed conifer stands at higher elevations. They forage primarily on insects but will also eat berries and fruits, especially during late summer and fall. They are prolific singers and the male will even sing from the nest, which makes their nests easy to find. Like other vireos, Warbling Vireos have declined in many places due to habitat loss and frequent brood parasitism by the Brown-headed Cowbird.

Warbling Vireos breed from southeastern Alaska, northern British Columbia, and southern Mackenzie southeast to southern Ontario and southern New Brunswick, then south to western Mexico, Alabama, and Virginia. They winter in Mexico and Central America, and very rarely in southern California.

Locally, Warbling Vireos are uncommon summer residents and fairly common transient migrants in the spring (late March – early June) and fall (late August – mid-October). During the breeding season, they can be found in riparian habitats in the Rose Valley, Wheeler Gorge, Sisar Canyon, Santa Paula Canyon, the Ventura and Santa Clara Rivers, and other suitable habitat across the mountains and foothills. During the spring and fall migrations, they occur in a variety of broadleaf habitats and tamarisks including the places named above as well as the Laguna Road and Hueneme Road tamarisk rows, Big Sycamore Canyon, LaJolla Canyon, Camarillo Regional Park, Rancho Sierra Vista, Canada Larga Road, Foster Park, and other areas with suitable habitat.



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, please call the trip leader.

Welcome to another year of great birding! Suggestions for birding sites and volunteers to lead are always appreciated. Just a few reminders about birding etiquette: Stay behind the leader, move quietly, ask questions, and listen to what people are pointing out. When socializing, stay behind the group.

Saturday, Aug. 28, 8:00 a.m. Ventura Wildlife Ponds. Leader: Art Marshall (642-1585). 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.

Sunday, Sept. 12, 8:00 a.m. Santa Clara River Estuary/Surfers' Knoll. Leader: Eric Waian (630-0100). 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. **Note:** If you would like to bird with Eric before the walk, he will start around 7:20 a.m. and briefly bird the marina from the dirt lot at the very end of Spinnaker.

Saturday, Sept. 18, 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.

Saturday, Sept. 25, 9:00 a.m. Beach Cleanup, Emma Wood State Beach. Information: Reed Smith (652-0706). California Coastal Cleanup Day is the premier volunteer event focused on the marine environment in the country. Join fellow Audubon members to help clean up one of our birding sites. Park at the far west end of Main

St. beyond the bridge over the Ventura River. Meet inside the Group Camp. Bring gloves and wear old clothes.

Sept. 23-26, Monterey Bay Birding Festival, Watsonville. The Pajaro Valley and the Monterey Bay region are home to an incredible diversity of habitats and bird species. No scheduled VAS trip.

Mark Your Calendar:

October 16 – Lake Casitas

October 23 – Beginners' Walk – Ventura Wildlife Ponds

Prop 21: A LEGACY FOR CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

Did you know that [52 Audubon California Important Bird Areas are at least partially owned by California State Parks, totaling 156,000 acres?](#) Audubon California, The Nature Conservancy, Save the Redwood League and California State Parks Foundation are sponsors of The State Parks & Wildlife Conservation Trust Fund Act ("State Parks Initiative") appearing on the November 2, 2010 statewide ballot as Proposition 21.

Prop 21 works like this-

Vehicles registered in California will get a free, year round day use admission to all California state parks in exchange for a new annual \$18 vehicle license fee, a considerable savings if you go to more than two State parks in a year. The funding will provide a stable, reliable and adequate source of funding for the state park system, for wildlife conservation and for increased and equitable access to those resources for all Californians. The parks budget will no longer be subject to cuts by the legislature or the Governor, the Trust Fund cannot be borrowed from or raided, and our state Parks can begin work on acquisitions and deferred maintenance once the funds become available. The passage of this proposition is a conservation legacy that all of us Audubon members in California can leave to future generations!

...**FIELD NOTES** (continued from Page 5)

Oriole reports included five in Quatal Canyon 16 Apr-8 May (DP), a male in Dry Canyon on 30 May (AS), and a pair in Lockwood Valley on 5 July (AS). Fifteen **Tricolored Blackbirds** were in the Lockwood Valley on 31 May (AS). **Brewer's Sparrow**, **Black-chinned Sparrow**, **Sage Sparrow**, and **Lawrence's Goldfinch** were reported widely in Quatal Canyon and the Lockwood Valley this spring and summer.

Canada Larga Road has become a favored spot for many local birders and photographers who continued to find notable birds there through the spring. Late in the season for a new find was a female **Vermilion Flycatcher** on 25 Apr (JC). Other notable finds included 3 **Bell's Vireos** and a **Grasshopper Sparrow** on 9 May (NG), and 60-80 **Tricolored Blackbirds** and a **Yellow-headed Blackbird** on 8 May (JC). Two **Lewis's Woodpeckers** continued through 25 Apr. Nearby, a **Lewis's Woodpecker** continued at Lake Casitas through 28 Apr.

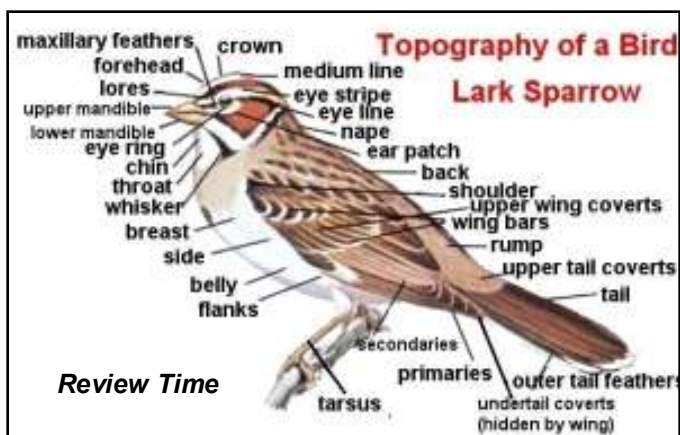
Several pelagic trips to Ventura County waters far offshore produced an impressive number and diversity of birds. **Cook's Petrels** were seen in record numbers off southern California this year and 172 in Ventura Waters on 16 May was part of a single-day record from a birding boat off the western U.S. of 173 individuals (JF, TM, DP et al.). That record stood for less than a month when it was broken on 12 Jun when 237 were seen in the same area, 45 of which were in Ventura County (JF, TM, DP et al.). Other notable birds from Ventura County waters on these trips include 5 **Laysan Albatrosses**, 8 **Black-footed Albatrosses**, over 100 **Leach's Storm-Petrels**,

1 **Long-tailed Jaeger**, and an **Arctic Tern** on 16 May (JF, TM, DP et al.); 26 **Leach's Storm-Petrels** on 12 Jun (JF, TM, DP et al.); and 2 **Cook's Petrels**, a **Buller's Shearwater**, 26 **Leach's Storm-Petrels**, and an **Arctic Tern** on 31 Jul (JF, TM, DP et al.).

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 659-5740 or pereksta@pacbell.net

Good birding,
David Pereksta

Observers: Allison Alvarado, Jeff Cartier, Don DesJardin, Jon Feenstra, Wes Fritz, Noah Gaines, Oscar Johnson, Dexter Kelly, Karl Krause, Todd McGrath, Jimmy McMorran, Robert McMorran, Matthew Page, David Pereksta, Kay Regester, Martin Ruane, Adam Searcy, Bob Tallyn, Kyle TePoel, David Vander Pluym, and Eric Waian



"Early Bird Announcement of FSCR VOLUNTEER WORKDAYS for 2010-2011" ***(Friends of the Santa Clara River)***

For you Audubon members that like to plan your volunteer field days well in advance here is the earliest scoop on the schedule of restoration work events set for the upcoming season.

Sunday, October 3rd	Sunday, February 6th
Saturday, November 6th	Saturday, March 5th
Sunday, December 5th	Sunday, April 3rd
Saturday, January 8th	

As usual these events will start out with informal birding from 8 am to 9 am, with the restoration work beginning about 9 am. Once again the activities will be lead by Sandy Hedrick and Jackie Worden of The Friends of The Santa Clara River . A new twist this season will be the addition of at least one additional work site on the Santa Clara River. Keep watch for announcements on this project. The first gathering of this season however will be at HRNA (Hedrick Ranch Nature Area) on Sunday, October 3rd. Details of each workday will noted under monthly field trips as usual.



NOTES FROM THE FIELD

...David Pereksta

Wetlands on the Oxnard Plain produced a number of notable sightings during the spring and summer. Highlights from Point Mugu included as many as 23 summering **Brant** 27 Jun-25 Jul (AS), a **Blue-winged Teal** on 14 April (AS), two **White-winged Scoters** on 27 May (AS) with at least one continuing through 26 July, an adult **Reddish Egret** 24-26 July, adult and subadult **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons** (likely the same from last winter) continuing through July (AS), and two **Red Knots** on 27 Jun (AS). Unusual was a large number (approx. 150) of **Forster's Tern** nesting attempts at Mugu Lagoon (MR). Two **Semipalmated Sandpipers** were in wetlands adjacent to Point Mugu on 10 Aug (AS). While occasionally seen in the fall, **Solitary Sandpipers** are more unusual in spring migration so one at the end of Arnold Road on 14 Apr was a surprise (DDJ) and another in Revolon Slough continuing through 15 Apr was in the place they are occasionally found in the fall. Other highlights from Arnold Road included a pair of **Clapper Rails** with two chicks 24 Apr-16 May (DK, DDJ); good numbers of **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** including 3 (DK) and 16 (JC) on 24 Apr, 25 on 25 Apr (KR & BT), and 3 lingering through 7 May; and a **White-winged Dove** and two **Tricolored Blackbirds** on 7 May (JC).

Other local lagoons and wetlands attracted a number of interesting waterbirds and shorebirds. After numbers of **Brant** were found at the Ventura River Estuary during spring migration, including a high of 100 on 15 Apr (KR), flocks of 10-47 birds were consistently found at that location through 15 Jun (KR). A male **Wood Duck** was at the Victoria Lakes Golf Course in Oxnard on 5 July (DP). **Common Merganser** records included three along Conejo Creek on 17 Apr (EW) and a female with four chicks on the Santa Clara River on 4 May (KK). Two **Cattle Egrets** were at the Buena Ventura Golf Course on 6 May (KK) and another was in eastern Ventura on 5 Jul (DP). A **Common Moorhen** was at an agricultural reservoir along Las Posas Road 24-25 Apr (DK). **Black Oystercatchers** reports included 6 at the Ventura River Estuary on 3 May, 2 on 27 May, and 3 on 12 Jun (KR); 10 at the Santa Clara River Estuary (SCRE) on 22 Jun (KTP); and 2 at SCRE on 25 Jul (NG). Other notable finds at SCRE included as many as 4 **Black Skimmers** 7 May-25 Jul (DVP), and a **Semipalmated Sandpiper** on 25 Jul (NG).

A variety of uncommon or vagrant landbirds were reported through the spring and summer. Several spectacular concentrations of migrating swifts were seen including 250 **Black Swifts** over east Ventura on 23 May (RM & AA), 300 **Vaux's Swifts** in Camarillo on 21 Apr (AS), and 100 **Vaux's Swifts** that appeared to be seeking an evening roost at rooftop level in east Ventura on 27 Apr (DP). While more abundant in winter, breeding **Horned Larks** are uncommon on the coastal plain so a flock of 10-15 birds near the Hedrick Nature Reserve on 8 Jun (AS) and calling and displaying birds in the barren fields near the Kimball soccer park on 13 Jun were notable (EW). Away from the species Santa Clara River stronghold, a territorial **Bell's Vireo** was in Hill Canyon 30 May-18 Jun (EW & MP) and another was at Point Mugu on 4 Jul (AS). Eastern warblers were few and far between with the only reported being a singing **Black-throated Green Warbler** on San Nicolas Island on 12 May (JM) and the continuing **Black-and-white Warbler** at Camino Real Park through 16 Apr. Other eastern vagrants included a male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** at a feeder in Ojai on 24 May (BT) and a singing **White-throated Sparrow** in Sisar Canyon on 18 Apr (RM & AA). Breeding season **Purple Finches** on the coastal plain included singing birds at Ivy Lawn Cemetery on 7 May (DVP) and Buena Ventura Golf Course on 2 Jun (DP).

There were numerous reports from the mountains and arid valleys of northern Ventura County. Raptors of note included a vocalizing **Northern Goshawk** on Mount Pinos in the vicinity of last year's nest on 8 May (DP) and a pair of nest building **Golden Eagles** near the Valley Vista Campground on 16 Apr (DP). The eagle pair was seen again on 8 and 22 May (DP), but there was no evidence of egg-laying in the nest. Another **Northern Goshawk** was seen over the County line on Mount Abel on 5 Jun (TM). Evenings of owling turned up a pair of **Spotted Owls** south of Pine Mountain on 9 Jun (DP, TM & WF) and a **Long-eared Owl** on the north slope of Pine Mountain on 8 Jul (OJ, AS, DP & TM). **Gray Flycatcher** reports included one in Quatal Canyon 16 Apr-22 May (DP), two in Dry Canyon on 5 July (AS), one in Lockwood Valley on 2 May (MP & EW), and two in Lockwood Valley on 31 May (AS). A **Dusky Flycatcher** and a **Cassin's Vireo** were on Pine Mountain on 11 Jul (DP). **Scott's** (continued on Page 4...)

VENTURA AUDUBON SOCIETY

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...CALL NOTES, (continued from Page 1)

the newsletter continues to be our largest expense. We hope to convert more members to digital delivery via the internet.

VAS will also continue to monitor land use proposals that could threaten birds and other wildlife. Among those, the Oxnard General Plan Update remains unfinished and development still threatens large parts of Ormond Beach, especially those areas that could be restored to wetland. A final plan for removal of the Matilija Dam remains elusive and now the land-owner has shut off access to the hiking trail to the falls.

A potential new threat arose this summer with discussion of the possibility that the City of Ventura might annex parts of the Canada Larga Valley. The City does plan to annex an area north of its present boundary between the Ventura River and Highway 33. Our real concern would be an effort to include any part of the valley itself. We've expressed our concern to the Council.

And, finally, I'm unaware of any plans for large alternative energy projects in Ventura County, but several are moving through the planning process in Santa Barbara, Kern and San Luis Obispo counties. Although these wind, solar and wave energy projects can also threaten habitat, they do help wean us of fossil fuels. California Audubon and the affected chapters have prepared (or drafted) position papers on these technologies. They are available at:

<http://ca.audubon.org/chapters-advocacy-energy.php>.

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SEPTEMBER BOARD MEETING

The Tuesday, September 7th Board of Directors meeting will be held at the home of Dee & Marianne, 1656 Riente St. in Camarillo. Any VAS member is welcome. Call 484-8415 for information.

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: birderz@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 fundraising 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.