

The CALIFORNIA CONDOR

Ventura Audubon Society **OCTOBER 2014** Volume 35 Number 2
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CALL NOTES ...Bruce Schoppe, President

Climate Change and Birds

The climate is changing as evidenced by melting glaciers and polar ice because temperatures are rising. Sea level will rise significantly over the next century. Weather patterns and local climate are being affected. The cause of these changes is pretty clear. Burning fossil fuels puts carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. CO₂ is a "greenhouse gas" and it is we humans who are responsible.

And birds, among other species, will feel the effects of these changes.

I doubt there are many "climate change deniers" among Audubon members. But roughly one-third of Americans think it is a "normal" cycle or refuse to accept the human cause. Many have a vested interest. The solution is to reduce greenhouse gases. Politically, other than in California and a few other states, efforts to address the issue haven't gotten very far. Many of us are trying to do our share. But, the planet's growing population and the growing numbers in the developing world who want to live like Americans makes one wonder will the planet even notice?

In September, National Audubon launched the Climate Initiative. Its primary message is: Climate Change is the biggest threat to birds. It is an effort to raise the visibility of the issue by tying it to birds which everyone sees daily and can relate to. The message: The Web of Life – the natural world is interconnected and interdependent. We must act!

The science is interesting. Audubon looked at historical records from the CBC and other, mainly citizen science, studies that tell us where the birds are and combined that information with studies that show how climate is likely to change those habitats. Each species is adapted to a particular set of conditions including temperature, rainfall, plants and prey. All of this could change, shifting, contracting or, even, expanding. The end result, according to the Audubon study, is that half the birds in North America are at risk.

For more information, please see the article "Field Guide to the Future" elsewhere in this issue, visit the climate website at: www.audubon.org/climate, and join us for the program on October 14th at Poinsettia Pavilion.

OCTOBER PROGRAM ...Program Committee
7:30 p.m. Tuesday, October 14th, Poinsettia Pavilion, 3451 Foothill Road, Ventura

THE CLIMATE INITIATIVE and BIRDS, featuring ANDREA JONES from Audubon California

On September 9th, Audubon launched its Climate Initiative. Climate change is the greatest threat to birds, putting more species at risk due to habitat loss. **Andrea Jones**, newly appointed Director of Bird Conservation for Audubon California will discuss the Audubon Initiative, the science behind it and what we can do to help.

We met Andrea last year when she presented a program on the Western Snowy Plover in November 2013. Andrea received her M.S. in Wildlife Conservation/Ornithology and her B.S. in Wildlife Biology and Management from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. In addition to her new duties, she continues to lead Audubon California's efforts on Important Bird Areas and shorebird conservation.

Please join us!

BEYOND BASICS ...Article and Photos by David Pereksta

Identifying Dowitchers and Other Difficult Species Groups... Cheat If You Have To! (Part 2)

Picking up where we left off last month, let's delve deeper in the identification of Long-billed and Short-billed Dowitchers. Reviewing the photos from that article, we can start to use fine points of identification that get beyond the content and scope of most field guides. The state-of-the-art of Dowitcher identification is constantly evolving and some books and articles published recently demonstrate that we can rely on more than plumage differences (or very specific plumage characters) to separate the two.

The bird pictured on the left is a juvenile, which is the easiest age to rely on plumage differences for making an ID. Most field guides describe these differences well. Juvenile Short-billed Dowitchers are highly patterned on the back with crispy pale-fringed scapular, coverts, and tertials that have complex internal markings (often referred to as "tiger stripe" tertials). Juvenile Long-billed Dowitchers are less colorful and their coverts and tertials lack the internal markings. Based on that, the bird in the photo is a Short-billed Dowitcher. However, plumage characteristics notwithstanding there are other features that help identify this bird as a Short-billed including the flat-backed appearance, yellowish tinge at the base of the bill, a broad-based and blunt-tipped bill with a downward kink near the tip, and a steeper loral angle* than a Long-billed. Conversely, Long-billeds show a more rounded back and belly (especially while feeding; looks like they swallowed a ball); a less distinct greenish base to the bill that is longer, thinner-based, and finer-tipped (and also gently arches through the outer half); and a shallower loral angle. Since no single field mark is conclusive, the more we evaluate the better a chance we have of correctly ID-ing the bird. Many of these fine points of identification are not included in North American field guides so we can better inform ourselves by reviewing more detailed sources of information.

The bird on the right is an adult in fresh alternate plumage. While the field guides generalize the plumage characters enough that we can take an educated guess at this one, as an entirely rufous belly suggests a Long-billed, a more detailed look reveals flat white tips on the covert feathers (as opposed to V-shaped) and vertical bars on the flanks fringed with white (as opposed to bars or spots) which identify this bird as a Long-billed Dowitcher. The other characteristics described above for Long-billed also fit perfectly. Of course, voice is still perhaps the best distinguishing feature between these species, but I could not find a photo that illustrates that! Familiarize yourself with their vocalizations and your correct IDs will increase.

With differences between ages and three distinctly different looking subspecies of Short-billeds, we are only scratching the surface here on the fine points of dowitcher ID. However, I hope this discussion has inspired you to further research this and see what you find. The only way I could keep all these characteristics clear was to develop a cheat sheet for myself so I had an easy go-to one-pager that contained everything I needed to remember about dowitcher ID after reviewing a number of books and articles.

Once you start getting comfortable with the abundance of resources for bird identification beyond the standard field guides, some of the more challenging identifications become less so. You can find similar help for distinguishing Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks; American Golden and Pacific Golden-Plovers; Common, Arctic, and Forster's Terns; female hummingbirds; Empidonax flycatchers; and a number of other frustrating groups. I am leaving you with another dowitcher to practice on. This is a worn breeding adult, which can be challenging. Find a good book on shorebirds, and mine the internet for articles on Dowitcher ID, and see if you can identify this one.



*For the record, the loral angle (in a profile view) is the angle between an imaginary extension of the gape of the bill toward the back of the head and the line connecting the gape of the bill with the bird's iris. Print some photos, get a ruler and draw those two lines on the head, and see if it makes sense.



OCTOBER FIELD TRIPS ...Karin Kersteter

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. For all trips, please wear appropriate clothing (layers are suggested), comfortable shoes, and bring snacks, water, hats, sunscreen, binoculars and field guides.

Saturday, Oct 4, 8:30 a.m. Lake Casitas. Leader: Kay Regester (805)652-1073. To car pool, meet at the Museum of Ventura Co., 100 E. Main, (side parking lot) at 8:00 a.m. **Directions:** Take Hwy 33 towards Ojai; exit Casitas Vista Rd. Turn right twice and go under freeway past Foster Park to first right, Santa Ana Rd. Follow to park, on left. Or take Hwy 33 to Hwy 150, turn left and follow signs to the lake. Park out front and we will walk into the park. There will be lots of walking, so wear comfortable shoes and bring snacks and water. Bring scopes if you have them! Target birds will include: the resident Bald Eagles, Green Heron, Chipping and Lark Sparrows, Common Merganser and Spotted Sandpiper.

Tuesday, Oct 7, 8:30 a.m. Lake Los Carneros, Goleta. Leader: Adele Fergusson (805) 415-4304. The lake, willows, and surrounding grassy scrub lands with pines, oaks, and eucalyptus should provide a wide variety of birds. **Directions:** Go north on Hwy 101 through Santa Barbara to Los Carneros Rd. and turn north toward the mountains. Go 2 blocks north on Los Carneros Rd. and turn right at the fire station into the parking lot for Stow House. **To car pool** meet at the Museum of Ventura Co. (side parking lot) at 7:30 a.m. Bring binoculars, hat & water, and a field guide is helpful. Target birds will include teals, shovelers, Redheads, Eared Grebes, Red-breasted Sapsucker and White-breasted Nuthatch.

Saturday, Oct 11, 8:30 a.m. Camino Real Park. Leader: Linda Easter (805) 482-7537. Camino Real is a grassy park surrounded by pines and eucalyptus and is an excellent migrant hotspot. We will also look for early arriving monarch butterflies. **Note directions:** We will meet outside the park and walk in. Take Telegraph Road toward Ventura College. Across from Ventura College, turn onto Estates, take a right on Aurora, go to the grass beltway across from the mobile home park. Park closest to the last house in the residential tract. We will start birding along the barranca and go into the park. Target birds will include a variety of early migrants and warblers, Nuttall's Woodpecker, Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Hutton's Vireo, Warbling Vireo, and Ruby-crowned Kinglets.

Friday, Oct 17, Reservations for Friday, Nov 14, Pt. Mugu Trip due. Reservations and a \$10 deposit are required. Limit 20 –VAS members only unless there is space available after the deadline. There is a new process for obtaining entry to the base. You must contact Janice Sussha (armybrat1@verizon.net) to RSVP. She will send you a form, which must be completely filled out and returned by Oct 17. No late or incomplete forms will be accepted.

Saturday, Oct 18, 8:30 a.m. Carpinteria Salt Marsh. Leader: Rob Denholtz (805) 684-4060. Join us for a very special bird walk! The Salt Marsh Reserve is an excellent birding location due to the estuary, wetlands, and upland habitats. Special birds of concern can be found here, including Belding's Savannah Sparrow and Clapper Rail. We will be birding a different section of the marsh, courtesy of our field trip leader. **NOTE NEW DIRECTIONS:** To car pool, meet at the Museum of Ventura Co., 100 E. Main (side parking lot) at 8:00 a.m. sharp. Exit Casitas Pass Rd. Go south to Carpinteria Ave. (traffic light) and turn right. Continue on Carpinteria Ave. Pass Delgado's Restaurant on the left and continue to Estero Way on the left. Park on the street only, not in the parking lot. Meet at the gate to the marsh.

Saturday, Oct 25, 8 a.m. Beginner's Bird Walk. Ojai Meadow Preserve. Leader: Allen Bertke (640-9037). This beautiful preserve is a birding hotspot and includes a restored wetland and native plantings. **Directions:** To car-pool, meet at the Museum of Ventura Co., 100 E. Main St. (side parking lot) at 8:00 a.m. Take Hwy 33 toward Ojai and turn left at the Y. The preserve is on the left side. Parking is available in front of the entrance and also at Nordhoff High School. Meet at the entrance. Target birds will include: Western Bluebirds, Sora, Belted Kingfisher, Western Meadowlark, Merlin, Cedar Waxwing, Lark Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow and White-crowned Sparrows.

SAVE THE DATE:

Tuesday, Nov 4 – Emma Wood

Friday, Nov 14 – Pt Mugu (Reservation required – limited to 20)

Saturday, Nov 15 – Veteran's Park, Sylmar

Saturday, Nov 29 – Beginner's Bird Walk – Saticoy Ponds


**Christmas Bird Count
January 3, 2015**

OJAI RAPTOR CENTER OPEN HOUSE

October 26, 2014

12:00 noon- 4:00 pm

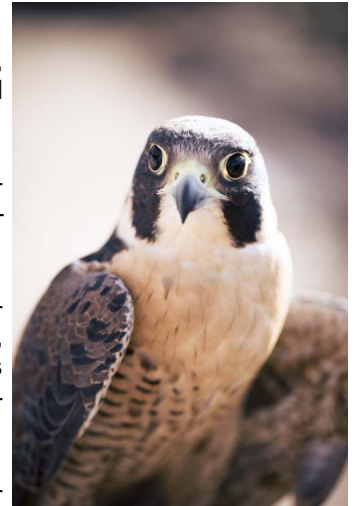
370 Baldwin Road, Ojai CA 93023

Ojai Raptor Center, (ORC) a non-profit 501(c) (3) organization is dedicated to the rescue, rehabilitation and release of birds of prey and other wildlife, and to providing educational programs to teach communities about wildlife and our shared environment.

The Center is closed to the public year-round due to the sensitive nature of wildlife in rehabilitation, but on Sunday, October 26th, ORC will open its doors to the public for a rare opportunity to meet all 18 of our non-releasable “ambassador” raptors.

Hawks, falcons, eagles, and owls will be on hand to greet guests with concurrent presentations on the ORC stage along with special guest Julie Tumamait-Stenslie, Chumash elder, who will be sharing native stories about our local wildlife throughout the afternoon. Drinks and snacks will be available for purchase as well as activities for children, auctions, and raffles.

Ojai Raptor Center Open House will be a free event with a suggested donation of five dollars. Handicapped parking will be available. Overflow parking will be located one street down from the Center where Pegasus shuttles will be running every 10 minutes.



Ambassador Bird Gavin,
a male Perigrine Falcon

FIELD GUIDE TO THE FUTURE

Nearly half of the bird species in the continental U.S. and Canada are threatened by global warming. Many of these species could go extinct without decisive action to protect their habitats and reduce the severity of global warming. That's the startling conclusion reached by Audubon scientists in a new study.

Here in California, birds threatened by global warming include Bald Eagle, Allen's Hummingbird, Black Oystercatcher, California Gull, and Merlin.

Of 588 bird species examined in the study, 314 are at risk. Of those, 126 species are at risk of severe declines by 2050, and a further 188 species face the same fate by 2080, with numerous extinctions possible if global warming is allowed to erase the havens birds occupy today.

“The greatest threat our birds face today is global warming,” said Audubon Chief Scientist Gary Langham, who led the investigation. “That's our unequivocal conclusion after seven years of painstakingly careful and thorough research. Global warming threatens the basic fabric of life on which birds – and the rest of us – depend, and we have to act quickly and decisively to avoid catastrophe for them and us.”

To understand the links between where birds live and the climatic conditions that support them, Langham and other Audubon ornithologists analyzed 30 years of historical North American climate data and tens of thousands of historical bird records from the U.S. Geological Survey's North American Breeding Bird Survey and the Audubon Christmas Bird Count. Understanding those links then allowed scientists to project where birds are likely to be able to survive – and not survive – in the future.

The study also reveals areas that are likely to remain stable for birds even as climate changes, enabling Audubon to identify “stronghold” areas that birds will need to survive in the future.

The result is a roadmap for bird conservation in coming decades under a warming climate. The study provides a key entry point for Audubon's greater engagement on the urgent issue of global warming. Responding to the magnitude of the threat to our birds, Audubon is greatly expanding its climate initiative, aiming to engage a larger and more diverse set of voices in support of protecting birds. Solutions will include personal choices to conserve energy and create backyard bird habitat, local action to create community climate action plans, state-based work to increase rooftop solar and energy efficiency, and our work in Important Bird Areas and other efforts to protect and expand bird habitats.

For more information, visit Audubon.org/Climate.



NOTES FROM THE FIELD

...David Pereksta

AUGUST 2014

The **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** in Santa Paula continued through at least 26 Aug and a hybrid fledgling left the nest on 1 Aug and was also seen through 26 Aug. Another fledgling was found and taken to the Ojai Raptor Center; it should have been left alone but unfortunately some people in the park were too drawn to interfering. August is early for the arrival of eastern vagrant passerines; however, a **Lark Bunting** was a surprise find along Arnold Road on 31 Aug (DP). Other landbirds of note included a **White-winged Dove** at the Ventura Harbor on 23 Aug (JB) and a **Yellow-headed Black-bird** at the Santa Clara River Estuary (SCRE) on 31 Aug (DL et al.).

Local lakes and wetlands that are trying to hold water despite the drought provided habitat for a number of notable waterbirds or water-dependent birds. A summering **Brant** continued at the SCRE through 17 Aug. The summering **Ross's Goose** continued at Lake Casitas through 16 Aug while the pair of **Bald Eagles** remained through 31 Aug. A **Wood Duck** was at the lake on 16 Aug (DT). Two **Reddish Egrets** continued at Mugu Lagoon through 14 Aug with one remaining through 16 Aug. A **Least Bittern** continued at Lake Sherwood through 12 Aug. The two hybrid **American x Black Oystercatchers** remained at the Ventura Harbor throughout August. There were several reports of **Black Terns** including one at SCRE on 5 Aug (DT), one at Lake Casitas on 16 Aug (DT), and one at the Ventura Settling Ponds on 18 Aug (MT).

Warm ocean temperatures offshore continued to produce rare seabirds on pelagic trips and trips to the islands. The **Blue-footed Booby** found in July was seen regularly on Anacapa Island through 12 Aug. A **Brown Booby** was on Anacapa Island 21-31 Aug (PG et al.) and was joined by a second bird on 29 Aug (JB). **Craveri's Murrelet** reports continued including two offshore of Mugu on 11 Aug (DM & GJ) and four south of Anacapa Island on 21 Aug (PG et al.). It has been an exceptional summer for that species off the coast of California.

August is a great time to look for southbound shorebirds and a number of uncommon species were found locally. An **American Golden-Plover** was on a sod field on the Oxnard Plain on 20 Aug (JB) and what was assumed to be the same bird was found within a few miles from there on 23 Aug. A **Semipalmated Sandpiper** was at the Santa Clara River Mouth on 18 Aug (DG) and what was likely a different individual was there 28-31 Aug (DPet). Others were on the Oxnard Plain on 11 Aug (LS), 19-20 Aug (DP), and 20 Aug (LS). Other shorebirds on the Oxnard Plain included a **Solitary Sandpiper** 23-28 Aug (LS) and another on 31 Aug (DP), a **Stilt Sandpiper** on 31 Aug (DP), a **Baird's Sandpiper** on 20 Aug (LS), and a **Pectoral Sandpiper** on 16 Aug (LS).

A few notable birds of prey were found along Arnold Road including an apparent **Swainson's Hawk** on 26 Aug (GJ) and an early arriving **Burrowing Owl** 17-31 Aug (SB).

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 calls about nuisance birds), e-mail or call David Pereksta at <pereksta@pacbell.net> or 659-5740.

Good birding,
David Pereksta

Observers: Joel Barrett, Stacey Bergman, Peter Gaede, Davis Garner, Gareth Jones, Dee Lyon, Dan Maxwell, Daniel Pettersson, David Pereksta, Larry Sansone, Daniel Tinoco, and Michelle Townsley

VENTURA AUDUBON SOCIETY

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If you are not sure if your membership has expired, please **email** Jackie
at jbworden7@gmail.com and she will check it out for you.



VAS OFFICERS AND CHAIRS

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Program Committee:	Laura Gulovsen	642-6544
	Margaret Wilson	647-7962
	Audrey Vincent	525-5826

BOARD MEETING: There will be a Board of Directors meeting on **November 4th** at the home of Neil Ziegler, 1921 Holly Ave, Oxnard. Call (805) 983-7207 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 bi-monthly 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, preferably in WORD format, or in the form of an e-mail message. *The deadline is noon on the **10th** of the month preceding the next issue.* E-mail to: deepress2@gmail.com.