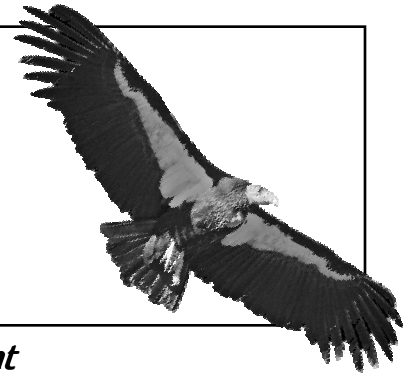


The CALIFORNIA CONDOR

Ventura Audubon Society **SEPTEMBER 2011** Volume 32 Number 1
A Chapter of the National Audubon www.VenturaAudubon.org



CALL NOTES ...Bruce Schoppe, President

A NEW YEAR

Welcome back as another Ventura Audubon Society year gets underway. I hope that everyone has had an enjoyable summer.

As we start the year, I want to note some changes to the roster of board members and chairs. We welcome two newcomers to the Board, one truly new and one, shall we say, recycled! Alexis Frangis, an environmental scientist for CA State Parks, joins the Board and Neil Ziegler, long active in VAS and a former president, returns to the Board.

Art Marshall has retired as Membership Chair after many years of service in a variety of roles, including president. Jackie Worden has succeeded him in that role. Throughout his time as Membership Chair, Art had a lot of help from his son, Peter, to whom we also owe thanks. Earlier, Marianne Slaughter took over the duties of Treasurer, succeeding Jan Lewison who had also served VAS

for many years. Finally, Dee Press has stepped down from the Board but continues as newsletter editor.

Our thanks to all who serve Ventura Audubon.

In the upcoming year, VAS will continue to offer interesting monthly programs arranged by Janice Sussha and field trips organized by Judy Dugan. Your thoughts, suggestions and ideas are welcome.

Our conservation/restoration efforts will move downstream on the Santa Clara River to land owned by The Nature Conservancy. We'll also continue our efforts on behalf of the Western Snowy Plover and California Least Tern and the beaches on which they nest, especially Ormond Beach which continues to face serious development pressures. http://www.edcnet.org/learn/current_cases/oromond_beach/index.html There is also renewed interest in implementing the Ventura River Parkway Plan approved, in concept, by the Ventura City Council in 2007. (<http://ucanr.org/sites/wshedUVR/files/79397.pdf>).

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SEPTEMBER PROGRAM ...Janice Sussha, Program Chair

Tuesday, September 13th, Poinsettia Pavillion, 3451 Foothill Road, Ventura

IRA MEYER, Photographer, Presents WILDLIFE AND ICE OF THE ANTARCTIC REGION



Ira Meyer's photographs have been published on the cover of the Turkish version of National Geographic's Climate Change special edition, in National Geographic's Atlas of Natural America, on the cover of Yosemite National Park's calendar, as the Nature Conservancy's holiday card, CD and video art, in the Los Angeles Times, on several book covers and a variety of magazines including: Outdoor Photographer, ESCAPE, Outdoor and Nature Photography, EARTH, Digital Photographer, ArtLife and Petersen's Photographic. In 2008, Ira's image of a dripping arch in a Greenland iceberg received the runner up award in the One Earth category of the prestigious BBC Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition. His work is also part of the permanent collections of the City of Beverly Hills, as well as Oxnard, California's Carnegie Art Museum.

This presentation will exhibit photographs from Ira's many trips to the Antarctic region featuring the wildlife on the Falkland and South Georgia Islands and the Ice of the Antarctic. Come join us for this visually stunning pictorial of this remote region of our planet!

BIRD OF THE MONTH – SEPTEMBER 2011

Article and Photo by DAVID PEREKSTA

REDDISH EGRET (*Egretta rufescens*)



Several herons that are rare in California can be found in the summer and fall when they disperse north from west Mexico. One that has been seen regularly along our coast in recent years is the Reddish Egret.

The Reddish Egret is a medium-sized, long-legged and long-necked heron that has a gray body and a rufous-colored head and neck. Adults have a dark bill, dark legs, pale eyes, and plumes on the head and neck that give it a shaggy appearance. During the breeding season, adults have elongate plumes on the head, neck, and back; a pink colored bill that is dark at the tip; violet-blue lores; and bluish feet and legs. Juveniles are a pale chalky brownish-gray with rufous-edged wing coverts. The species also has a white morph, but none have ever been seen in California. The Little Blue Heron looks similar, but is smaller and more slender with a bluish bill with dark tip and bluish-green legs.

Reddish Egrets frequent saltwater flats and lagoons and are more tied to salt water than any of our other herons. Their distinctive feeding behavior includes running through the shallows with long strides, staggering sideways, leaping in the air, raising one or both wings, and abruptly stabbing at fish. This behavior can make them easy to spot at a distance. They also stand still and spread their wings to shade the water to attract fish, a technique known as “canopy feeding.” North America’s rarest and most range-restricted heron, the species is recovering from decimation by plume hunters in the late 1800s.

The Reddish Egret breeds locally along the coast of Texas, in southern Florida, the West Indies, and both coasts of Mexico and Central America. The subspecies that breeds in Baja California (*E. r. dickeyi*) has recently extended its breeding range north to the Todos Santos Islands, which is coincident with an increase in records of the species in southern California. Most southern California records fall between late July and late March when juveniles disperse northward.

In Ventura County, the majority of Reddish Egrets have occurred at Mugu Lagoon during the summer and fall. Unlike some birds that can not be seen from outside the naval base, Reddish Egrets often forage in the eastern arm of Mugu Lagoon along Highway 1 at low tide. Prior to 2001, there were only three records of this species for the county, but since that time they have been seen nearly annually with as many as three birds at once in Mugu Lagoon. Other places they have been found locally include the Santa Clara River estuary and the lagoon at Ormond Beach.



SEPTEMBER FIELD TRIPS ...Judy Dugan

Welcome to another year of great birding!

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.

Suggestions for birding sites and volunteers to lead are always appreciated. We had a large turnout for summer birding averaging about 20 people a week – many who prefer weekday birding. As a result, Adele Fergusson has volunteered to lead a walk the first Monday of the month (unless it is a holiday, then the 2nd Mon). Check the regular listing for the current month's location & the Mark Your Calendar section for the next month.

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.

Aug. 27, 8:00 a.m. Ventura Wildlife Ponds. Leader: Neil Ziegler (983-7207). 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. 11, 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. Surfes' Knoll is on the left. Please bring scopes.

Monday, Sept. 12, 8:30 a.m. Arroyo Verde Park, Ventura. Leader: Adele Fergusson (415-4304). We may see some early fall migrants including White-crowned & Golden-crowned sparrows, hawks & woodpeckers. Take Victoria Ave. north, left on Foothill Rd., right on Day Rd. entrance to the park. Meet at the last parking lot by the restrooms.

Saturday, Sept. 17, 9:00 a.m. Beach Cleanup, Emma Wood State Beach Group Campground. Information: Reed Smith (652-0706). California Coastal Cleanup Day is a statewide volunteer day. Join fellow Audubon members to help clean up one of our birding sites. Meet inside the campground at the far west end of Main St. beyond the bridge over the Ventura River. In 2009 volunteers used 130,000 plastic bags & 135,000 plastic gloves so **BYO** – bucket, previously used shopping bags or reusable bag, and gloves.

Saturday, Sept. 24, 8:30-10:30 a.m. Beginners' Bird Walk, Foster Park. Leader: Allen Bertke (640-9037). We should see fall migrants, bluebirds & egrets. Take Hwy 33 from Ojai or Ventura to Casitas Vista exit. Park under the overpass. To car pool from Ventura, meet at 8:10 at the Ventura Co. Museum on Main St. (side parking lot).

Sept. 23-25, Monterey Bay Birding Festival, Watsonville. No scheduled VAS trip.

Mark Your Calendar

Monday, Oct. 3 – Camino Real Park, Ventura

Saturday, Oct 22 – Beginners' Walk, Ventura Wildlife Ponds



STATE OF VAS FINANCES

...Marianne Slaughter, Treasurer



It seems like the start of a new VAS year is a good time to review our Chapter's finances. First, a few basics. Our operating budget consists of income and expenses figured on an annual basis from July 1 through June 30, the VAS calendar year. Income is derived from National Audubon, general donations, memberships in our local chapter, and our annual Birdathon fundraiser. There are also

pass through donations which go directly to paying for Audubon Adventures, the May BBQ meeting, and the Christmas Bird Count. Expenses include the monthly newsletter, postage and bulk mail fees; cost for the meeting room and speakers' fees; conservation donations to a few local groups such as Ojai Raptor Center, and administrative costs. Our treasury also contains restricted grants from a variety of organizations which are held separately from operating funds, and which can only be used for the purposes specified in the grants. These may vary from year to year.

Now for some specific dollar amounts, which have been rounded up or down. Our actual income last year was \$8,858. Our expenses totaled \$8,652. So we took in \$200+ more than we spent, definitely a good outcome. Our general funds balance, i.e., our money in the bank as of 6/30/11 for operational expenses, was \$9,245, an amount that is roughly equal to what we spend each year. In the middle of each budget year, our balance slips well below \$9,000 as we pay our bills, but then rises as donations from our members flow in during Birdathon. That sounds like a lot of money, perhaps, but it will keep us on a solid financial footing only as long as income doesn't diminish and expenses don't accelerate.

Now for some further delineation of our expenses, especially noting what took the biggest bite out of the pie. Percentages have been rounded up or down. Our newsletter expense for the 2010-2011 budget year was \$3,531 (38%); monthly meetings/speakers was \$1,380 (15%); insurance was \$641 (7%); website \$107 (1%);

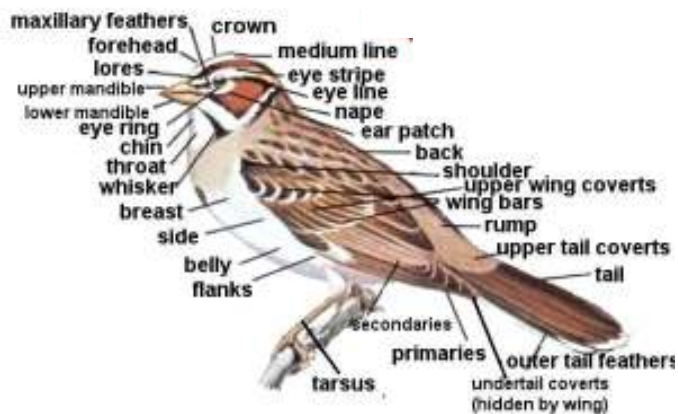


conservation donations \$435 (5%). Audubon Adventures/education was \$1,076 (12%), and the May BBQ cost \$464 (5%). If all these numbers are making you dizzy, just focus for a minute on our greatest expense, the excellent newsletter VAS produces. 38% is a large portion of the budget, and unfortunately the cost of postage is increasing significantly. It is anticipated that the cost of producing the newsletter for 2011-2012 will rise to \$3,825, or 41% of our budget, if we continue to print the same number of newsletters.

I would like to spend a moment discussing the funding grants that VAS has received for special projects, our restricted funds. There is a Least Tern Fund (general), received in a prior year, and a Least Tern fund from Amgen to be used specifically at Ormond Beach. These funds total just over \$3,000 and are used for fencing and other projects related to protecting Least Terns. Our other restricted grant, received in 2011 from an Audubon California Endowment Fund, is to be used at McGrath State Beach. It totals almost \$5,400. This grant was limited to be used in a state park, in an Important Bird Area and on Endangered/Threatened species of birds. In 2010-11 VAS spent out an Audubon grant for the Share the Shore project, which was a great success. As already stated, restricted grant monies cannot be used for anything other than their stated purpose, so they are not part of the VAS operational budget.

A major goal of your treasurer this budget year is to increase the number of our members who receive the VAS newsletter electronically, so that we can bring down the expense of producing it. So step up and do your part. To begin receiving an e-Newsletter instead of a copy via regular mail, send an email with "eNewsletter" in the subject line to our Editor, Dee Press, at birderez1@roadrunner.com. If you are already receiving the newsletter via email with no problem you don't need to do anything.

Thanks to our members who support the goals and endeavors of our Audubon chapter.





NOTES FROM THE FIELD

...David Pereksta

Since the last report in the May newsletter, we have seen the passage of both northbound migrant shorebirds in the spring and the start of "fall" migration south in the summer. **Black Oystercatchers** continue to be reported frequently along the mainland coast with five at Marina Park 1 Jun (KR), one there 16 Jul and 30 Jul; two at the Santa Clara River estuary on 10 Jul (KR & MH); and two juveniles at the Ventura River estuary on 17 Jun, suggesting breeding at or near that location (KR). Uncommon in spring was a **Solitary Sandpiper** at the Ojai Meadows preserve on 23 Apr (LE & JG). The only **Red Knot** reported was one at the Santa Clara River on 3 Jul (PJ). **Baird's Sandpiper** reports included 1 at Saticoy 3-5 Aug (RM & AA) and 3 at the Santa Clara River Estuary on 7 Aug (AS & DMA). Notable for their numbers were large flocks of **Whimbrels** migrating down the coast past Point Mugu at dusk including 290 on 20 Jul and 520 on 28 Jul (DP & AS).

Local lagoons, wetlands, and beaches attracted a number of interesting waterbirds. Summering and unseasonal waterbirds included an alternate-plumaged **Eared Grebe** at the Ventura Harbor 16 Jul-12 Aug (KR) and single **Brant** at the Ventura River Estuary 24-25 Apr and 23 Jun-3 Jul (KR). As many as six **Least Bitterns** were found in the marshy margins of Matilja Lake 2-7 Aug (PG). **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons** continued at Point Mugu with two seen there on 20 Jul and one on 28 Jul (DP). A **Reddish Egret** was also at Mugu Lagoon 19-28 Jul (MR). Breeding rails included a pair of **Clapper Rails** at the end of Arnold Road with three young present there on 26 Jun (DK) and at least two pairs of **Virginia Rails** at Rancho Sierra Vista including two chicks seen and photographed there with adults on 15 Apr (DP & JC). **Franklin's Gulls** are rare at any time in the county but most reliably found in May, so one on Hollywood Beach on 26 May was in the prime window for the species (RS & NZ). **Black Skimmers** were reported in a variety of locations including 3 at the Ventura River estuary on 26 Jun (KR), 2 at the Santa Clara River estuary on 10 Jul (KR & MH), nine at Mugu Lagoon on 20 Jul (DP), and 13 at Mugu Lagoon on 28 Jul (DP & AS).

Unseasonal and uncommon raptor reports were few, but included several notable breeding records. The pair of **Bald Eagles** continued at Lake Casitas through at least 30 Apr, but no reports came in on the final outcome of their nesting effort. A **Long-eared Owl** nest with chicks was found in the Palo Comado Open Space near Oak Park on 11 May (PF). Uncommon near the coast at Canada Larga Road was a **Prairie Falcon** on

20 Apr (KR) and a **Golden Eagle** on 21 Apr (MP). Migrant **Swainson's Hawks** are rare along the coast so an individual seen in Camarillo on 21 Apr was notable (AS).

There were several reports of interest from the mountains and arid valleys of northern Ventura County. The most notable was a **Northern Goshawk** family on Frazier Mountain on 22 Jul (DDJ) that confirmed breeding for that location. Three **Red Crossbills** were on Frazier Mountain on 10 Jun (DP). Reports from Mount Pinos included two **Dusky Flycatchers** on 6 Aug (AV), six **Golden-crowned Kinglets** on 16 Jul (RB), and a **Townsend's Solitaire** with young and **Pine Siskins** on 11 Aug (DM). The Lockwood Valley area hosted a **Prairie Falcon**, territorial **Gray Flycatcher**, and three **Scott's Orioles** (near Dry Canyon) on 12 Jun (AS). Other reports of **Scott's Orioles** from Dry Canyon included two on 15 May (MP, EW, & LT) and one on 10 Jun (DP).

A variety of uncommon or vagrant landbirds were reported through the spring and summer. Two **Common Ground-Doves** at Canada Larga on 10 May (KR) were away from citrus and avocado orchards where they normally occur locally. A **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** was along the Santa Clara River near Santa Paula on 5 Jul (AS) where it may have been a late northbound migrant. The only reports of northbound **Black Swifts** were of 80 migrating north over the Sespe Wilderness on 23 May (EC) and a single bird over the Santa Clara River near the 101 bridge on 8 Jun (AS). A **Hammond's Flycatcher** was at Wheeler Gorge Campground on 29 Apr (DP). **Bell's Vireos** away from the Santa Clara River included two singing birds along Canada Larga Road 10-17 Apr (DP) and one at Hill Canyon on 17 Apr (MP). **California Gnatcatchers** continued their residency at Cal Lutheran and appeared to have multiple nesting attempts this spring and summer through late-July. The only **Grasshopper Sparrow** reported away from the Santa Monica Mountains was found along Canada Larga Road 3-24 May (DP). Eastern vagrants included a singing male **Indigo Bunting** at the Stewart Canyon Debris Dam in Ojai 25 May-16 Jun (DR & BD) and a **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** at La Jolla Canyon on 7 Jun (AS). A **Yellow-headed Blackbird** was at the Ojai Meadows Preserve on 27 Apr (DR & BD) and two were at the Olivas Park Golf Course on 22 Apr (DP).

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. (continued on Page 6)

VENTURA AUDUBON SOCIETY

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CALL NOTES... (continued from Page 1)

Every conservation organization I know is focusing increasing efforts on educating young people about the conservation ethic. VAS does a lot. In the last program year, we funded 14 Audubon Adventures classrooms. Susan Bee, Neil Ziegler and Alan Bertke conducted 6 classroom visits and field trips for younger kids; we also completed the Share the Shore Project. John Connor and Alan Bertke conducted a field trip to the Carpinteria Salt Marsh for a group of Ventura College students. The fact is kids that experience and learn to appreciate wildness and wildlife at an early age are more likely to carry that appreciation into adulthood and the voting booth! It would be great to do even more. We are limited only by the number of volunteers.

VAS currently has about 850 members, most of whom join by way of joining National Audubon. That is a powerful voice for conservation in Ventura County. If you have not yet participated in a VAS activity, please plan to join us soon. We're actually a pretty fun group of people!

NOTES FROM THE FIELD (continued from Page 5)

Observers: Allison Alvarado, Richard Barth, Jeff Cartier, Eric Culbertson, Don DesJardin, Becky Donahue, Linda Easter, Pat Farris, Peter Gaede, Jesse Grantham, Mary Hansen, Penny Johnson, Dexter Kelly, Dinuk Magamma, Dan Maxwell (DMa), Robert McMorrان, Matthew Page, David Pereksta, Kay Regester, David Roine, Martin Ruane, Adam Searcy, Reed Smith, Louis Tucker, Alex Viduetsky, Eric Waian, and Neil Ziegler.

VAS OFFICERS AND CHAIRS

President	Bruce Schoppe	658-2396
Vice-President		
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
Science/Webmaster	Reed Smith	652-0706
Programs	Janice Susha	983-3929
At Large:	Jim Susha	983-3929
	Jack Gillooly	646-3867
	John Connor	654-1805
	Jan Lewison	643-3353
	Nancy Schorsch	643-5825
	Art Marshall	642-1585
	Alexis Fangis	217-4833
	Neil Zeigler	983-7207
Non Board:		
Membership	Jackie Worden	652-0577
Newsletter	Dee Press	484-8415

OCTOBER BOARD MEETING

The Tuesday, October 4th Board of Directors meeting will be held at Dee & Marianne's, 1656 Riente St, Camrillo. 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: birderez1@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.