

The California Condor

Ventura Audubon Society
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A Chapter of the National Audubon Society
venturaaudubon.org

Call Notes

by Rachel Ameche
President

Welcome to the 2023-2024 Ventura Audubon Society (VAS) year! Autumn is just around the corner, and I am already eagerly awaiting the return of our fall avian residents. It doesn't truly feel like fall to me until the White-crowned sparrows sing. Over the summer, VAS was hard at work protecting birds and wildlife habitat. Keep reading for exciting updates about the Shorebird recovery team, the conservation committee, and ways you can get involved.

With the new year we have some changes to the board. Please welcome Deby Tygell, our new treasurer. She will be gradually taking over this position under the mentorship of Sherry Dorris, our previous treasurer. Deby is also the treasurer for the Ventura Surfrider foundation, and we are looking forward to learning from all her experience. I want to extend the most sincere gratitude to Sherry.

Thank you, Sherry, for your hard work, perseverance and problem solving. We are so grateful for all you have done, and continue to do for this organization. Additionally, you may notice that our biologist, Cynthia Hartley, no longer appears on our board roster. She is stepping down from this position, but will continue her impactful work as the Director of the Shorebird Recovery program. Vince Kinsch is now our vice president, and he is teaching me all I need to know to be the president. Thank you Vince for your inspiring leadership.

I am so grateful for the privilege of being this year's president. I joined the chapter 3 years ago, eager to participate in conservation work. When I wanted a local opportunity to protect birds and their habitats, looking up the local Audubon chapter was my first move. I found the Beach Naturalist Training class and jumped right in. I have since had the joy of spending many hours counting Western Snowy Plovers, watching over nests, speaking with the community, and initiating Dog Rangers. This has been a fulfilling and meaningful part of my life, and for that I am thankful to VAS. As President, I hope to support and contribute to the mission of VAS: to promote at the local level, by education and action, the protection and restoration of bird populations and wildlife habitat for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biodiversity.

One of my favorite things about Autumn is the beginning of our Field Trip Season. We have a new coordinator this year, Alistair Skinner. Alistair is a regular attendee on our field trips and will be an excellent field trip leader. Bird walks are a great way to connect with fellow bird enthusiasts. If you are an experienced birder, your help with identifying species and welcoming new birders is invaluable. If you are a new birder, these trips are a great way to meet people, learn more skills and see new species.

If you are a member or a potential member looking for ways to connect, advocate for our local environment, and protect birds, please consider joining our team of volunteers. Over the course of this year, we will have various opportunities for involvement including our volunteer naturalists program, political activism, and outreach events. Keep your eye on the newsletters for more information, as well as updates on VAS happenings, and upcoming events. Be sure to follow us on Instagram for more frequent updates. Our website is always a great place to check for information. Thank you for your support, and



[Membership Webpage](#)

[Join VAS via PayPal](#)

The City of Port Hueneme Recognizes VAS

Recognition from the City of Port Hueneme: A Celebration of Bird Conservation Efforts

We were overjoyed and deeply honored to receive special recognition from the City of Port Hueneme for our commitment to protecting endangered birds on Ormond Beach.



During the Hueneme Beach Festival on August 27th 2023, our shorebird team was presented with a certificate of recognition. Earlier in the year we were also awarded a community grant from the City of Hueneme and the Port of Hueneme. This grant has been instrumental in supporting our field camera project, which plays a crucial role in accurately monitoring nesting outcomes and keeping tabs on nesting habitat. Moreover, it enables us to share essential outreach video footage capturing candid behaviors of plovers and terns, thereby fostering valuable awareness.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Councilmember Laura Hernandez and the City of Port Hueneme for their continuous support. Collaborative efforts like these enable us to make a meaningful impact on bird conservation in our community and beyond.



Shorebird Recovery Program Update

by Cynthia Hartley, Shorebird Recovery Program Lead

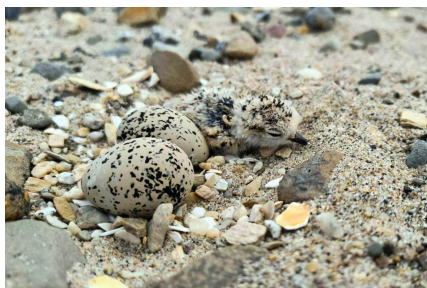
Nesting Season Concludes for Western Snowy Plovers and California Least Terns



This is the last Ormond Beach juvenile snowy plover of the year. It is just at the age where it can fly. It's dad was still protecting it when we saw it on August 27th, photo by Alecia Smith

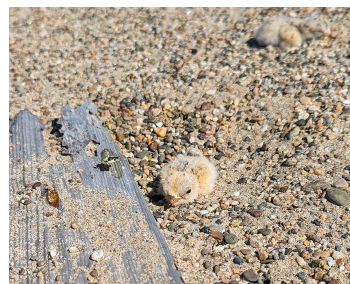
	Total Nests	Hatch	Fail
Snowy Plover	66	54	12
CA Least Tern	19	13	6

The nesting season for the western snowy plover (plover) and California least tern (tern) has officially drawn to a close. Terns had their usual short intense season that began with the first nest found on May 31 and ended with the last fledgling terns seen on July 31st. When we looked for them just 2 days later, all terns were gone from Ormond Beach. No doubt they left with their parents to begin their winter migration to Baja California, Central America and beyond. The final plover nest successfully hatched on August 3rd. On our final survey on August 30th, we observed the final 3 fledgling chicks of the year. All 3 had reached the age of flight but were still with their dads. This survey marks the conclusion of the 6-month nesting season.



Achievements for Snowy Plovers

The plovers at Ormond Beach experienced an exceptionally successful year. This year saw a substantial increase in the number of nests and many more surviving chicks compared to previous years. Moreover, for the first time, we achieved our goal of 50 breeding plovers, as set by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for species recovery. Several elements played a role in this outcome, including the absence of corvids preying on nests and chicks, ample cover provided by storm debris along the beach, and a significant presence of insects due to persistent pools of water through June.



Mixed Results for California Least Terns

In contrast, terns had a reasonably good but not outstanding year. This can be attributed to the thriving tern colony on the neighboring beaches of Pt Mugu, which acted as a successful nesting area. Ormond Beach serves as a backup location for Pt Mugu terns, in case of substantial nest losses - often caused by predators wiping out multiple nests in a short span. However, this scenario did not occur this year, resulting in fewer terns choosing to re-nest at Ormond Beach.

Looking Ahead

The rest of this year will be dedicated to in-depth data analysis and report writing based on this year's findings. I am scheduled to present our collected data at both the FWS Snowy Plover Recovery Unit 5 and the CDFW Least Tern Recovery meetings. Additionally, in the early months of next year 2024, I will be giving a presentation during the Ventura Audubon speaker program, focusing on nesting activities at Ormond Beach.

Our attention will shift to fence work and container winterizing in October.

We plan to schedule habitat fence work volunteer days in October:

1. Removing western snowy plover and California least tern nesting season signs
2. Taking down metal posts, and clearing other fencing materials.
3. Helping to winterize our storage containers (painting, gooping the roof)
4. Removing trash from nesting habitats.

If you're interested in joining us, please register via our [Google Sign-Up Form](#) [here](#)

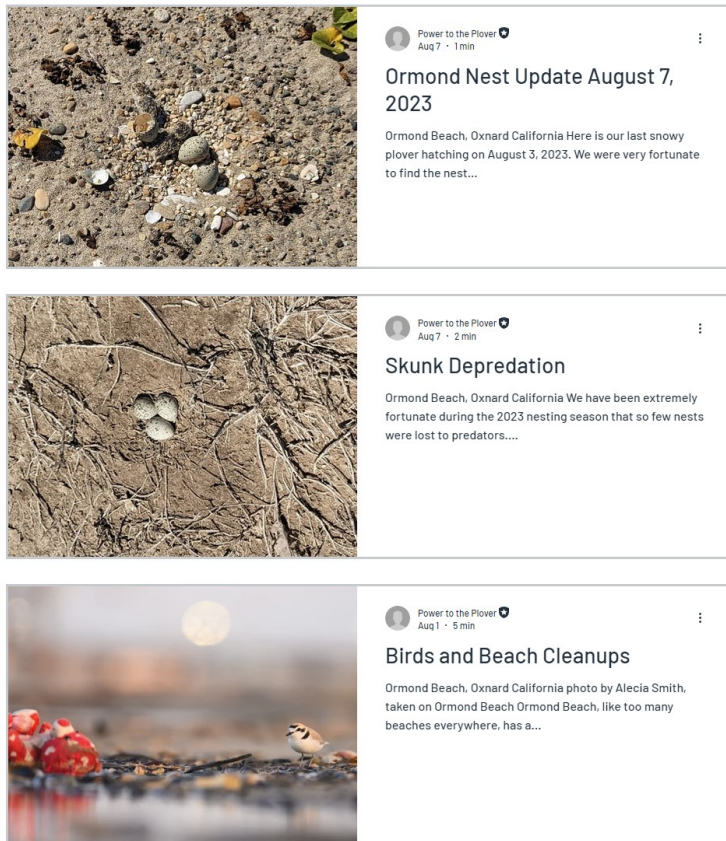
We'll email everyone on the list once the work days are scheduled.

Introducing Our Bird Blog

Don't miss out on the latest updates available on our "Bird Blog", which is linked on the VAS website. This past summer, I initiated the blog with the aim of providing convenient access to timely nesting season updates. Even though nesting season has ended, I will be maintaining the blog by sharing videos, images, and progress reports as I delve into the analysis of last year's 2023 data. Furthermore, keep an eye out for upcoming announcements about the upcoming 2024 season. We'll be providing information and opportunities for what's on the horizon for the upcoming season.

But that's not all! The blog's scope will extend beyond nesting season reports. The blog will also serve as a platform for discussing other pertinent news items and topics. Stay tuned to our bird blog for information and captivating stories. We look forward to sharing this exciting journey with you as we continue to champion the cause of Ventura County bird conservation.

[Blog Link](#)



The image displays three social media posts from the organization 'Power to the Plover'. Each post includes a photograph on the left and text on the right. The first post, dated August 7, 2023, features a photo of a sandy nesting site with several eggs and a small bird chick, titled 'Ormond Nest Update August 7, 2023'. The second post, also dated August 7, 2023, shows a nest of eggs in a nestbox made of sticks, titled 'Skunk Depredation'. The third post, dated August 1, 2023, shows a bird on a beach with red plastic cups, titled 'Birds and Beach Cleanups'.

Power to the Plover
Aug 7 · 1 min

Ormond Nest Update August 7, 2023

Ormond Beach, Oxnard California Here is our last snowy plover hatching on August 3, 2023. We were very fortunate to find the nest...

Power to the Plover
Aug 7 · 2 min

Skunk Depredation

Ormond Beach, Oxnard California We have been extremely fortunate during the 2023 nesting season that so few nests were lost to predators....

Power to the Plover
Aug 1 · 5 min

Birds and Beach Cleanups

Ormond Beach, Oxnard California photo by Alecia Smith, taken on Ormond Beach Ormond Beach, like too many beaches everywhere, has a...

Ventura Audubon Birding Field Trips

Beginners are always welcome on field trips!

Please do not be shy if you are learning bird ID or are just curious.

We love having and encouraging beginner birders!

- We request that all participants sign up no less than 24 hours in advance for field trips - *this allows us advance time to ensure we have enough trip leaders*
- This also enables us to notify participants of any changes

Sign up early to participate in a field trip and to get notifications if a field trip is changed or cancelled!

1. Visit our [Field Trip webpage](#)
2. Scroll to the bottom of the field trip descriptions, and fill out; your name, email address and select the trip you want to attend
3. You will be sent an email by our Field Trip Coordinator

Questions or need help? Email fieldtrips@venturaaudubon.org

Light drizzle does not necessarily cancel trips, but heavier rain will. Please wear appropriate clothing (layers are suggested), comfortable shoes, and bring snacks, water, hats, sunscreen, binoculars and field guides.

September Field Trips

Ventura Settling Ponds

Saturday September 9th
Meeting Time: 8:30am



A fan favorite, enjoy a morning of birding at the ponds. This is an easy walk along the shore of the settling ponds. We'll be looking for ducks, grebes and herons. Spotting scopes are always welcome. Possible side trip to the Santa Clara River mouth for those interested.

For directions please sign up here: [Field Trip webpage](#)

Ojai Meadows

Saturday September 23th
Meeting Time: 8:30am



This beautiful preserve is a birding hotspot and includes a restored wetland and native plantings. Target birds will include: Western Bluebirds, Sora, White-tailed Kites, Western Meadowlark, Merlin, Lark Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow and White-crowned Sparrows.

More info on [Ojai Valley Land Conservancy website](#)

For directions please sign up here: [Field Trip webpage](#)

September 2023 Speaker Program

The Santa Clara River Estuary: The History and Issues

Speaker: Tevin Schmitt

Date: Tuesday September 12th

Time: 7:00 pm PST

In person at the Poinsettia Pavilion

3451 Foothill Rd, Ventura, CA 93003

Program Description: Tevin will give a presentation on the natural history and water quality issues in

the Santa Clara River Estuary. He will also present Wishtoyo's watershed monitoring program and water quality monitoring efforts in the estuary, as part of our watershed-wide monitoring effort. The presentation will also cover the water quality and habitat issues that the Ventura Water Pure Project is hoping to address and how Wishtoyo is involved in the project. There will be plenty of discussion on California Least Terns and Western Snowy Plovers and their use of the Estuary for foraging.



We are rightfully concerned about the Ventura Water Pure project, so he will be taking questions and will be discussing these issues with those attending our program.

Speaker Bio: Tevin Schmitt is the Watershed Scientist for the Wishtoyo Chumash Foundation. Wishtoyo serves as a “rainbow bridge” linking Chumash and Indigenous lifeways with the protection of natural and cultural resources, utilizing traditional ecological knowledge to provide environmental and cultural preservation and justice, education, research, and advocacy.

Tevin has years of experience in conducting water quality analysis, stormwater sampling, and industrial wastewater treatment design throughout the coastal watersheds of southern California. In addition to water quality analysis, Tevin has extensive experience in wildlife biology. Tevin works with local research organizations, like the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology, and regulatory agencies conducting surveys for local endangered and sensitive wildlife in the Santa Clara River and Santa Monica Mountains.

Tevin runs Wishtoyo's watershed monitoring program in which stream teams conduct water quality analysis and endangered species habitat surveys throughout the Santa Clara River watershed. Tevin also works with Wishtoyo's environmental and cultural education programs, teaching youth and community members about water quality and local ecology. Lastly, Tevin works with Wishtoyo's litigation team, analyzing and collecting evidence for potential Clean Water Act and Endangered Species Act cases.

To join the program visit our

[Monthly Speaker webpage](#)

Notes from the Field

NOTES FROM THE FIELD – Apr-Jun 2023 by David Pereksta

The most noteworthy bird found locally this spring was Ventura County's first **Cassin's Sparrow**, which was at the Ventura Settling Ponds 26-27 Apr (SC). This species has been long overdue in the county, but it was not expected to show up as a migrant at the ponds. Some of us have listened for singing birds in appropriate habitat around the county for a number of years. This species is normally found in grasslands and shrublands in the southwestern U.S. and Great Plains.

The only summering **Wood Duck** was a male in Wildwood Park 5 May-14 Jun (SB). A **Long-tailed Duck** was in the Channel Islands Harbor on 14 Apr (SK). A **Red-necked Grebe** continued in the Ventura Harbor through 4 Apr. A **Laughing Gull** was at Mugu Lagoon on 18 Apr (PD) and a **Franklin's Gull** was at the Santa Clara River Estuary on 16 Jun (MB). A **Common Tern** was on the Oxnard Plain on 23 Apr (DP). **Neotropic Cormorants** were found at several locations as they continue to expand their range into coastal southern California including individuals in east Ventura on 30 Apr (DP & SP), the Ventura River Estuary on 10 May (SK & LLG), and Lake Sherwood 9-31 May (MH). An **American Bittern** continued on the Oxnard Plain through 23 Apr. A **Reddish Egret** continued at Mugu Lagoon through 25 Jun and as many as two **Cattle Egrets** were at Lake Casitas 29 Apr-24 May (GH). A late **Zone-tailed Hawk** continued in Ojai through 10 Apr. Migrant **Swainson's Hawks** were reported widely this spring with too many records to summarize.

A **Williamson's Sapsucker** was on Mount Pinos on 6 Apr (NW). **Bank Swallows** included one at Lake Casitas on 1 Apr (LLG), as many as seven at the Ventura Settling Ponds 24 Apr-18 May (KS, m

obs.), as many as eight on the Oxnard Plain 9-14 May (DP), and one at Point Mugu 22-26 May (DP). **Purple Martins** included one in east Ventura on 3 May (DP), two at the Ventura Settling Ponds 3-4 May (SC et al.), one on the Oxnard Plain on 14 May (DP), and one in the Rose Valley on 29 May (LLG & RR). **Red Crossbills** have been scarce the last few years so two on Mount Pinos on 23 Jun were notable (DP). Birders are always hopeful for eastern vagrants in May and June, but only a few were found this year and their stays were brief including a **Yellow-throated Vireo** at Rancho Sierra Vista on 14 May (RB), a **Gray Catbird** at the Ventura Settling Ponds on 13 Jun (MB), and a **Baltimore Oriole** at Arroyo Verde Park on 26 May (DP).

Eastern vagrant warblers were hard to come by this spring with the only two being singing **Northern Parulas** at Point Mugu State Park on 27 Apr (PP) and Thousand Oaks on 17 May (AM). **Summer Tanagers** were at Canada Larga Road on 16 May (LLG), Arroyo Verde Park on 22 May (MBr), and the Ventura Settling Ponds on 7 Jun (MB). **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** included individuals at Rancho Dos Vientos on 26 Apr (RB), on the Sandstone Peak Trail on 27 May (MS), Thousand Oaks on 11 Jun (GR), Newbury Park 13-30 Jun (CB & RA), Ojai 18-19 Jun (BB), and two in Ventura 9-10 May (DH). **Indigo Buntings** included singing individuals at Arroyo Verde Park on 23 May (SC) and Canada Larga on 7 Jun (DP & LLG).

Thank you to those who reported sightings during this period. If you have any questions about local birds or have a good one to report (please no messages about nuisance birds) e-mail David Pereksta at <pereksta@pacbell.net>

Good Birding,
David Pereksta

Observers: Richard Armerding, Betsy Bachman, Marc Better, Catherine Bourne, Max Breshears, Ryan Burnett, Stephen Bylin, Sammy Cowell, Patricia Deventer, Mary Hansen, Debbie Herrera, Graeme Hinde, Sangeet Khalsa, Lukas Le Grice, Ava Molnar, David Pereksta, Sandy Pereksta, Paul Pyle, Rick Ridgeway, Griffin Rohrer, Kirill Shtengel, Maximilian Sluiter, Nolan Walker

Become a VAS Volunteer



**Do you like to go birding? Interested in science and advocating for birds?
Then VAS needs you!**

We are looking for volunteers to help lead our monthly field trips. Field trip leaders guide participants around the field trip location. They help the group identify and log the birds we observe. You don't have to be an expert birder, just excited to share the joy of birding. If you're interested, email outreach@venturaudubon.org and put 'Field Trip Leader' in the subject line.

We are also looking for volunteers to join our Conservation Committee. The Conservation Committee is a diverse group that is dedicated to advocating for birds and their habitat in Ventura. They meet every other month to discuss issues that impact bird habitat, review environmental impacts from development and conduct outreach with local officials. The next meeting is October 12. If you are interested in joining the Conservation Committee, email outreach@venturaudubon.org and put 'Conservation Committee' in the subject line.



Snowy plover dad and chick at Ormond Beach taken last summer by intern Alex Vaca

VAS Trip to Costa Rica March 20 - 29 2024



Birding Southern Costa Rica with Ventura Audubon

Set out on a journey across the Pacific coastal region of Costa Rica to discover the abundant species of neotropical birds and other wildlife inhabiting this small but biodiverse country. Marvel at the variety of ecosystems, from lowland tropical forests and wetlands to temperate forests and páramos, and identify hundreds of bird species along the way. Visit national parks and wildlife reserves, botanical gardens, and world-renowned research stations to learn about the natural history of Costa Rica and the latest conservation initiatives to protect its precious ecosystems as you observe magnificent species like crocodiles and endemic avifauna.

Highlights

- Cruise along the Tárcoles River and watch for water birds and shorebirds.
- Venture on a guided tour through Los Cusingos Bird Sanctuary, once home to famed ornithologist Alexander Skutch.
- Observe some of the 400+ bird species during your stay at Las Cruces Biological Station, a leading research outpost with onsite accommodations.
- Ascend the Cordillera de Talamanca to experience its famous diversity of endemic wildlife.
- Seek out the elusive Resplendant Quetzal in Savegre's private reserve

Click the link below for more information

[Costa Rica 2024](#)

Bird Friendly Tree Trimming

Nearly 3 billion birds have vanished from North America's skies in the past 50 years. Ever-expanding cities and suburbs have played a big role in this loss. But people who live in cities can give birds back a little bit of what they've lost by trimming trees, bushes, and ground cover in the fall instead of spring, when they are nesting and raising their young.

At least 175 bird species breed in Ventura County, many of which build nests in trees or bushes. Birds that nest in shrubs and trees in cities include a diverse mix from the very small, such as hummingbirds, to the very large such as the great horned owl and other birds of prey. Numerous songbirds also nest at various heights in shrubs and trees and include the yellow warbler, lesser goldfinch, American goldfinch, house finch, lazuli bunting and numerous others, who enrich neighborhoods with their color and song.

Many species breed between March 1 and August 31, but some, including hummingbirds, owls, and hawks, could nest at any time of the year.

The Ventura Audubon Society recommends pruning vegetation between September 1 and January 30, and to remove only as much as necessary and no more than 25% of the tree crown. Leaving the tree as intact as possible provides more places for birds to nest as well as rest, hide from predators, and forage for insects, flowers and seeds.

The Ventura Audubon Society also urges people hiring tree trimmers and gardeners to make sure they know that destruction of nests during nesting season violates state and federal laws, and to only hire arborists certified by the International Society of Arborists.

Because not all birds nest in trees, groundcover should be managed carefully as well. Birds that nest on the ground in southern California cities and suburbs include the dark-eyed junco, song sparrow, California towhee, spotted towhee, orange-crowned warbler and others. Their nests are often in hidden, hard-to-spot locations.

To protect ground-nesting birds, trim ground cover, such as ivy, in the fall or early winter. Trim enough to avoid having to do a later springtime trim. To provide greater nesting habitat, consider not trimming and letting the ground cover grow to offer more nesting and foraging opportunities for ground-nesting birds.

The same prudent (and lower cost) approach applies to the trimming of shrubs and trees. Consider allowing both trees and shrubs to reach their climax height and density to provide enhanced bird nesting and foraging habitat.

Finally, fall and winter are also the perfect time to establish California native plants, as this is the season when many of them begin growing. Many bird species favor native plants for food, shelter, and nesting.

For more bird-friendly landscaping tips, go to

[California Native Plant Society](#)

[Audubon's list of native plants](#)

[The Matilija Nursery](#)

Other Audubon Events on the Central Coast



Morro Coast Audubon Society

Serving San Luis Obispo County Since 1966

Program: Exploring Biodiversity and Conservation in Ecuador: An Ecologist's Perspective

Date: Monday, September 18th at 7pm

Location: Via Zoom

Program Speaker: Torrey Gage-Tomlinson, Biologist and MCAS Board Member

Ecuador is one of Earth's most biodiverse countries—home to about 15% of the world's bird species—yet conservation remains a steep uphill battle. In this talk, Torrey will explore the issues of conservation, ecotourism, and scientific research in Ecuador, which he personally experienced while living, studying, and working as an ecologist there for nearly half a year. He will speak specifically about his research regarding the conservation and biology of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) listed species in remote NW Ecuador, and display some of his best photos. Lastly, Torrey will briefly talk about his trip after Ecuador to the Pantanal and Atlantic Cloud Forest in Brazil. His hope is that he can illustrate how ecotourism and scientific research can go hand-in-hand to support conservation of biodiversity.

Click this [link](#) for more details.



SANTA BARBARA
AUDUBON SOCIETY

Program: Following the Phalaropes: A Journey along the Migration Route of a Shorebird

Date: Wednesday, September 27th at 7:30pm

Location: Farrand Hall, Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History

Program Speaker: Nora Livingston

Wilson's Phalaropes (*Phalaropus tricolor*) are small shorebirds that travel over 5,000 miles between their breeding grounds in upper North America and their wintering grounds in South America each year. Wilson's Phalaropes depend on saline lakes for survival during their migration because the simple yet productive ecosystem provides ample food to fuel the epic journeys the birds undertake during their lifetime. Nora Livingston, Lead Naturalist Guide at the Mono Lake Committee, will talk about the natural history of the Wilson's Phalarope and what she has learned by following the phalaropes along the longest leg of their migration route. Last fall, Nora traveled from her home at Mono Lake, a major migration staging area for phalaropes, to Laguna Mar Chiquita in Argentina, where 60% of the world's Wilson's Phalarope population spends their winters.

Click this [link](#) for more details

Wild Birds Unlimited Ventura Events



Beginner Bird ID Class - Spring Edition March 18th 2pm PST on ZOOM

Struggling to identify sparrows? Frustrated with finches? Are there flashes of yellow going through your yard that you wish you could name? We will be having a beginner bird identification class focusing on the most common species that you are likely to see at your feeders this time of year and how you can tell them apart. This talk will include common western and eastern species!

Click this [link](#) to sign up

Thank you to our supporters!

Financial contributions to our chapter allow us to continue our work protecting birds and their habitat

Grants

- National Foundation of Fish and Wildlife (NFWF)
- Patagonia--\$10,000 grant

Support Ventura Audubon Society

Ventura Audubon Society is a registered tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization.

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Donate ONLINE

VOLUNTEER: Fill out this [SURVEY FORM](#)



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