

The California Condor

Ventura Audubon Society

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A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

venturaaudubon.org



Yellow headed blackbird at Ormond Beach, by Alex Vaca

Call Notes

*by Cynthia Hartley
VAS Executive Director*

We hope everyone had a great summer! This newsletter marks the beginning of our 2022-23 season, with a new lineup of speaker programs and field trips. We are looking forward to connecting with our members and friends again, and making new connections this year. Last year was a great year and we look forward to what this year will bring. Below I have summarized some of the new things to look for this year.

Field Trips - We have a new field trip coordinator, please join us in welcoming Alex Vaca to our team. He is an avid birder and photographer, and loves to share his knowledge of birds with others. We met Alex as one of our Shorebird Recovery summer interns two summers ago. He is currently a biology major at CSUCI. Anyone who attended a field trip last year has probably seen Alex with his great camera set-up. We also have been using his photos on all

of our platforms, including the yellow headed blackbird photo with this article.

This year we are relaxing our field trip procedures a bit. We will continue to have sign-ups for field trips, but we no longer will limit the number of participants or require a COVID questionnaire. Sign ups will help us plan for the number of trip leaders and will give us an email list so we can share the eBird list with participants. We will have a liability form/photo release to sign for all participants. Alex is planning field trips to many of our popular birding hot spots, but will also be introducing some new locations. Look for about 2 birding field trips a month with an occasionally weekday field trip. Please see our field trip article for a list of September bird outings. Feel free to reach out to Alex at fieldtrips@venturaaudubon.org if you have any questions.



Board of Directors: We are excited to welcome our newest board of directors' member, Rachel Ameche. She came to us as a Beach Naturalist volunteer in 2021. She's logged many hours recruiting dog rangers, tabling at special events and conducting public outreach on the beach. She even created a fun and easy iteration of our plover pals craft project. Because of her amazing work last year, Rachele was one of two 2021 Volunteers of the Year. Joining our board of directors was a natural next step. Rachel loves birding and her enthusiasm is infectious. We are excited to have her on our board this year.

Speaker Programs - This year we have a new program coordinator, Alecia Smith. Alecia has been our Shorebird Recovery Coordinator for 2 years. You may also know her photography, which we often feature in our publications, social media and in our year-end shorebird calendar fundraiser. Alecia will be sourcing speakers from all over the U.S. and even from other countries. Because of this, our speaker programs will vary between in-person/virtual or virtual only, depending if our speaker can present locally. In-person programs will be at the Poinsettia Pavilion in the Santa Paula room, and will still be a hybrid between in-person and virtual. So there will always be an option to join us from the comfort of your own home. Our September speaker will be presenting from his home in Trinidad and Tobago! So our first meeting will be virtual. You may reach Alecia via email at outreach@venturaaudubon.org.



Inside this Newsletter

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Membership News

By Vince Kinsch

Thank you to everyone who is a member of the Ventura chapter.

Welcome to September! Hard to believe summer is about over. Look for your renewal reminders in your email inbox. Your membership is a great way to support the chapter and 100% of your membership fees stays with VAS. We are also developing members only birding trips in 2023.

Watch for details in our new quarterly VAS Members Newsletter.
Click [here](#) to join or renew

As always, if you have any questions regarding membership, please contact membership@venturaaudubon.org.

Member Photo of the Month

Red Shouldered Hawk

This photo was taken by member **Chuck Engel** in his backyard on July 9th

Have a cool picture of a bird from Ventura County? Submit it along with the ID, location and date to membership@venturaaudubon.org. We'll select a different one each month.



Carmen Ramirez

It was with great shock and sadness that we learned about the passing of Ventura County Supervisor Carmen Ramirez in August. Carmen was a fierce protector of our county's beach habitat. In 2016 when we asked the City of Oxnard to help us better protect snowy plover and least tern habitat on Ormond Beach, Carmen found a way to do it. At that time she was an Oxnard City Council member and she did not hesitate to help. With her determination and support the City of Oxnard passed the Ormond Beach Ordinance which protects this critical habitat to this day. This is just one part of the legacy Carmen left the County of Ventura. Carmen fought for environmental justice in many forms for all of Oxnard's beaches and its residents. We are forever grateful and will miss her deeply.



September Speaker Program

"Birding the Wildest Islands of the Caribbean"

with Faraaz Abdool



Speaker: Faraaz Abdool
Date: Tuesday September 13th
Time: 7:00pm
Online via Zoom

Our September Program, aptly titled "Birding the Wildest Islands of the Caribbean", is a visually stimulating virtual tour of the twin-island country of Trinidad and Tobago. While widely considered to be part of the Caribbean, these islands have a geological past that holds the key to an astounding density of biodiversity. Your virtual tour leader, Faraaz, is a widely published bird photographer and is the author of "Casual Birding in Trinidad & Tobago". He serves on the Trinidad and Tobago Birds Status and Distribution Committee and leads in-person tours on both islands. Over the past twelve years he has seen and

photographed over 300 species on Trinidad and Tobago. Sadly not all of these can be included in this presentation; however, there are images of more than 150 species along with several stunning vistas to be enjoyed over the course of this whirlwind tour covering the myriad of habitats on offer.



Faraaz Abdool is a wildlife photographer, writer, birding guide, and overall environmental advocate from Trinidad & Tobago. His roundabout journey began with a deep love for nature as a child followed by several years of intense mathematics and science. After working for a few years as an electrical engineer, Faraaz abandoned that profession to put all his efforts into the conservation and protection of the natural world. Today, he remains as captivated by nature as he was decades ago; he seeks to impart that love to any and every person possible in a bid to save the world.

To join the program via Zoom:

visit our
[Monthly Speaker webpage](#)

Then click the
"Watch Virtually Via Zoom" button
at the top of the webpage



If you have topic requests or would like to recommend a speaker, please email Alecia, our program chair outreach@venturaaudubon.org

Diversity is Important for both Birds and Birders

Ventura Audubon Society is committed to fostering and preserving a birding culture of diversity, equality and inclusion. Promoting birding to a diverse audience is critical to the future of birds, benefits humans, improves our chapter and supports our mission to protect birds and their habitat. As an audience member if you ever feel we are not living up to this promise please feel free to reach out and let us know.

September 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 new 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 notify participants of any changes

Sign up early to participate in a field trip:

1. Visit our [Field Trip webpage](#) to sign up
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.

Field Trips



Enjoy birding the oak woodland, grassy areas, and chaparral in this long, broad canyon. Early fall migrants may include Western Tanager, Townsend's warblers, Ash-throated Flycatcher, and Phainopepla. Parking is \$2/hour and up to \$5/day, or park on Foothill and walk inside to meet.

Arroyo Verde Park

Saturday September 3
Meeting Time: 8:30am

Directions: Take Victoria Ave, left on Foothill Rd, right on Day Rd to the entrance of the park. Because they are building a playground area, our usual meeting place in the parking lot by the bathroom is closed. We will meet at the last parking lot past the bathrooms before the baseball fields.

[GOOGLE MAP](#)



Camino Real Park

Saturday September 17
Meeting Time: 8:00am

Camino Real is a grassy park surrounded by pines and eucalyptus and is an excellent place to see birds. Target birds will include Red Shouldered Hawk, Pacific-slope Flycatcher and Townsend's Warbler.

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.

[GOOGLE MAPS](#)

Visit our [Field Trip webpage](#) to sign up!

Shorebird Recovery Program



California least tern feeding its chick at Ormond Beach, photo by Alex Vaca

Ormond Beach Nesting Outcome

Total WSP Nests 56	Hatch 32 57%	Failed 23 41%	Unknown 1 2 %
Total CLT Nests 34	Hatch 7 21%	Failed 25 73%	Unknown 2 6%

Our report from Ormond Beach has both good and bad news. This summer we had a record number of western snowy plover (WSP) nests! Fifty six is the most nests we've ever documented. We had a high hatch rate during the first half of the season, with almost all nests hatching. We also documented the largest numbers of clutches on the beach at a single time in May, and a good number of chicks reached fledgling age. But then ravens showed up in June and they hit the snowy plover nests extremely hard. They predated all active nests within a one-week period. We were able to protect snowy plovers in the last half of the season by using predator exclosures, so the final season hatch rate was comparable to other years at almost 60%.



California least tern (CLT) arrived in May and started nesting in June, but just 21% of those nests hatched. Unfortunately, we cannot use predator exclosures on CLT nests. Unlike snowy plovers that run off their nests and can navigate the openings of the cage, terns typically fly directly off or on their nests. Plus, the tern colony was small, so they couldn't defend themselves from the ravens and other predators. A handful did manage to hatch, and a few chicks made it to fledgling age this summer and were able to migrate with their parents.

We had a number of incidences of motorcycles and other off-roaders on the beach this year and several times they tried to enter nesting habitat. We also documented many people walking/biking/jogging inside the nesting habitat. The best way we can protect this sensitive nesting habitat from these types of disturbances is to have people present to intercept & educate or if necessary report these individuals. We are deeply grateful to our summer interns and Beach Naturalists for the times they were there to protect nests from these disturbances. We continue to work with the landowners and local agencies on additional ways to address this problem.



*Ormond snowy plovers and least terns: all photos
by Alex Vaca on Ormond Beach*



Hollywood Beach Nesting Outcome

Total WSP Nests 12	Hatch 9 75%	Failed 3 25%
Total CLT Nests 26	Hatch 0	Failed 26

The good news from Hollywood Beach this year is what we saw happen with WSP chicks. The overall nest outcome is very comparable to past years. We had 12 WSP nests, and 9 hatched for a 75% hatch rate. All WSP nests on Hollywood Beach are protected with predator exclosures because of the presence of crows, which would otherwise predate all of the nests. So we typically have pretty high hatch rates. The problem we have is chick survival, and that is the real story this year. Crows normally hunt the chicks after they hatch, and for those chicks that survive the crows they have to navigate humans and dogs on this busy urban beach. Typically very few or even no chicks survive, but this year we saw a change. Due to the lifting of COVID restrictions, we were able to gather a volunteer team in the beginning of the season from our local USFWS office to install habitat fencing. We saw more snowy plover fledglings this year than we've ever seen before. We believe the fencing provided safe refuge for snowy plover families, and this enabled chicks to survive. Additionally, our outreach intern team was assigned weekend shifts every Sunday of their internship. The team helped our Beach Naturalists spread awareness for the snowy plover families and recruited new dog rangers to encourage community members to help keep these birds safe by reducing disturbance.

California least terns arrived in May, and in June they started nesting. To better protect the nesting terns, more symbolic fencing was installed. Unfortunately, crows preyed nearly all of the tern nests, then high tides took out the rest. Just like the Ormond Beach colony, there weren't enough adults to withstand corvid predation. However all the new fencing appears to have helped the snowy plovers.

Thanks to our contract biologist Debra Barringer, Outreach coordinator Alecia Smith, our team of outreach interns, and our volunteer Beach Naturalists for their dedicated work this summer!



*WSP adult with chick on Hollywood Beach
photo credit - Alecia Smith*



*Beach Naturalist Fred Dale installing signs on
Hollywood beach; photo credit - Alecia Smith*



Habitat fencing on Hollywood Beach, photo by Cynthia Hartley

Dog Rangers

This summer our Shorebird Recovery Team launched our new Dog Rangers program. This program reframes the public conversation around the disturbance of shorebirds and seabirds by dogs, letting beachgoers know how their dog can help birds. The pledge asks dogs and their owners to commit to making the following promises in support of birds. We specifically targeted Hollywood Beach because of the numerous dogs that visit that beach. Thank you to our dedicated summer interns and all the volunteers who talked to dog owners this summer!



The Dog Ranger pledge:



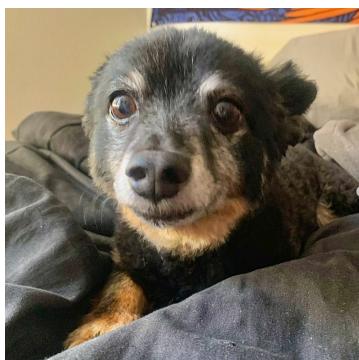
Meet Our Newest Dog Rangers



Charger



Raya



Raider



Toby

In 2022 our Shorebird Recovery Program was made possible by an Endangered Species Act Section 6 grant from the US Fish and Wildlife Dept, and by donations made to our annual Raise the Roost fundraiser. Thank you to all of our supporters and to our CA Dept of Fish and Wildlife sponsors!



Notes from the Field: Apr - Jun 2022 *by David Pereksta*

Wood Ducks have been scarce recently with the only one of the period being found at the Ventura Settling Ponds on 21 Apr (MM & KP). A **Redhead** was at the Ventura River Estuary on 13 May (TT) and another was at Lake Casitas 3-18 Jun (LLG & SK). A **Long-tailed Duck** was at the Santa Clara River Estuary 9 May-30 Jun (SC). A **Red-necked Grebe** off Mugu Rock on 10 Apr (JA) was likely the same individual wintering closer to the mouth of Mugu Lagoon. As many

as two **Common Gallinules** continued at the Ventura Settling Ponds through 3 Jun and one of these was likely the one seen at the Santa Clara River Estuary 5-6 Jun.

A **Semipalmated Sandpiper** was on the Oxnard Plain 2-3 May (LS). **Solitary Sandpipers** included individuals at Ojai Meadows on 5 Apr and 10 Apr (SS), at Lake Casitas on 26 Apr (LLG et al), and east Ventura on 2 May (DP). A **Black-legged Kittiwake** was at the Ventura River Estuary on 24 May (SK). **Franklin's Gulls** included one at the Ventura River Estuary 28-29 Apr (SK) and two at the Santa Clara River Estuary on 16 May (TT) with one remaining through 20 May. An unexpected summering bird was a very worn **Short-billed Gull** that was present at the Santa Clara River Estuary 2-30 Jun (SK). **Black Terns** are a rare spring migrant along the coast so one at the Santa Clara River Estuary on 27 Apr (SC) and as many as five there 9-12 May (m. obs.) was notable.

A **Brown Booby** was on Anacapa Island on 26-31 May (JB) and another was recorded on a trail cam at San Nicolas Island on 21 May. **Neotropic Cormorants** continue to be found locally with increasing frequency including one at the Ventura River Estuary on 29 Apr-1 May (SS) and another continuing at a pond in Filmore through 30 Jun. The only **Reddish Egrets** of the period were at Mugu Lagoon on 25 Apr and 6 Jun (MR). A **Cattle Egret** was on the Oxnard Plain on 13 Apr (LS).

As many as three **Bald Eagles** continued at Lake Casitas through 27 Jun and two were at Lake Piru through 23 Jun (m. obs.). Nesting apparently occurred on private property near Lake Piru this year. Migrant **Swainson's Hawks** included one over the Harmon Canyon Preserve on 16 Apr (MT), two over Camarillo on 16 Apr (AR), two over Sesar Canyon on 17 Apr (LLG), one over east Ventura on 20 Apr (DP), one over the Ventura River on 25 Apr (DC), one at Lake Casitas on 5 May (EBC), one at the Ventura River Preserve on 8 May (LLG), and one at Matilija Lake on 18 May (LLG).

Several **Bank Swallows** were seen in migration including one (presumed the same bird) at the Ventura Settling Ponds 16-22 Apr (KS), another there on 13 May (MB), as many as two at the Santa Clara River Estuary 7-9 May (KS), and another on the Oxnard Plain on 20 Apr (DP). Three **American Dippers** continued in Santa Paula Canyon through 11 Jun. Continuing wintering warblers at the Ventura Settling Ponds included a **Black-and-white Warbler** through 20 Apr and a **Northern Waterthrush** through 24 Apr. A **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was south of Lake Casitas on 25 May (JM). **Summer Tanagers** were reported from Sulphur Mountain on 29 May (MBo), Lake Casitas on 25 Jun (XZ), and Steckel Park on 28 Jun (TT).

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: John Apperson, Joel Barrett, Marc Better, Mario Borunda, Elizabeth Brewer Chouinard, Dan Cooper, Sammy Cowell, Sangeet Khalsa, Lukas Le Grice, Justin MacMartin, McKenzie Mudge, David Pereksta, Kevin Pietrzak, Adi Rao, Martin Ruane, Larry Sansone, Spencer Seale, Kirill Shtengel, Tina Tan, Michael Tiffany, Xinglai Zhuang

Special Field Trip from Holbrook Travel
benefitting Ventura Audubon



Ecuador | Birding the Chocó-Andes Region: Western and Eastern Slopes

with Ventura Audubon

February 22, 2023 - March 3, 2023

Trip Overview

An extraordinary abundance of bird life inhabits the forests of northwestern Ecuador. Amid cloud forest, rainforest, páramo, and the eastern and western slopes of the Andes Mountains, you'll seek out as many of the country's 1,640-plus species as possible with assistance from your expert guide on this 10-day adventure. In particular, much of the avifauna you'll encounter is endemic to the Chocó region, while other species are more easily found here than any place else. Along the way, attend a presentation by a local ornithologist, view the snow-capped Antisana Volcano, and straddle the equator at the Middle of the World Monument.

There are still spots available, but they're filling up fast. **The deadline to sign up and send in your deposit is October 1st.**

For more information and to sign up [click here](#)



Mark your calendar for the month of October!

Birdathon is right around the corner! Birdathon is Ventura Audubon's major fall fundraiser. Although grants support our work of species monitoring and habitat protection, they only provide a part of our funding needs and grants require significant resources to administer. Donations provide a critical part of our fundraising needs. Next month's October newsletter will be a special Birdathon edition.

Look for our annual mailer in you mailbox and email inbox in early October

Other Zoom Classes or Meetings for Birders

Classes by Frank DeMartino of Wild Birds Unlimited Ventura

Bird ID: Fall Warblers

Saturday September 10th at 2pm

Fall migration brings waves of warblers through North America every year. Young warblers will be all over the place mixed in with nonbreeding plumage adults. It is an exciting and, honestly, frustrating time as we struggle to identify drab yellow birds. Get ahead of the game this year with our Fall Warbler ID class! We'll take a look at some common migratory species and how we can tell one from another during this chaotic time.

Here is the Zoom link to the event: [Click here](#)

Falling for Migration

Saturday September 17th at 2pm

Fall migration is upon us! What does that mean? It means birds are passing through our yards and heading to their wintering grounds. Migration is an amazingly complicated event that birds perform twice a year, at least! We're going to take a look at the history of migration and highlight some of the birds that go that extra mile (literally).

Here is the Zoom link to the event: [Click here](#)

Saving Songbirds

Saturday September 24th at 2pm

The birds need our help! Population declines have hit many of our favorite birds and it's time we talk about how we can help them out. We will take a closer look at Cornell's Seven Simple Actions as well as some other local organizations and projects that are helping restore lost habitat. We'll talk about turning your yard into a Certified Wildlife Habitat and how native plants can help turn the tide for our feathered friends.

Here is the Zoom link to the event: [Click here](#)

**Conejo Valley
Audubon Society**



September Meeting



Time: 7:00 - 8:30 pm

Date: September 12

Each September, our first meeting of the season is dedicated to the birding trips and adventures of our members, so you are invited to submit your recent, or not-so-recent photos. Those of you who wish to share your photos, please contact [Don Klabunde](#) for instructions and the link where you can upload your files.

This program will be in a hybrid format: in-person at the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology, and also online via Zoom.

In Person

Masks will be required, and the in person group will be limited to a maximum of thirty to allow for social distancing purposes, so please RSVP to the [Programs Coordinator](#) to reserve a seat.

Via Zoom

If you are sharing photos, you will be able to narrate your show during the Zoom meeting. To attend this meeting, use this link (<https://zoom.us/j/6155249106>) at the meeting time.



Morro Coast Audubon Society

Serving San Luis Obispo County Since 1966

The Bats of San Luis Obispo County

Speaker: Bill Haas, Director, Central Coast Bat Survey

Time: 7:00pm

Date: September 19th

California's Central Coast hosts 19 species of bats. All are insectivorous. All are beneficial to local agriculture as agents of pest control - millions of dollars' worth of benefit! None carry (and thus cannot transmit) the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Very few are hosts to the rabies virus. We have no vampire bats on the Central Coast, California, or

anywhere in the USA. Our bats live in cottonwood trees, in caves, and in crevices; they roost in bridges, belfries, and barns; they sequester under roof tiles, in attics, and the walls of old wooden structures. Some literally hang out in wind-sheltered porticos -- especially stucco-walled entryways - where they dismember, devour, and digest their prey leaving homeowners the forensic evidence to solve the mystery of their nighttime mischief. And sorry, they don't really eat a lot of mosquitos, but they do feast on a potpourri of scrumptious, mouth-watering exo-skeletonized fare that includes Mayflies, moths, and midges. Want to learn more? Bring your questions and a healthy appetite for learning even more about our Central Coast bats.

[more info](#) (including zoom link)



SANTA BARBARA AUDUBON SOCIETY

Seabird Monitoring in the Channel Islands

Speaker: Daryl Hodges

Location:

Farrand Hall, Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History
2559 Puesta del Sol, Santa Barbara, CA 93105

Time: 7:30pm

Date: September 28th

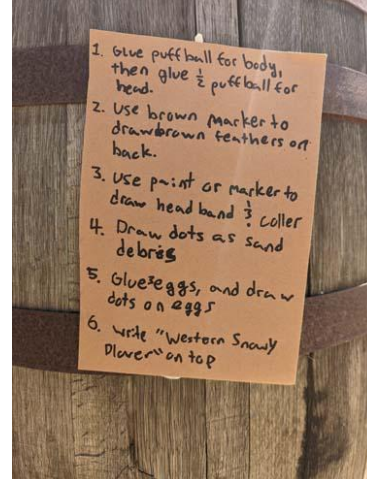
California Institute of Environmental Studies (CIES) works with the National Park Service and other cooperators to restore native habitat and monitor seabird species on the Channel Islands. Jim will discuss some of the interesting trends and highlights from the seabird monitoring work we have done over the last several years, from the majestic Western Gulls of Anacapa to the secretive Ashy Storm-petrels nesting in the cliffs and sea caves at Santa Cruz and Santa Barbara Islands.



[more info](#)

Photos from our May 2022 Annual Meeting





Ways to Support Ventura Audubon Society

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