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The California Condor

Ventura Audubon Society

February 2023 Volume 64, Number 6

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

venturaaudubon.org

Only a few 2023 Shorebird Fundraiser Calendars Left



Shorebirds 2023

By Alecia Smith

- Net proceeds support the Shorebird Recovery Program at Ventura Audubon
- Size: 11 x 8.5 (High-Quality Matte Finish)
- \$36 US Shipping Included
- To order your calendar visit Alecia's [website](#)

Call Notes

by Vince Kinsch
President



Photo by: Vince Kinsch

Ventura County is an amazing place. We have undammed river systems that went very wild during the storms in early January. I spent quite a bit of time photographing both the Ventura and Santa Clara Rivers and some of our coastline during and after the storms. In addition to being a bird enthusiast, I am also a surfer and am active in the Ventura Surfrider Foundation. What struck me most about these storms is how both river systems and parts of our coast changed and are continuing to change. It also increases my concern for coastal bird habitats under threat by sea level rise. While homes and businesses can be moved and rebuilt, the loss of coastal habitat necessary for the survival of many bird species may result in the disappearance of these birds in our county. The Ventura Audubon Society is committed to being an advocate for birds. We urge our members and supporters to be advocates too. You can help by becoming a member of VAS and National Audubon, volunteering for our chapter (see our volunteer opportunities at the bottom of this newsletter and on our [website](#)), and support efforts to protect bird habitat. One such effort is the Ormond Beach Restoration and Access Project. This project intends to create a space that includes habitat restoration, protection of sensitive animal and plant species and improves public access. VAS has given valuable input to this project and will continue to be involved during the design and construction phases. More information on this project can be found on the City of Oxnard's [website](#) or on [Facebook](#).



On Tuesday, February 7th the Ventura Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation will host a special program at Topa Topa brewing company. Come hear Surfrider's expert program lead, Joan Tharp, talk about Ormond Lagoon and the vital importance of restoring Ormond Beach for migratory birds and snowy plovers. VAS will be tabling at the event so drop by and meet the Shore Bird Recovery Team. Topa Topa brewing is located at 4880 Colt St, Ventura. Click [HERE](#) for a map.

Are you unable to volunteer for the chapter but still want to make a difference?

Snowy plover nesting season is around the corner and our Shorebird Recovery Team needs supplies to protect the nesting habitat. We are installing tideline fences at Ormond Beach the last week of February and need the following fencing materials:

- [Cable rope](#) : 3/16th galvanized - 250 foot role; Need 8 rolls
- [Cintoflex C](#) : 6'X330' mesh rolls mesh; Need 4 rolls
- [T-posts](#) : 7' green steel; Need 100 posts
- [Cable ties](#) : 8" black UV resistant; Need 2 bags of 1,000

Click here to [donate](#) , select "Shorebird Recovery Program Fund" and leave a note with your donation how you would like the money applied. Or contact Cynthia, our program coordinator, [here](#) if you'd like to donate another way.



[Membership Webpage](#)

[Join VAS via PayPal](#)

Christmas Bird Count Recap by Frank DeMartino

The 2022 Christmas Bird Count season is over and our Ventura circle included 102 participants that found 190 species! We tied our third highest species count ever and this is our highest count since 1994! Thank you all for your hard work and determination to find those birds.

Interesting sightings for the count included our first ever CBC sightings of: Red Knot, Northern Parula, Gray Catbird, Tropical Kingbird, and Virginia's Warbler. It's always a good count when the warblers are out and we recorded 11 different species this year. It was also a good year for geese as we got 5 of our targeted 6 species. Turkeys continue to be challenging on count day, but my #1 target bird, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, made an appearance at a feeder in Ventura! In terms of new high counts, we more than doubled our previous high count for Mountain Bluebird with 59. Yellow-crowned Night-herons continue to increase numbers at the Settling Ponds and we set a record there with 15.

Another record goes to the Scaly-breasted Munias with 49 as they have been steadily marching through the county.

Thank you for volunteering and I look forward to doing it all again next winter!

Ventura Audubon Young Birder Program

In December a group of avid young birders from Ventura Audubon Society and the community came together to form the VAS Young Birders Club. Led by Biologist Kat Whitehouse, Outreach Coordinator Alecia Smith and Youth Liaison Max Breshears, the Young Birders Club's focus is to provide a community for those young and young at heart to share their enthusiasm for birds and their habitat. The Young Birders Club participated in the Christmas Bird



Count, gathering over 40 species. Notable species included, western snowy plover, white faced ibis, marsh wrens, and Brant. Birders, mostly under the age of 18, meet one to two times per month for birding, photography and exploration at various sites around Ventura County, creating a safe environment to interact with their peers who share a birding interest, help other young birders who are just starting out and just generally have an awesome time. VAS Young Birders will also join VAS field trips to gain knowledge from our more experienced birders.

We have about 10 members and are looking for more. Our young birders average age is 13 and they come from Summerland to Thousand Oaks! If you know a young birder in Ventura County who would like to be a part of this new VAS program or are interested in becoming a mentor please reach out to the Young Birders Club on Instagram @vas_youngbirdersclub or email outreach@venturaaudubon.org

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 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

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.

February Field Trips

Lake Casitas

Thursday Feb 9th, 2023
Meeting Time: 8:30am



Join us for a walk by the lake with Adele!
Target Species: hummingbirds, grosbeaks, gnatcatchers as well as ducks, geese and waterfowl. Hopefully we will see the Lewis's woodpecker and the Bald Eagle. Plans are to enter Lake Casitas by car so walking will be less than usual.

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

Conejo Creek North Park

Saturday Feb 25th, 2023
Meeting Time: 8:30am



Conejo Creek is a great setting to find a variety of bird species. We'll be looking for Oak Titmouse, Ruby-Crowned Kinglet and a variety of ducks

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

January 2023 Speaker Program



"Sea to Summit: The Marvelous Hummingbird"

Speaker: Benny Isaac Jacobs-Schwartz

Date: Tuesday Feb 14th 2023

Time: 7pm

Via Zoom, see link below.

Program Description:

From Alaska to the high Andes of South America, join us as we explore the magic of hummingbirds! With 360 species recognized globally, we'll discuss their remarkable biology, expansive range, ecological significance and the best way to attract them to your yard! Mouthwatering media and local hummingbird ID section included!

Speaker Bio:

Benny Isaac Jacobs-Schwartz owns and operates a bird guiding business and lifestyle brand called BIRDS by

BIJS (pronounced Bee-jus). Working professionally for over 10 years as a naturalist guide, expedition trip leader, and international bird guide, Benny has worked in a variety of locations coast to coast, including exotic places such as; coastal Alaska, Central America, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Ecuadorian Amazon.

Benny is a passionate educator and photographer, specializing in birds! Benny uses his ample collection of nature-based content to leverage an active social media presence. BIJS uses his passion for the natural world to inspire others to put down their phone and pick up their binos.



To join the program visit our

[Monthly Speaker webpage](#)

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

Notes from the Field Nov - Dec 2022 by Dave Pereksta

After an outstanding migration period during September and October, the next two months continued to produce a number of rare and uncommon birds. Three species that have been recorded only a few times in the county are worth highlighting. Two female **King Eiders** that were at Mussel Shoals 17-20 Dec (HR) and then later relocated at the Ventura Pier 25-31 Dec (KW & KW) constituted the third record for Ventura County. A **Lesser Black-backed Gull** at the Santa Clara River mouth 21-30 Dec (NA) is the second county record and the first in over a decade. A **Nelson's Sparrow** was at the Santa Clara River mouth on 19 Nov (MBr), which was the first record in the county in over 11 years.

A **Tundra Swan** was at the Santa Clara River Estuary on 16 Dec (SS) and was later relocated at the Saticoy Spreading Ponds 26-30 Dec (JC). A **Eurasian Wigeon** was at Lake Sherwood on 16 Dec (MB). As many as two **Black Scoters** were at the Santa Clara River mouth 14 Nov-1 Dec (MB, GA), one was at Mugu Lagoon on 18 Dec, and as many as three were at Mugu Rock 19-23 Nov (JA, GA). **Long-tailed Ducks** included one on the ocean near the Santa Clara River mouth 21 Nov-22 Dec (BJS) and another at Mussel Shoals 17-22 Dec (HR). A **Red-necked Grebe** was offshore of Mugu Lagoon 11 Nov-18 Dec (DP).

A **Sandhill Crane** flew over Camarillo on 27 Nov (JM). Two **Red Knots** were on the beach near Surfers Knoll 4-22 Dec (MBr). A **Blue-footed Booby** was reported off the Ventura Harbor on 13 Nov (AA). A **Neotropic Cormorant** continued at Lake Sherwood through 19 Dec with a second bird seen on 22 Nov (DP). An **American Bittern** was at Point Mugu on 18 Dec (DP & GP) and another continued at Lake Sherwood through 19 Dec. An immature **Zone-tailed Hawk** was in Ojai 12 Nov-13 Dec (SO) and an adult was in the upper Ojai Valley on 13 Dec (JM).

A **Broad-billed Hummingbird** visited a Ventura yard 9-10 Nov (ETG). **Williamson's Sapsuckers** included a female at Lake Piru 11 Nov-28 Dec (MB), a male in Simi Valley on 26 Nov (CK & DK), and a male on Mount Pinos on 27 Nov (DP et al.). A **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was at Lake Casitas on 6 Dec (LO). **Red-naped Sapsuckers** included individuals in Thousand

Oaks on 6 Nov (GR), Conejo Community Park 12-18 Nov (KR & SR), Fillmore 18-21 Dec (DH), Wheeler Gorge Campground on 16 Nov (KK), the Ventura River Steelhead Preserve on 19 Nov (GC), and a continuing bird at Lake Casitas through 28 Nov with a second bird found 12-28 Nov (LLG & RR).

A **Tropical Kingbird** was at the River Ridge Golf Course on 5 Nov (DM) and another was at Camino Real Park 17-31 Dec (MB, BL & CL). A very late **Western Kingbird** was documented at Point Mugu on 9 Dec (DP et al.). A **Gray Flycatcher** was at Arroyo Verde Park 11 Nov-31 Dec (KO). **Plumbeous Vireos** included one at Mission Oaks Park 1-6 Nov (RC), a likely returning bird from the last few winters at Pitts Ranch Park 28 Nov-18 Dec (DP), a continuing bird at Rancho Simi Park through 20 Dec that was seen with a second bird on 9 Nov (DP), and a continuing bird in Thousand Oaks through 5 Nov. As many as 40 **Pinyon Jays** continued on Mount Pinos through 5 Dec. A **Chestnut-backed Chickadee** was on the Naval Base in Port Hueneme on 12 Dec (JM), which is likely the southernmost record in California. A **Pacific Wren** was at Rincon Creek 12-31 Dec (SS) with a second bird found on 14 Dec that may be a **Winter Wren** (DP). A **Pacific/Winter Wren** was found at Sycamore Canyon on 18 Dec (SC & SS), which may be a **Winter Wren**, but further analysis is needed. A **Gray Catbird** continued in Ventura through 31 Dec and a **Sage Thrasher** was along the Santa Clara River on 25 Nov (DW). A **Red-throated Pipit** was at the Santa Clara River mouth on 20 Nov (DP et al.).

A **Lapland Longspur** was at Point Mugu on 18 Dec (DP & GP). A **Clay-colored Sparrow** was at the Thousand Oaks Community Park 23-31 Dec (JM). An apparent returning **Gray-headed Junco** was in Thousand Oaks 4-5 Nov (GR). A **Harris's Sparrow** put in a brief appearance at Lake Casitas on 30 Nov (KK). **White-throated Sparrows** were reported from too many areas to summarize here. A **Large-billed Savannah Sparrow** was at the Santa Clara River mouth 19 Nov-11 Dec (MBr) and a **Swamp Sparrow** was at Point Mugu 12 Nov-9 Dec (JM). Rare locally in winter, a **Green-tailed Towhee** was in Ventura on 17 Dec (MT).

An **Orchard Oriole** was in Ventura on 5 Nov (RMc) and another was at Bubbling Springs Park on 29 Dec (CT). A **Baltimore Oriole** was at the Kimball Barranca 25 Nov-17 Dec (CT). A **Rusty Blackbird** was frequenting a few parking lots near Telephone and Main 27-31 Dec (FD & VM).

A **Northern Waterthrush** continued at the Ventura Settling Ponds through 29 Dec. **Black-and-white Warblers** included one in Ventura on 11 Nov (NA) and a continuing individual at the Ventura Settling Ponds through 30 Dec. **Tennessee Warblers** occurred in unusually high numbers this fall with sightings all over southern California. Late fall local records included individuals at Pitts Ranch Park on 5 Nov (JA), Oxnard College on 11 Nov (LLG), Ventura Community Park on 14 Nov (NA), a Ventura yard on 20 Nov (RMc), the Victoria Avenue tipus on 20 Nov (NA), tipus on Telephone Road on 20 Nov (NA), Conejo Community Park on 20 Nov (RS), and Mission Oaks Park on 18 Dec (SK). A **Lucy's Warbler** was in Camarillo on 4 Nov (JM) and a **Virginia's Warbler** was near the Ventura Medical Center 17-19 Dec (RMc & JMc). A **Northern Parula** was at the Ventura Settling Ponds 25 Nov-22 Dec (KS) and a **Canada Warbler** was in an Oxnard yard 9-12 Nov (RCor).

Summer Tanagers included individuals at River Ridge Golf Course on 5 Nov (DM), Bubbling Springs Park 7 Nov-29 Dec (NA), the Ventura Settling Ponds 13-20 Nov (KS), Arroyo Verde Park on 13 Nov (MB), the Kimball Barranca 25 Nov-29 Dec (DP & SP), and one at Mission Oaks Park on 18 Dec (SK). A **Scarlet Tanager** was in the Kimball Barranca 25-26 Nov (DP & SP). Several **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** were found around Ventura included two different ones on the east end on 4 Nov and 27 Nov (RMc), one 12-17 Dec (ETG), and one in Camino Real Park on 30 Dec (DS).

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: Allison Alvarado, John Apperson, Noah Arthur, Glenn Austin, Marc Better, Max Breshears, Jeff Cartier, Graham Chisholm, Rick Constantino, Rene Corado, Sammy Cowell, Frank DeMartino, Derek Hameister, Benny Jacobs-Schwartz, Sangeet Khalsa, Chrystal Klabunde, Don Klabunde, Karl Krause, Bill Langford, Carol Langford, Lukas Le Grice, Jerry Maryniuk, Dan Maxwell, Viviana McKinley, Jimmy McMorran, Robert McMorran, John Mueller,

Kris Ohlenkamp, Lynn Oldt, Sarah Otterstrom, David Pereksta, Sandy Pereksta, Giles Pettifor, Hugh Ranson, Rick Ridgeway, Griffin Rohrer, Karen Rusch, Steve Rusch, Spencer Seale, Kirill Shtengel, Dessi Sieburth, Roger Swanson, Elisa Taylor-Godwin, Cameron Tescher, Michael Tiffany, David Wappler, Katya White, Kevin White

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@venturaaudubon.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. Upcoming meetings are Feb 7 and April 4th. If you are interested in joining the Conservation Committee, email outreach@venturaaudubon.org and put 'Conservation Committee' in the subject line.

Stewardship Opportunity!

Saturday Feb 18th, 9am-11:30 am: Ormond Beach Cleanup

We'll be focusing on collecting trash in the fenced areas that are closed during nesting season. These areas are sensitive nesting habitat for the threatened western snowy plover and endangered California least tern. Nesting starts just around the corner in mid-March! It's our last chance to remove trash from the habitat before they will be closed for the season. **RSVP and emergency contact waiver is required - email outreach@venturaaudubon.org to join us!**



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

Other Audubon Events on the Central Coast



Program: FROM THE ASHES: LIFE AFTER WILDFIRE IN THE LOS PADRES NATIONAL FOREST

Date: Monday, Feb 6 7PM

Location: Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology, 439 Calle San Pablo
Camarillo, CA 93012 and Via Zoom

Program Speaker: Bryant Baker, Director of Conservation and Research at
Los Padres Forest Watch.

What happens in the first days, weeks, and months after a fire comes to our region and leaves nothing but burnt stems and ash behind? What do our local ecosystems look like a year later? Two years later? Ten years later? These are the questions naturalist and photographer Bryant Baker set out to answer during his explorations of burned areas in and around the Los Padres National Forest. Through this virtual visual journey, see the unique phases of ecosystem regrowth, learn about the different strategies plants and animals use to cope with wildfire, and find out what lies ahead as these places continue to recover.

Click this [link](#) for more details



Morro Coast Audubon Society

Serving San Luis Obispo County Since 1966

Program: Observing and Conserving the Seabirds that Rely on California's Central Coast

Date: Monday, Feb 20 7PM

Location: Via Zoom

Program Speaker: Dan Robinette, Point Blue Conservation Science

Seabirds are a highly visible and charismatic feature of central California's coast. They have adapted to ocean life by living long and providing increased parental care to offspring compared to other birds. These characteristics make them both a source of fascination to recreationists as well as a great research tool for studying changes in the ocean. In fact, seabirds can be easily included in both scientific monitoring and volunteer-based community science programs. Unfortunately, life on the California coast can come at a cost for seabirds. As the number of humans visiting the coast increases, so does the list of threats to seabirds. This Community Program will introduce the many seabird species that are dependent on central California's coastal habitats, discuss the threats they face, and highlight some of the conservation victories giving these birds hope. It will also demonstrate some of the ways that seabirds can be used as indicators of change in our oceans and thereby guide the management of our ocean resources.

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

Wild Birds Unlimited Ventura Events



Sparrow ID Workshop - Saturday, February 11th at 1pm on ZOOM

Do you marvel at the subtle intricacies of sparrows? Is "little brown birds" your favorite group of birds? Then join me as I dive into the wonderful world of North American sparrows! We'll be focusing on what sparrows might be in your yard and how to tell the different (but very similar looking) sparrows apart. For folks local to Ventura County, CA there are two options to join field trips to practice sparrow ID in the real world!

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)

Support Ventura Audubon Society

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

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