

The California Condor

Ventura Audubon Society
December 2021 Volume 63, Number 4
A Chapter of the National Audubon Society
venturaaudubon.org



White Pelicans at Ormond Lagoon - photo by Joan Tharp

We hope everyone had a safe and wonderful Thanksgiving! I'd like to extend a personal note of gratitude to everyone who supported us during our October Birdathon Fundraiser. I am humbled by your response. Please know that each of your contributions support our mission, from enabling us to send a newsletter, to keeping a website, to hiring biologists to monitor snowy plovers and least terns. Thank you!

Our biggest news is that the Christmas Bird Count is just around the corner. If you've participated before you might think it's coming early this year, and you aren't wrong! We are holding it about 2 weeks earlier than normal. The count window occurs during the 2 weeks before and after Christmas. Because Christmas and New Years are on a Saturday this year, this has essentially wiped out the middle 2 weeks of the window. Please note, this year Frank DeMartino is holding a special class to prepare counters for the big day. It is not required, but it will be very useful for anyone who participates. He will go over the basics of how to participate and will discuss target species we are looking to find in our area. Please see the article on the Christmas Bird Count below!

In other news we are putting work into improving our membership tracking and offerings. This month we have made available a special membership level for a short time, and our membership chair has a special announcement about upcoming changes. See the Membership Special and Membership Update articles below.

We wish everyone a very safe and wonderful Christmas!



Membership Special

2022 Shorebird Membership - \$40



**For a limited time, we are offering a
\$40 Shorebird Membership (\$50 value)**

It's a great present for the birder on your gift list!

Shorebird Membership includes the following:

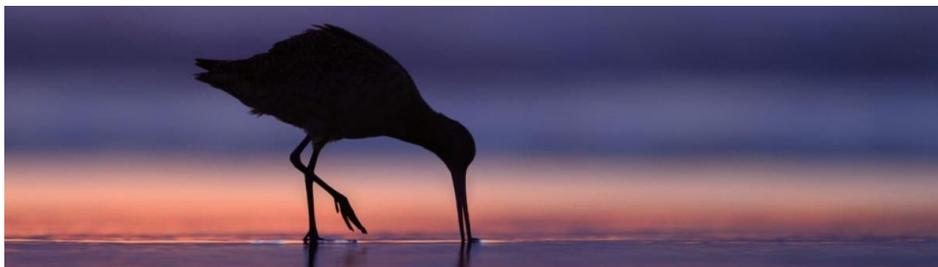
1. One Annual (or Renewal) VAS Membership
2. 2022 Shorebird Calendar featuring local Ventura shorebirds by Alecia Smith
3. VAS Shorebird Logo



We have calendars in stock and ready to ship out.
This offer will last until the end of January or until our supply of calendars runs out.

To order your Shorebird Membership please click on the button on the right to go to our PayPal site. *Be sure to include your shipping information on the form.*

Join Now!



You may still order your individual calendar
without the membership for \$30,
or browse the monthly photography on this [website](#)

Update from the Membership Coordinator



We would like to thank everyone who joined or renewed their annual membership in 2021! We are working hard to enhance our membership support. In particular, we are converting to a database to track membership. We have already made some improvements, and as we enter 2022 we will be adding new ways to better serve you:

Recent Changes:

- We have rolled out an easier way to join or renew using a new PayPal sign up page. As always, you may still join by mail with a check and membership form.
- This month we will be offering a new membership level, "Shorebird". This combines a membership with a 2022 Shorebird calendar for a \$10 discount.
- We have simplified our membership [webpage](#) to make it easier to select your membership options

Coming in 2022:

- We will be adding additional membership options and perks
- Starting in January, we will be sending out annual renewal reminders to VAS chapter members before your membership expires

If you have any questions or concerns about your membership,
please feel free to send an email to membership@venturaaudubon.org.

We look forward to an exciting 2022!

By joining our local chapter, your donation directly supports Ventura Audubon's mission.

[Membership Webpage](#)

[Join VAS via PayPal](#)

Ventura Audubon Christmas Bird Count Saturday December 18, 2021

Special Class on 12/12/21 to prepare for the CBC!

Top 10 Most Wanted Yard Birds

Speaker: Frank DeMartino

Time: 2-3 PM

Date: Sunday Dec 12, 2021

Zoom Meeting [link](#)

Facebook event [link](#)

This presentation will focus on the upcoming count, how you can participate, what birds to look for in your yard, and how to tell those tricky rare birds from your common birds. We'll go over 10 of the birds that we most want to find for the CBC. You may have one and not even realize it!

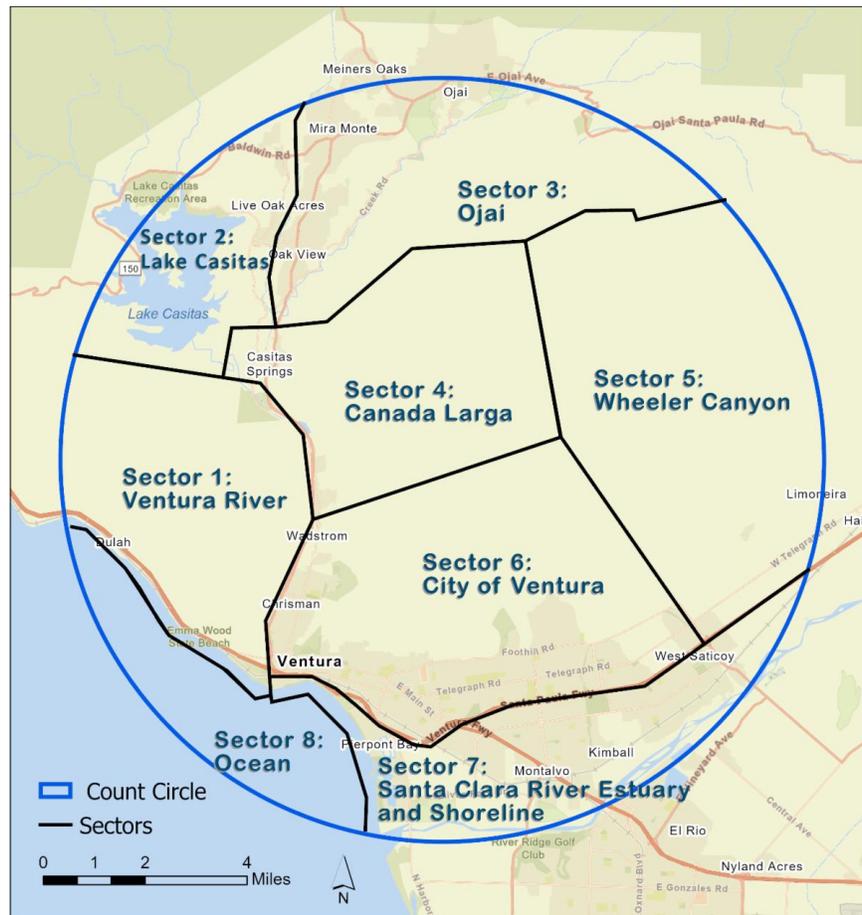
Each winter the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) presents a chance to participate in the oldest and longest running community science project. Click [here](#) for more information on the history of the CBC, and [here](#) for reports from 1900-2020.

Because the data collected is used to compare against other years, it is done the same methodical way each year. We only count birds within a defined 15-mile diameter "count circle". The Ventura Audubon count circle is sub-divided into 8 sectors (see map below). Each sector has a leader who organizes teams within their sector, and the entire circle is organized by our CBC compiler, Frank DeMartino. Frank will report the data after the count is completed to the National Audubon Society database.

If you would like to participate this year, either in the field or from your backyard, please do one of the following:

- Email Frank DeMartino at frank@colynx.com,
- Visit or call the [Wild Birds Unlimited](#) store in Ventura
- Attend the "Top 10 Most Wanted Yard Birds" class (optional)

Ventura Count Circle



In past years VAS has hosted a pot-luck dinner the night of the Ventura CBC. This year, in consideration of COVID safety, we plan to hold a virtual event via Zoom where preliminary results from the day will be reviewed. Zoom link information will be sent to CBC participants.

What are we learning from the CBC?

Each year CBC data is added to a database and is available to researchers and the public. The Ventura count has been held each year since 1980. **A special thank you to Karl Krause and Frank DeMartino for making this happen.** Karl compiled VAS CBC data for 18 years, and now Frank is continuing this work! The reason we hold a bird count each year is to track and understand the patterns of wild bird activity in our count

circle. Brad Sillasen developed an interactive database that shows trends in bird populations within Ventura Audubon's Count Circle. Below is an example of some of the data on we have collected. To explore the data more, please visit the website link below:

Click to view the Ventura Audubon CBC database

Years on Record: 41

Total Species Recorded: 304
 Most Species Recorded: 202 (1987)
 Least Species Recorded: 156 (1981)
 Average Species Recorded: 178

Trending Up

(delta as % of avg count for first half of count years)

Snow Goose	+213%
Greater Scaup	+194%
Hooded Merganser	+199%
Red-throated Loon	+162%
Pacific Loon	+1036%
Horned Grebe	+130%
Western Grebe	+203%
Black-vented Shearwater	+654%
Brandt's Cormorant	+658%
Pelagic Cormorant	+184%
American White Pelican	+5511%
Brown Pelican	+249%
Bald Eagle	+904%
Black Oystercatcher	+855%
Snowy Plover	+374%
Long-billed Curlew	+325%
Marbled Godwit	+171%
Black Turnstone	+128%
Pomarine Jaeger	+210%
Parasitic Jaeger	+179%
Common Murre	+1627%
Rhinoceros Auklet	+1029%
Royal Tern	+260%
Eurasian Collared-Dove	+2311%
Western Screech-Owl	+147%
Costa's Hummingbird	+167%
Allen's Hummingbird	+1585%
Merlin	+115%
Peregrine Falcon	+217%
Cassin's Kingbird	+101%
American Crow	+142%
Violet-green Swallow	+106%
White-breasted Nuthatch	+120%
Mountain Bluebird	+165%
Great-tailed Grackle	+302%

Trending Down

(delta as % of avg for first half of count years)

Ross's Goose	-65%
Wood Duck	-55%
Cinnamon Teal	-81%
Northern Pintail	-94%
Green-winged Teal	-65%
Canvasback	-82%
Cattle Egret	-100%
Green Heron	-73%
Ferruginous Hawk	-77%
Common Gallinule	-56%
Black-necked Stilt	-90%
American Avocet	-91%
Wandering Tattler	-61%
Dunlin	-97%
Western Sandpiper	-87%
Long-billed Dowitcher	-75%
Wilson's Snipe	-72%
Bonaparte's Gull	-98%
Herring Gull	-80%
Glaucous-winged Gull	-70%
Spotted Dove	-100%
Loggerhead Shrike	-66%
Hutton's Vireo	-64%
Horned Lark	-62%
Mountain Chickadee	-90%
Canyon Wren	-55%
Golden-crowned Kinglet	-59%
Varied Thrush	-86%
Nashville Warbler	-51%
Rufous-crowned Sparrow	-91%
Chipping Sparrow	-51%
Swamp Sparrow	-56%
Western Tanager	-71%
Brown-headed Cowbird	-72%
Bullock's Oriole	-75%

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!

COVID-19 safety measures:

- All participants sign up 24 hours in advance for field trips - *this allows us advance time to ensure we have enough trip leaders to provide for social distancing*
- Participants sign and return a COVID release form
- All participants must be vaccinated - this includes our leaders too, please be prepared to show proof of vaccination
- Everyone must wear a mask and social distance during the field trip

To participate in a field trip

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
4. Fill out the form and email back, or bring with you to the trip

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.

December Field Trips



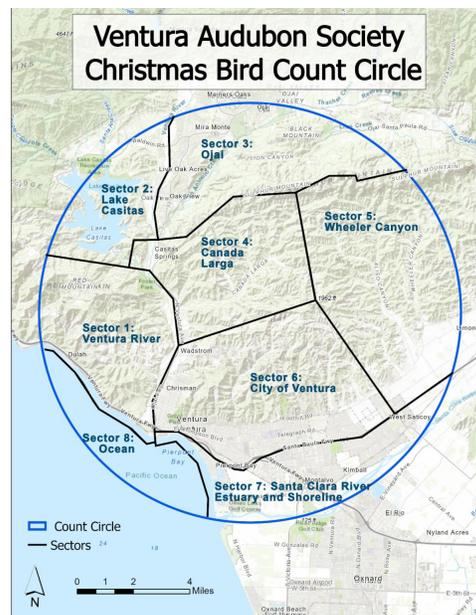
Snowy plover ; photo by Alecia Smith

Santa Clara River Estuary/ Surfers Knoll

Saturday Dec 4th, 2021
Meeting Time: 8:30am

We will walk along the beach from Surfers Knoll parking lot to the estuary.

Target Species: A variety of shorebirds including Snowy Plovers, Ruddy and Black Turnstones and hopefully Surfbirds which are always an exciting treat. We will also tackle



Christmas Bird Count

Saturday Dec 18th, 2021
Meeting Time: Check with your sector leader

Today we count all species, numbers of birds of species and we visit every nook and cranny in our Ventura Audubon count circle.

some gull and tern identification, so bring your field guides! Please bring scopes if you have them. We will be walking a good distance on sand, so please wear appropriate footwear and plan on dressing in layers.

Directions: Take Harbor Blvd to Spinnaker and enter Ventura Harbor. Follow Spinnaker as it curves around to the right. Park in Surfers' Knoll parking lot, on the left.

[GOOGLE MAPS](#)

Birders of all skill sets are involved in the CBC. If you are a beginning birder, our compiler will pair you with an expert initially.

If your home is within the boundaries of a CBC circle, then you can stay at home and report the birds that visit your feeder on count day as long as you have made prior arrangement with the count compiler.

If you would like to participate this year, please contact Frank at frank@colynx.com

December 2020 Program: Movie Night



The Condor's Shadow

55 minute movie

Presented by: Joseph Brandt

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Condor Recovery Program

Date: Tuesday Dec 14, 2021

Time: 7pm

Q&A with Joseph Brandt after the movie

The Condor's Shadow profiles the ongoing challenge of bringing the iconic California condor back from the brink of extinction. Biologist Joseph Brandt, zookeeper Mike Clark, toxicologist Myra Finkelstein as well as a feisty condor named Pitahsi all contribute to the narrative in a year-in-the-life story of endangered species recovery. With

vérité footage shot in the ruggedly beautiful nesting habitat of the condor and interviews with those who have lived the story for more than thirty years, this heart-wrenching and beautiful film will make you appreciate the passion and hard work required to pull a species back from the brink.



To join the program visit our

[Monthly Speaker webpage](#)

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

The lead field biologist for the Wildlife Service's Condor Recovery Program, **Joseph Brandt** is a larger-than-life character - literally, at 6'6" he's an impressive and gregarious individual in person as well as onscreen. Passionate and at the same time pragmatic about building a self-sustaining wild condor population, Joseph is one of those exceptional individuals that relishes the gritty challenges found in biological field work. As condors never nest anywhere convenient to humans, Joseph's extensive background in rock climbing is used routinely in his job. If you ever thought it would be fun to be a biologist, you'll appreciate Joseph Brandt. A taskmaster and arguably the exact kind of personality that makes a recovery program like this one possible. Joseph shares his passion for the condor in a way that will make you appreciate the beauty of one of the rarest birds on earth. As his collaborator in the Big Sur condor recovery effort, Joe Burnett, related "...he's in it because he cares about the birds".



A graduate of the University of Oregon. Joseph has worked with grizzly bears in Montana, sea birds on the Columbia River and with penguins below the equator. He became enamored with the condor as a seasonal biologist with the Ventana Wildlife Society in Big Sur, California. After a stint in Southern Chile ("...just me, two Chileanos and one-hundred thousand penguins") he took a biologist position with the California Condor Recovery Program in 2006 and manages the field program today.

Shorebird Recovery Program Update



PHOTO: AL COLE SMITH

The winter months for the Shorebird Recovery team, and for all plover and tern biologists, is a time of data analysis, report writing and sharing data. Much like our favorite bird, we are also resting and recovering from the nesting season.

Recovery Unit 5 Meeting

Our biologists and contractor holds CA State and Federal permits to conduct nest monitoring. Reporting monitoring data is a requirement for these permits. The first big meeting of the year for our team is on December 2nd, 2021. This is the Recovery Unit 5 (RU5) meeting for the western snowy plover. The RU5 area includes all of San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara and Ventura counties, including Santa Rosa and San Nicolas Islands. We will be there to represent Ormond and Hollywood Beaches and will discuss successes and challenges with the other biologists and the USFWS. More meetings will occur in January and final reports are due on Jan 31, 2022. We have compiled many of our past reports and made them available on our [website](#). The 2021 reports will be added soon after they are submitted to the USFWS on Jan 31, 2022.

We continue to conduct regular monitoring of wintering snowy plovers on Hollywood and Ormond Beaches. Our next big field day will be the snowy plover winter window in January, when all snowy plovers are counted from the border of Canada to the border of Mexico.

Birding Classes with Frank at Wild Birds Unlimited Ventura



Beginner Bird ID Class Winter Edition!

Speaker: Frank DeMartino

Time: 2-3 PM

Date: Saturday Dec 4, 2021

Zoom Event

Is your yard full of little brown birds? Are you wondering where all of the colorful birds have gone? Join us as we talk about the variety of birds that spend the winter in in your area and learn some ID tips for common backyard birds that occur this time of year. We will talk sparrows, finches, woodpeckers, nuthatches, and more!

Zoom Meeting [link](#)

Facebook event [link](#)

WBU After Hours Holiday Special

Time: 6:30-7:30 pm PM

Date: Sunday Dec 5, 2021

Zoom Event

Christmas Shopping for Birders!

Join the staff of Wild Birds Unlimited in Ventura for a special holiday shopping event! We'll be showcasing some of our holiday products, gift ideas, and special viewer only deals! Grab a glass of wine or your beverage of choice and tune in!

Zoom Meeting [link](#)
Facebook event [link](#)

CBC Practice! Top 10 Most Wanted Yard Birds

Speaker: Frank DeMartino
Time: 2-3 PM
Date: Sunday Dec 12, 2021
Zoom Event

It's Christmas Bird Count season! Ventura's count is Saturday, December 18th. That means it's time to start checking those backyard birds! This presentation will focus on the upcoming count, how you can participate, what birds to look for in your yard, and how to tell those tricky rare birds from your common birds. We'll go over 10 of the birds that we most want to find for the CBC. You may have one and not even realize it!

Zoom Meeting [link](#)
Facebook event [link](#)

Thank you to our supporters!

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

Grants

- California Department of Fish and Wildlife and United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Endangered Species Act Section 6 Grant
- National Foundation of Fish and Wildlife (NFWF)
- National Audubon Society, Audubon in Action Grant
- Ventura FWS office

Support Ventura Audubon Society

Please remember us on "Giving Tuesday"

Please consider VAS in your year end donations.
Ventura Audubon Society is a registered tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization.

Join

Donate ONLINE

VOLUNTEER: Fill out this SURVEY FORM



[Contact Us](#)

Visit our website