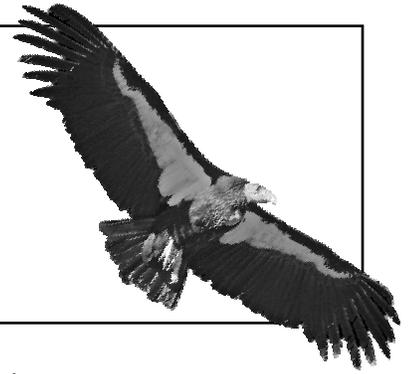


# *The* **CALIFORNIA CONDOR**

Ventura Audubon Society **APRIL 2012** Volume 32 Number 8  
A Chapter of the National Audubon [www.VenturaAudubon.org](http://www.VenturaAudubon.org)



## *CALL NOTES ...Bruce Schoppe, President*

### **Birdathon!**

Birdathon is Ventura Audubon's only major fundraiser of the year. With your generous response, VAS can continue to provide outstanding monthly programs and publish a monthly newsletter (electronically and on paper). We can also continue to develop educational outreach programs, fund local conservation and environmental projects and help inform the public on important birding and wildlife issues.

Any scheduled trip during the month of APRIL may be used as the basis for your pledge of an amount per species seen. **Or, if you prefer, you may make a donation in any amount.** All contributions are tax deductible.

Please use the pledge form and preaddressed envelope provided in this newsletter to send in your pledge or donation. If you receive your newsletter by email, the pledge form arrived as an attachment. Send your pledge or donation to Ventura Audubon Society, P.O. Box 24198, Ventura, CA 93002.

We have an ambitious project planned to put more interpretive panels on more beaches to help educate people

of the need to "Share the Shore". Signs available through California State Parks tell the story of shorebirds and, especially, the Western Snowy Plover and the California Least Tern.

We would like to put them at Ormond Beach, Hollywood Beach, Channel Islands Harbor, Mandalay Beach and McGrath State Beach. Less expensive than commissioning a new design, the signs and their supporting structure are, nonetheless, costly. But, we think it is important to spread the word and help preserve habitat for these birds.

We would also like to publish a brochure letting people know the rules for their dogs on the beaches of Ventura County. Here again, we do not need to start from scratch! Santa Barbara Audubon led the way and has made a design available for customization to our area.

Last year, members generously contributed \$3,855 to the Birdathon. Our goal this year is \$4,000.

Thank you for your continued generosity.

## *APRIL PROGRAM ...Janice Susha, Program Chair*

*7:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 10th, Poinsettia Pavillon, 3451 Foothill Road, Ventura*

### *Ten Best Wildflower Trails in Ventura County with Rick Burgess*

Spring is in the air and to many people this means its time to get out and enjoy spring wildflower displays. Many people travel for miles to see these beautiful flowers, but there are many local areas that are justly famous for spectacular wildflowers. Join botanist Rick Burgess as he takes us on a leisurely ramble to 10 of his favorite wildflower trails closer to home. Some of these areas are well known, others are more obscure, but all of them have beautiful wildflower displays.

For over 30 years, Rick and his wife Trisha have been working on a Flora of Ventura County, which is now finally in manuscript form. When Rick is not working on botanical pursuits, he is employed by the City of Thousand Oaks as an environmental planner, a position he has held for 26 years. Associated with many environmental groups, Rick is past president of the Channel Islands Chapter of the California Native Plant Society and has been a Director at Large of the State-wide organization. Rick is also a member of Ventura Audubon and takes particular pleasure in being the sector leader for Ojai in the annual Christmas Bird Count.

## *BIRD OF THE MONTH – APRIL 2012*

*Article and Photo by David Pereksta*

### *Western Tanager (Piranga ludoviciana)*



April brings a variety of northbound migrants through Ventura County with some continuing to points further north and others staying to breed locally. The Western Tanager is a common migrant and local breeder.

The Western Tanager is a small tanager with breeding plumaged males having a red face; yellow nape, underparts, and rump; and black wings, tail, and back. There are two wing bars, the upper one yellow and the lower one white. The bill (small for a tanager) is pale, blunt, and stout. Most females are yellow, palest on the belly, while others range to distinctly grayish-white with the yellow restricted to the undertail coverts. They have an olive-yellow face and upperparts and a grayish back. Immatures are similar to females. Winter males look like females, but have more conspicuous wing bars, brighter yellow on the underparts, and may show a tinge of red to the face. The song is a series of two- and three-syllable languid notes with alternating inflection. Call is a slurred *pit-er-ick*.

Western Tanagers occur farther north in summer than any other tanager species. They nest in coniferous forests of the north and high mountains, but may show up in any habitat during migration including grassland and desert. The species prefers mature open stands or the edges of denser forests, but they also inhabit deciduous trees along streams and lakes, and clumps of oaks growing amongst conifers. While breeding, they usually keep to high dense foliage, but during fall migration they can be seen gleaning fruits and berries from ripening shrubs.

They breed from extreme southeastern Alaska, southwestern Mackenzie, British Columbia, Alberta, and central Saskatchewan south to northern Baja California, southern Arizona, and extreme western Texas; also in the Black Hills of South Dakota. They winter in Baja California and central Mexico south to Central America; small numbers also winter in coastal southern California.

Western Tanagers are fairly common to common transient throughout Ventura County and a fairly common to locally common summer resident at higher elevations. Transients may be seen in any wooded area including parks and neighborhoods during their spring (mid-April to mid-May) and fall (mid-July to mid-Oct) passages. Breeding pairs can be found in coniferous and oak-conifer woodland at higher elevations at places including Mount Pinos, Frazier Mountain, Pine Mountain, and along Sespe Creek; rarely at lower elevations such as Sisar Canyon. Transients can occur anywhere but reliable locations to find them during the migration periods include Camino Real Park, the Laguna Tamarisks, Big Sycamore Canyon, LaJolla Canyon, Rancho Sierra Vista, Wheeler Gorge, Sisar Canyon, and Reyes Creek. Wintering individuals are rare, but they are occasionally found in groves of blooming eucalyptus trees like those at Camino Real Park.



## *APRIL FIELD TRIPS ...Judy Dugan*

Beginners are welcome on all field trips. Light drizzle does not necessarily cancel trips, but heavier rain will. If in doubt, please call the trip leader.

**Birdathon: Any scheduled trip in April may be used to pledge money per species seen!**

**Saturday, April 7, 9:00-12 a.m. Restoration Work Day, Santa Paula. Hedrick Ranch Nature Area Restoration Program. Come at 8:00 for birding! Leader: Sandy Hedrick (340-0478).** Long pants and boots or closed shoes are required. **Directions:** Take Hwy 126 to Santa Paula, 10<sup>th</sup> St. Exit. Go left under freeway, right on Harvard, right on 12<sup>th</sup>, cross S.C. River Bridge. Go 3.7 miles to 20395 S. Mountain Rd. Turn left onto the dirt road & follow it to the end (approx. ½ mile).

**Monday, April 9, 8:30 a.m. Fillmore Fish Hatchery/Lake Piru Area. Leader: Adele Fergusson (415-4304).** The Fish Hatchery usually produces several good species of herons, egrets, and other birds that come to feed on the leftovers from the fish feeding, as well as several other species of birds. We will then go to Lake Piru area. **Directions:** Meet at the fish hatchery which is located to the right off Hwy 126 just 1.2 miles east of Fillmore and 26 miles from Ventura. **To carpool,** meet at 8:00 at the Pacific View Mall. Take Coastal View Dr. entrance off Mills & park in the lot directly across from the parking garage entrance.

**Saturday, April 14, 8:30 a.m. Lake Casitas. Leader: John Pavelko (640-9040)** We should see Snowy & Great Egrets, Great Blue Herons, spring migrants, and many more. **Directions:** Take Hwy 33 towards Ojai; exit Casitas Vista Rd. Turn rt. and go under freeway past Foster Park to 1<sup>st</sup> rt., Santa Anna Rd. Follow to park. Or take Hwy 33 to Hwy 150, turn left and follow signs to the lake. **To carpool** meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Museum of Ventura County, 100 E. Main (side parking lot).

**April 21 & 22, San Luis Obispo Weekend Birding Trip. Leader: Neil Ziegler (983-7207). Saturday, 8:00 a.m. Laguna Lake. Directions:** From Hwy 101, take the Madonna Rd/Hwy 227 exit. Follow on Madonna Rd. to

the park which is located midway along the north side of Madonna Rd. In the varied habitats, we should see wetland birds, migrating warbler, various sparrows & perhaps Blue Grosbeaks. From there we will go to other birdy sites in the area. On Sunday, we will go to Montana De Oro. Make your own accommodations. Several are staying at the Travelodge at 1825 Monterey St (805-543-5110). Contact Judy (642-0842 or [catmai03@yahoo.com](mailto:catmai03@yahoo.com)) if you plan to go. Contact cell phones in SLO: Neil (805-208-3149) Judy (805-283-4272).

**Monday, April 23 – Registration for Tejon Ranch May 13 (Mothers' Day) Trip** Antelope Valley side of the ranch. Preference given to VAS members. Information required for registration: name, address, tel. #, & email address. Call Judy (642-0842 or email [catmai03@yahoo.com](mailto:catmai03@yahoo.com)) to register. Specific details in May newsletter.

**Saturday, April 28, 8:30 – 10:30 a.m. Beginners' Bird Walk. Ojai–Persimmon Hill area. Leader: Allen Bertke (640-9037).** Join us at Allen's place. We should see Hooded & Bullock's Orioles, Western Bluebirds, hummingbirds, and many more. Bring binoculars, a field guide, hat, and water. **Directions:** From Ventura, take Hwy 33 to Creek Rd. Turn right and follow Creek Rd. for about 5 miles. Just past the 10mph left hand curve, take 1<sup>st</sup> right onto Saddle Lane (Look for Persimmon Hill sign; Saddle Lane sign is difficult to see.) Once on Saddle, go straight at the stop sign. 481 Saddle will be the 4<sup>th</sup> house on the right past the stop sign. **Carpool** from the Museum at 8:00, 100 E. Main.

### **Mark Your Calendar**

May 5 - Hedrick Ranch Nature Center

May 7 – Lake Casitas

## ***BEGINNERS BIRD WALK ...Allen Bertke***

This month we combined the Beginner's Bird Walk with the 15<sup>th</sup> annual Great Backyard Bird Count, sponsored by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the Audubon Society. This is a four day citizen-science project that has become quite popular. Over 90,000 check lists were sent in last year. Check it out at [www.birdsource.org](http://www.birdsource.org). On this day our group of 27 people tallied 40 species and a total of 377 birds. I'm sure we missed many birds because I consider these outings a teaching experience rather than a contest, so I was busy spouting off about habitat, birding by GISS, bird behavior, etc. If I was able to get a couple of people more interested in birding, and more appreciative of the wonderful world of birds, then it was a successful day.

At first, the birds seemed to flock to us – starting in the parking lot outside the gate, and then again in the field on the north side of the water park. The longer we stood there, the more birds came to visit us or fly by, including some unusual parking lot birds like Great Blue Herons and Great Egrets. It was as if some bird pheromones had spilled on me. This was becoming more of a bird stand around than a bird walk. The group was beginning to think I was some kind of a Bird Whisperer. (I wonder if it had something to do with that truckload of birdseed that I had spread out early that morning?) Just kidding. I'm sure it was simply my birding magnetism. We saw 11 species in the parking lot before we even entered the park and another dozen or so on our first stop at the field on the right.

In the field behind the water park, one gentleman was asking if sapsuckers were a rare sighting. I explained that they are common, but just not seen very often. As he was pondering that oxymoron, a Red-breasted Sapsucker flew into a tree right in front of us, on cue. If you speak of them, they will come. I was adding to my mystique. Later, a woman was noticing all of the mistletoe in one of the bare sycamore trees. I mentioned that Phainopeplas love mistletoe. After hearing several "Fane-o-whats?" from the group, I got out my worn and trusty Sibley's guide to show them this beautiful bird, whose Greek name means "shiny robe". Sure enough, as soon as I put the book away, a Phainopepla flew in to inspect the mistletoe! My mystique was intensifying. Someone said it seemed that I could summon birds up at will. Jokingly I said "Yes, on my good days, I simply mention a bird's name and it shows up for me." So I tried mentioning another bird's name. No luck. I guess saying "Ivory Woodpecker" was really pushing it. Should have stopped while I was ahead.

See you on the next walk.



### ***NOMINATING COMMITTEE***

A Nominating Committee consisting of Sandy Hedrick, Nancy Schorsch and Susan Bee was appointed by the Board of Directors. The Committee recommends the following for the 2012 – 2013 Board of The Ventura Audubon Society:

Susan Bee	Joyce Schoppe
John Connor	Bruce Schoppe
Judy Dugan	Marianne Slaughter
Alexis Frangis	Reed Smith
Jack Gillooly	Janice Sussha
Laura Gulovsen	Jim Sussha
Sandy Hedrick	Neil Ziegler
Jan Lewison	

Any member of The Ventura Audubon Society may suggest names for nomination by contacting any member of the Nominating Committee. The Board of Directors is elected at the Annual meeting in May. Officers are elected by the Board at its organizational meeting, usually in August.



## NOTES FROM THE FIELD

...David Pereksta

Wintering waterfowl and other waterbirds continued over the last month with a few new birds being found. A diversity of wintering geese have occurred locally this year and continuing birds included a flock of approximately 20 **Greater White-fronted Geese** at the Saticoy Spreading Ponds through 8 Mar, 5 **Snow Geese** near Point Mugu through 19 Feb, and a **Cackling Goose** at Lake Sherwood through 7 Mar. Lake Sherwood also hosted eight **Least Bitterns** on 25 Feb (MH, DP & KR), one of which was later seen well on 29 Feb (MH). The **Eurasian Wigeon** continued at Rancho Simi Park through 7 Mar. Ten **Blue-winged Teal** continued in the nearby Arroyo Simi through 10 Mar, a pair of **Common Mergansers** was there 10-11 Mar (MC), and 7 **Hooded Mergansers** continued through 11 Mar.

Four **Blue-winged Teal** were near Point Mugu on 19 Feb (DP et al.) and a large flock (60-120) of **American White Pelicans** was seen overhead there on 4 Mar (JM et al.). The four previously reported **Long-tailed Ducks** remained at Hollywood Beach through 3 Mar with three being seen through 7 Mar. A **Black Oystercatcher** and **Surfbirds** were there on 23 Feb (AS & MB). The **Long-tailed Duck** found at Lake Casitas on the Ventura Christmas Bird Count was seen again in late Feb. The **Red-necked Grebe** continued in the Ventura Harbor through 11 Mar and a **Wood Duck** was at a pond near the Ventura Harbor on 4 Mar (KR). Away from their usual haunts at the Ventura Harbor, six **Black Oystercatchers** and an **American x Black Oystercatcher** hybrid were at Mussel Shoals 6-7 Mar (DP). A **Pacific Golden-Plover** continued on the sod fields along Arnold Road with a second individual being found there with it on 25 Feb (DP).

Uncommon wintering passerines continued over the last month, which included a few late season discoveries. The wintering **Eastern Phoebe** in Camarillo continued through 8 Mar and three **Vermilion Flycatchers** continued in the Point Mugu vicinity through 18 Feb with at least two remaining through 4 Mar. The **Plumbeous Vireo** remained at Rancho Simi Park through 11 Mar. **Sage Thrashers** have been widely reported over the last few months and two more were found along the coast in Oxnard on 29 Feb (MS).

Unseasonal warblers included a **Black-and white Warbler** at Bubbling Springs Park on 2 Mar (DC), the wintering male **Hermit Warbler** in Camino Real Park through 4 Mar and another individual at Rancho Simi Park on 11 Mar (MP) and a **Nashville Warbler** on 17

Feb and **Black-throated Gray Warbler** on 20 Feb in an east Ventura yard (RM). Feeder watching at Lake Sherwood on 25 Feb yielded a **White-throated Sparrow** and a "**Slate-colored**" **Dark-eyed Junco** (DP & MH).

Early season reports from the mountainous north county included a **Clark's Nutcracker** on Mount Pinos on 18 Feb (MP), single **Northern Pygmy-Owls** in Rose Valley on 9 Mar (PR) and Wheeler Gorge on 11 Mar (PP & CC), and an **American Dipper** and 20 **Pine Siskins** in Rose Valley on 9 Mar (PR). Montane species in the lowlands included two **Golden-crowned Kinglets** in Ojai on 11 Mar (JG) and continuing **Mountain Bluebirds** along Canada Larga Road through 25 Feb. Also notable near Ojai was a **Zone-tailed Hawk** over Oak View on 27 Feb (JS).

Thank you to those who reported sightings during the last month. If you have any questions about local birds or have a good one to report (please no nuisance bird calls), e-mail or call David Pereksta at <pereksta@pacbell.net> or 659-5740.

Good birding,  
David Pereksta

Observers: Matt Brady, Dennis Cabral, Madison Christian, Carolee Colter, Jesse Grantham, Mary Hansen, Robert McMorran, Jim Moore, Matthew Page, David Pereksta, Paul Prappas, Peter Ralph, Kay Regester, Adam Searcy, Jeremy Siegrist, and Mitch Siemens.

### NEWSLETTER PROBLEMS?

If you're experiencing delivery problems with your newsletter, need to change your address, want to change your delivery type, or have questions about your membership renewal date, please contact **Jackie Worden** at jbworden7@gmail.com or call her at (805)652-0577. In addition to being our new Membership Chair, she also manages our mailing databases, so she's the one to make the changes.

**VENTURA AUDUBON SOCIETY**

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	Art Marshall	642-1585
	Alexis Frangis	217-4833
<b>Non Board:</b>		
Newsletter Mailing & Membership	Jackie Worden	652-0577
Newsletter Editor	Dee Press	484-8415

**APRIL BOARD MEETING**

The Tuesday, April 3rd Board of Directors meeting will be held at the home of Susan Bee, 1415 McNell Road in Ojai, at 7:15 p.m. Call 640- 0779 for more information.

**THE VENTURA AUDUBON SOCIETY** holds its regular meeting on the second Tuesday of the month at the Poinsettia Pavilion, 3451 Foothill Rd. in Ventura at 7:30 p.m., September through April. The May meeting is a barbecue. Call the President for information. Board Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of the month. A Membership Form is available on our web site.

**THE CALIFORNIA CONDOR** is published nine times per year (September—May). Members are encouraged to submit articles, announcements, letters and drawings in WORD format or in the form of an e-mail message. *The deadline is noon on the 12th of the month preceding the next issue.* E-mail to: [birderz1@roadrunner.com](mailto:birderz1@roadrunner.com) Call Editor Dee Press at 484-8415 for more information.