

# *The* **CALIFORNIA CONDOR**

Ventura Audubon Society **April 2018** Volume 42, Number 8  
A Chapter of the National Audubon [www.VenturaAudubon.org](http://www.VenturaAudubon.org)



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



**Birdathon** is Ventura Audubon's major fundraiser of the year. With your generous response, VAS can continue to support our many education and conservation programs. Although, in the past, we have depended upon grants to fund our conservation efforts, it has become apparent that, in the future, we will be expected to do more ourselves.

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. Ventura Audubon is a 501(c)3 corporation.

You will again receive a mailing with a pledge form and an envelope in which to return your pledge or donation. Send your pledge or donation to P.O. Box 24198, Ventura, CA 93002.

Thank you for your continued generosity.

## **APRIL PROGRAM**

**Genetics & Geolocators: Tracking Migration from Pleistocene to Present...Allison Alvarado**

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



Allison Alvarado is an Assistant Professor of Biology at Cal State University Channel Islands, where she teaches courses in Ecology, Ornithology, and Conservation Genetics. While growing up in Southern California, she always wanted to travel. She has worked with Hawaiian Honeycreepers on the Big Island, Fairy Wrens in Australia, Neotropical migrants in Alaska, and the San Clemente Loggerhead Shrike. While attending graduate school at UCLA, she joined the Center for Tropical Research which took her far across the globe to South America and Africa. This semester she will be taking undergraduate students to Costa Rica for spring break as well as the Santa Rosa Island Research Station. She is involved in local research including a study of Least Bell's Vireo on the Santa Clara River in collaboration with WFVZ, USFWS and USGS. Her most recent research interest focuses on hummingbirds in the Tri-Counties.

In her talk, she will be discussing her past and current research with Hermit Thrushes. She studied a migratory divide in British Columbia, using genetics to uncover the origin of disparate migratory directions, and using geolocators to track contemporary migration routes throughout the annual cycle. As she continues her research on hybrid zone dynamics across the divide, she is interested in the role of climate on subspecies variation and the process of speciation at a broad geographic scale. Check out the Bird Genoscape website for more information about her current project on migration connectivity in Hermit Thrushes. <https://www.birdgenoscape.org/highlighted-species/hermit-thrush/>



## *NOTES FROM THE FIELD*

*...David Pereksta*

February is generally a slow month for new reports as winter residents are continuing their stays or starting to leave and some of the more common expected migrants are starting to trickle in from the south. Migrants are starting to arrive and February saw early reports of species including Rufous Hummingbird, Warbling Vireo, a variety of swallows, and Hooded Oriole. More northbound migrants are on their way so pay attention for new sights and sounds where you are birding.

A **Ross's Goose** continued at Lake Casitas through 1 Feb and 10 **Cackling Geese** continued at Rancho Simi Park through 26 Feb. A pair of **Wood Ducks** were at the Simi Hills Golf Course 17-26 Feb (ET). **American White Pelicans** were reported from a variety of locations with notable numbers including as many as 40 at the Santa Clara River Estuary 3-18 Feb (DB, SK), as many as 6 continuing (?) at Lake Piru through 23 Feb, and as many as 19 at Mugu Lagoon 1-26 Feb (JP). Two **Reddish Egrets** continued at Mugu Lagoon through 18 Feb with one being seen through 23 Feb, while another was elsewhere on the Oxnard Plain 11-28 Feb (DP). Two **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons** and a **Common Gallinule** continued at the Ventura Settling Ponds through 28 Feb. A large number of this species for our area, 100 **Northern Fulmars** were in the Santa Barbara Channel on 21 Feb (JB).

**California Condors** included one at Valle Vista Campground on 3 Feb (ER & MJ), seven at Mount Pinos on 4 Feb (MR), and as many as four continuing at Lake Piru through 27 Feb. Two **Bald Eagles** continued at Lake Piru through 21 Feb and the pair was seen at Lake Casitas through 28 Feb. An early **Swainson's Hawk** was over Frazier Mountain on 9 Feb (JA). The **Zone-tailed Hawk** was seen again in Ojai on 13-24 Feb (JG), which was the first report after the Thomas Fire. Two **Long-eared Owls** were along the East Las Virgenes Canyon Trail on 21 Feb (MM).

Two **White-winged Doves** continued in Camarillo through 18 Feb. Sapsuckers continued in pepper trees at several locations including a **Red-naped Sapsucker** at Lake Casitas through 1 Feb, another **Red-naped Sapsucker** at Canada Larga Road through 18 Feb and a **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** at Canada Larga through 24 Feb. Birders seeking the sapsuckers at Canada Larga should be careful to distinguish between these similar looking species. A **Tropical Kingbird** was on the CSUCI campus on 11 Feb (DP), which may be the same bird that was seen a few times near Callegas Creek earlier in the winter. The **Pacific/Winter Wren** continued at Bates Road through 16 Feb. A **Clay-colored Sparrow** was found at Pitts Ranch Park in Camarillo on 12 Feb (LE & CL) with a second one found there on 13 Feb (KK). Both remained through 28 Feb. A **White-throated Sparrow** continued in Ojai through 19 Feb. Ten **Red Crossbills** were on Mount Pinos on 2 Feb (KO), five were there on 21 Feb (RA), and one was near Mutah Flat on 9 Feb (DP).

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 calls about nuisance birds), call or e-mail David Pereksta at 659-5740 or [pereksta@pacbell.net](mailto:pereksta@pacbell.net)

Good birding,  
David Pereksta

Observers: John Apperson, Richard Armerding, Joel Barrett, Debra Barringer, Linda Easter, Jesse Grantham, Monica Jacinto, Sangeet Khalsa, Karl Krause, Carol Langford, Mark Mendelson, Kris Ohlenkamp, David Pereksta, Jeremiah Psiropoulos, Ethan Ripperger, Ed Thomas



## ***APRIL FIELD TRIPS...Adele Fergusson***

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. For all trips, please wear appropriate clothing (layers are suggested), comfortable shoes, and bring snacks, water, hats, sunscreen, binoculars and field guides.

A few reminders about birding etiquette: Stay behind the leader, move quietly, ask questions, listen to what people are pointing out. When socializing, stay behind the group.

### **Sunday April 1, 2018 8:30 a.m. Ojai Meadows**

**Leader: Raeann Koerner (805) 701-1919**

This beautiful preserve is a birding hotspot and includes a restored wetland and native plantings.

**Directions:** To carpool, meet at the Museum of Ventura Co., 100 E. Main St. (side parking lot) at 8:00 a.m. Take Hwy 33 toward Ojai and turn left at the Y. The preserve is on the left side. Parking is available in front of the entrance and also at Nordoff High School. We will meet at the entrance. Target birds will include: Western Bluebirds, Sora, Belted Kingfisher, Western Meadowlark, Merlin, Cedar Waxwing, Lark Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow and White-crowned Sparrows.

### **Saturday April 7, 2018, 9:00 a.m. Work Day Hedrick Ranch Nature Area (HRNA) Spring Clean Up**

**Leader: Sandy Hedrick (805) 340-0478**

Arrive at 8:00 for self-guided birding which usually yields some interesting birds. This will be our Spring Clean Up we will work from 9am – noon. Long pants and boots or closed shoes are required. Bring water, gloves & sun protection.

**Directions:** Take Hwy 126 to Santa Paula, 10th St. Exit. Go under freeway, rt. on Harvard, rt. on 12th and cross the 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). Even a little rain can make the road impassable; if in doubt, call Sandy to check road conditions.

**Please Note:** A special prize will be produced for any VAS member who has not been to a restoration field day this year (2017/18)—and equal appreciation will be coming to those who have! Thanks, Sandy Hedrick

### **Wednesday April 11, 2018 8:30 a.m. Lake Casitas**

**Leader: Adele Fergusson (805) 415-4304**

Join us for a walk by the lake. We will be looking for hummingbirds, grosbeaks, gnatcatchers as well as ducks, geese and waterfowl. Hopefully we will see a Bald Eagle.

**Directions:** Take Hwy 33 towards Ojai; exit Casitas Vista Rd. Turn right twice and go under freeway past Foster Park to first right, Santa Ana Rd. Follow to park, on left. Or take Hwy 33 to Hwy 150, turn left and follow signs to the lake. Park out front and we will walk into the park. There will be lots of walking, so wear comfortable shoes and bring snacks and water. Bring scopes if you have them! Target birds will include: the resident Bald Eagles, Green Heron, Chipping and Lark Sparrows, Common Merganser and Spotted Sandpiper. To Carpool from Ventura, meet at 7:50 am at the parking lot behind Carrow's (next to the Chevron station) at the intersection of Harbor and Seaward (Von's Shopping Center).

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**...FIELD TRIPS** (Continued from Page 3)

**Sunday April 15, 2018 8:00 a.m. Krotona Institute**

**Leader: Jesse Grantham [ojaiswimmer@gmail.com](mailto:ojaiswimmer@gmail.com)**

**This will be a combined walk with CVAS**

Krotona Institute is a theosophical study center, with acres of beautiful grounds, including grasslands, pines, oaks, and ornamental plants with lot of water features. Field Sparrow was seen here last winter, but hasn't shown up this year. Also a good place to discover raptors flying over. We might get lucky with a Black Vulture or Zone-tailed Hawk.

**Directions:** Take the Ojai/Hwy 33 exit from Hwy 101 North or South. Drive north-bound 12 miles through the small towns of Casitas Springs, Oak View, and Mira Monte. After passing Villanova School, take the next left (Krotona Hill on the left, Hermosa Rd on the right). Two stone pillars mark the entrance. Drive up the hill to the parking lot by the library. Good to car pool, we will meet at 7:45 behind Carrows on Harbor, next to the Chevron Gas Station. If time permits afterwards we will go to Ojai Meadows Preserve and see what the rain has brought. Park at Nordoff High School or the pull out area on the west side of 33, just past the high school.

**Sunday, April 22, 2018 2 p.m. Ventura Settling Ponds**

**Leader: Frank DeMartino (805) 906-8733**

The settling ponds at the Ventura Harbor is a reliable place to find ducks, grebes, gulls and terns, as well as songbirds and raptors. We should hear Yellow Warbler, Yellow Rumped Warblers and Blue-gray gnatcatchers.

**Directions:** Take Harbor Blvd to Spinnaker Dr. and enter Ventura Harbor. The water treatment plant is on Angler, a left turn before Spinnaker curves to the right. Park either across the street from the entrance on Angler or in lot on right hand side of Spinnaker Dr. Use caution in crossing road at blind curve. Meet in front of gate

**Saturday April 28, 2018 8:30 a.m. Emma Woods**

**Leader: Linda Easter (818)-519-2833**

We will begin at the entrance to Emma Wood State Beach, searching the scrub for sparrows and warblers. We will follow the path that leads through the willow forest (often finding wren tit and other secretive birds here) and finally across the sand dunes to the Ventura River Estuary. The estuary is always an exciting place to bird, and target birds will

include: Snowy, Black-bellied and Semipalmated Plovers, Willet, Whimbrel, Black Turnstone, Red-necked Phalarope and Forster's Tern. There will be a fair amount of walking, so please dress appropriately in layers and comfortable shoes.

**Directions:** From US-101, exit California St, turn right and then make a quick left onto Thompson Blvd. Follow Thompson (becomes Garden St) and turn left on W. Main St. Follow W. Main St until just before it enters the northbound 101 freeway. Emma Wood is on the left. There is ample street parking along the outside of the park on W. Main St (we must

# *West Coast Marshes Are Drowning, But There's Still Time to Save Their Birds ...Hannah Waters*



In the next 100 years, sea level rise will overtake Pacific coast marshes. Here's how conservationists plan to keep endangered marsh birds afloat.

Karen Thorne has grown used to expressions of stunned shock whenever she gives a talk. It simply comes with the territory, the U.S. Geological Survey ecologist says, of informing hundreds of coastal wildlife managers that, in 100 years time, the places they care for will be underwater.

"They dedicate every day of their job out there conserving and managing these habitats," Thorne says. "Then to be told that, well, in so many years, [those places are] probably not going to be there anymore because of a problem that's out of their control? It's very disconcerting for people."

But when she shares the results of her new study, the most detailed sea level rise projections yet for Pacific coast marshes, that apprehension melts away. Published last week in *Science Advances*, the new work examines how rising waters will alter the ecology at 14 marshes, from Seattle in the north to Tijuana in the south, at 10-year intervals throughout the next century.

Like other reports on sea level rise, it predicts dire results by 2110, as rising waters inundate all coastal marshes in California and Oregon, and most of those in Washington. However, there's a silver lining: It also finds that sea level rise will progress slowly until 2050. That gives today's managers enough time to prepare marshes, and their birds, for the changes to come.

"It's breaking down this monster problem into something that's manageable," she says. "You actually have 40 to 50 years to see what we can do. It gives people hope and motivates them to figure this out."

One of these managers is Meg Marriott, a wildlife biologist at San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge, located at the north end of San Francisco Bay. Marriott helps manage marsh habitat for Ridgway's Rails, a federally listed endangered species that forages and nests among marsh grasses. All of its California habitat will likely be underwater by the end of the century, so managers like Marriott need to begin work now, long before the threats present themselves, to prevent its extinction.

In its specificity, Thorne's study has been critical in informing their planning process, Marriott says. "There are lots of models out there for San Francisco Bay," she adds, "but none were done by actually coming out onto the land and taking elevation measurements, except for Karen Thorne's work."

At all 14 marsh sites up and down the Pacific coast, Thorne led a group of researchers to measure land elevation, take soil cores, survey plants, and monitor water levels. Her team fed these various data into a sophisticated model to calculate how rising seas would affect ecological processes, such as vegetation patterns, sediment build-up, and erosion, at each individual marsh.

"She's done such a service in providing this really detailed analysis of what's going to happen to our marshes," Marriott says. "We're using that information to plan for climate change and sea level rise." (Thorne made her results available to managers as they were available, years before the official publication of the work last week.)

According to Thorne's research, the marshes of San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge will drown eventually—but not all at once. First, the lowest-elevation marshes in the south end of San Francisco Bay will go under, and then the water line will creep northward into the higher-elevation marshes. Refuge managers identified one 400-acre marsh, called Sonoma Creek, that connects the southern marshes to the northern ones. "As the marsh migrates north, Sonoma Creek will be a corridor for animals migrating north," Marriott says.

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...(Continued from Page 5) The refuge already had plans to restore Sonoma Creek partnership with Audubon California to create vital habitat for Ridgway's Rails. But after seeing Thorne's projections, they incorporated new ideas to help rails survive rising seas, Marriott says. They built small islands (around 400 square feet in area) that sit above the water line, even during the year's highest King Tides, for birds to run onto when water inundates the marsh. They also constructed a mud ramp over the levee, leading from the marsh to dry upland habitat, to provide an additional escape route. Without these dry areas, rails drown when tides or storm surges flood the marsh. Before fully submerging the area, sea level rise will send stronger tides and surges inland, and these occasional floods will threaten birds first.

Farther south, at Seal Beach National Wildlife Refuge near Los Angeles, managers have come up with a different solution to the problem. Like around San Francisco Bay, the land surrounding the refuge is urban and developed; not only does this prevent the marshes from moving inland as sea levels rise, but any rails that flee the floodwaters end up in the city, where they're readily caught by house cats and other predators. So, around 10 years ago, managers there built floating platforms and, during high tides, rails jump up onto them to stay dry. "It's a short term-strategy, but it's a great strategy," Thorne says, and one that could be easily replicated elsewhere.

These changes should help rail populations now, and over the next couple of decades. But additional restoration and management will be needed after that. "That's the reason we've taken so much time and money and partnered with Audubon to enhance this particular marsh," Marriott says. "We will have helped keep these guys alive in the initial stages of climate change and sea level rise." In a few decades, she'll pass off this work to the next cohort of refuge managers, who will use improved climate models to get the birds over the next hump of adaptation.

Even assuming that sea level rise is moderate, by 2110 most California marshes will have no dry areas, or will convert entirely to mudflats, according to the study.

This sort of work will be necessary to maintain marshes up and down California's coast, according to the new study. Even assuming that sea level rise is moderate (around three feet), by 2110 most California marshes will have no dry areas, or will convert entirely to mudflats. Under high sea level rise (nearly four feet), all California marshes and some in southern Oregon will be replaced by mudflats, and some in southern California will become open water permanently, with no tidal activity to speak of.

Farther up the coast, in Washington, marshes are also predicted to grow wetter. But a few will persevere even as those in the south become mud. This is because these marshes don't have cities and other development directly behind them, so they'll be better able to adapt naturally and migrate inland.

"It looks like in the coming century, Willapa and Grays Harbor and other northwestern estuaries might be some of the last remaining salt marsh" on the Pacific coast, says Trina Bayard, director of bird conservation for Audubon Washington. They might become new hotspots for birds migrating up and down the Pacific Flyway. "We need to start thinking about planning ahead of that," Bayard says, "thinking about land acquisition next to existing salt marsh, and looking for opportunities to provide for marsh migration. I think it really speaks to a need for more communication and coordination across the entire West Coast."

Thorne hopes her new work will be a catalyst for these conversations, and guide managers throughout the Pacific seaboard toward a new model of conservation. It's no longer enough to put a fence around important habitat to keep it safe for wildlife; managers need to take initiative to identify and protect areas that will become important habitat in 50 years, and actively alter habitats to make them resilient to coming change.

"That's opportunity," Thorne says. "If you know sea level rise is accelerating as the century moves on, which is what the projections are, then what can we do now so they don't drown later? How can we identify these estuaries that are very resilient to sea level rise?"

For Pacific coast land managers, it's the problem of the century. And now, thanks to this new research, they have the information they need to get to work solving it.

*Hannah Waters is a senior associate editor at Audubon, covering [climate change](#), [conservation](#), and [science](#) news. She's passionate about chickadees and [seabirds](#). Find her on Twitter: [@hannahjwaters](#)*

## ***NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING***



The Annual Meeting and BBQ are scheduled for **Saturday, May 19, 2018 at 11:00 AM**. This is the official notice of that meeting. It will be held at **Church of the Foothills, 6279 Foothill Road, Ventura CA. 93003**. **Directions:** Take Victoria Avenue north to Foothill Road. Turn right onto Foothill Rd. The driveway for the church will be on the left in about one-half mile. The church is hidden from view but, there is a sign.

As usual, we shall do some birding beforehand starting at 9:00 am, likely at Arroyo Verde Park. It will be an opportunity to see portions of the park that have been reopened after the Thomas Fire. Watch for announcements sent via Constant Contact and on our website for specific location and time.

Instead of a BBQ this year, we will have tacos. **Famous Taco Bar** will provide the tacos and will make chicken, pork or fish tacos for us with all the associated fixings! **Please bring your own plates and utensils (to reduce trash) and an appetizer or dessert to share.** You may also bring your own beverage including beer and wine. Famous Taco Bar will provide lemonade and VAS will provide water.

The meeting will start at 11:00 a.m. This is the meeting at which you, the members, elect the board of directors to lead VAS for the next program year. A slate of proposed nominees for 2018-2019 appears below. The Board elects the officers. Several longtime board members are retiring and there will be vacancies among the officers. Nominations may also be made from the floor at the meeting.

The price this year will be \$11.00 per person (adult or child). Please send your reservation with check to Marianne Slaughter at P.O. Box 24198, Ventura, CA 93002 **by May 11th**. Or, you may call Marianne at (805) 484-8415 or Bruce at (805) 658-2396 with your reservation and pay at the BBQ.

### ***Proposed Candidates for 2018-19 Board of Directors***

Debra Barringer  
Deborah Burns  
Frank DeMartino  
Sheryl Dorris  
Adele Fergusson  
Cynthia Hartley  
Sandy Hedrick  
Kaitlyn O'Dea  
Bruce Schoppe  
Janice Susa  
Jim Susa  
Jackie Worden

<b>VAS Officers and Chairs</b>		
<b>Officers</b>		
President	Bruce Schoppe	(805) 658-2396
Vice President	Cynthia Hartley	(805) 795-4115
Treasurer	Marianne Slaughter	(805) 484-8415
Secretary	Joyce Schoppe	(805) 658-2396
<b>Board Members</b>		
Conservation	Sandy Hedrick	(805) 643-2408
Publicity	Jim Susha	(805) 983-3929
CBC	Frank DeMartino	(856) 906-8733
Field Trips	Adele Fergusson	(805) 415-4304
Membership	Deborah Burns	(805) 933-0647
Newsletter	Janice Susha	(805) 983-3929
WSP/CLT Team	Debra Barringer	Unlisted
<b>Outreach</b>	<b>Vacant</b>	
<b>Programs</b>	<b>Vacant</b>	
At Large	John Connor Jackie Worden	(805) 654-1805 (805) 657-2837
<b>Chairs</b>		
Webmaster	Christi Lester	(310) 722-9557
Education	Betsy Bachman	(805) 646-4407
Social Media	Rachael Cavanagh	

**MEMBERSHIP EXPIRATION:** If you are not sure whether your membership has expired, please **email** Deborah at debburns38@gmail.com and she will check it out for you.

**BOARD MEETING:** The next Board of Directors meeting will be on Tuesday, **April 1**. Our meetings are held at Wild Birds Unlimited located at 4020 E. Main Street, Ventura, 805-765-4594. Because the store will be closed, parking is available. VAS members are welcome to attend.

**THE VENTURA AUDUBON SOCIETY** holds its monthly program on the second Tuesday of the month at the Poinsettia Pavilion, 3451 Foothill Rd. in Ventura at 7:30 p.m., September through April. Board Meetings are held bimonthly on the first Tuesday of the month. A membership form is available on the VAS web site. Our May meeting is a barbecue.

**THE CALIFORNIA CONDOR** is published nine times per year (September-May). Members are encouraged to submit articles, announcements, letters and drawings, preferably in WORD format, or in the form of an e-mail message. *The deadline is noon on the 12th of the month preceding the month of publishing.*

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