

The CALIFORNIA CONDOR

Ventura Audubon Society **MARCH 2013** Volume 33 Number 7
A Chapter of the National Audubon www.VenturaAudubon.org



CALL NOTES ...Bruce Schoppe, President

March brings the first days of spring and the beginning of the nesting season for the Western Snowy Plover (and, later, the California Least Tern) on our beaches. The “symbolic” fencing will be going up mid-month at McGrath, Mandalay, Hollywood, and Ormond Beaches. Ventura County beaches are important to the recovery plan for these birds. The fences serve to remind beachgoers that the birds need their space, undisturbed to nest and reproduce. I know that I’m “preaching to the choir” when reminding you that dogs are not permitted on the State Park beaches and must be on leash elsewhere. But, anyone who walks the beaches knows that dogs are allowed to run freely everywhere. We still have a lot of work to do from an education standpoint!

Audubon California has consolidated all of the information surrounding Audubon’s efforts to protect the Western Snowy plover on a website: <http://ca.audubon.org/protecting-western-snowy-plover>.

The problem of educating people about the importance of protecting and restoring threatened and endangered species is not unlike the problem associated with convincing people that global climate change is a problem. At a recent meeting of the Central Coast Audubon Chapters, we were introduced to Brigid McCormack, the newly appointed Managing Director of Audubon California and VP, National Audubon. She came to us from the *Climate Works Foundation* and told us about the Yale Project on Climate Communication. A project of Yale University’s School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, they identified the “Six Americas”. Americans tend to fall into one of six categories to describe their view of climate change from “alarmed” to “dismissive”. The point of their study is that we need to communicate differently with each group. If you are interested, the website is: <http://environment.yale.edu/climate/>.

I’m happy to report that one of our members has volunteered to organize and plan the Field Trips beginning in July. Karen Kerstetter will take over from Judy Dugan who has handled that job very well for eight years. We appreciate Karen’s willingness to help. We are still looking for someone to handle the education and publicity duties. Susan Bee has handled both for several years but they could be separate functions. If you are interested, please call any Board member. Or, talk to Susan to learn more about the duties and time considerations, etc. Remember, VAS is a volunteer led organization and we are only as effective as your willingness to participate.

MARCH PROGRAM ...Audrey Vincent

7:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 12th, Poinsettia Pavilion, 3451 Foothill Road, Ventura

VENTURA RIVER PARKWAY UPDATE

Diane Underhill, Friends of the Ventura River (FOVR) will present an update on the Parkway, the continuous network of parks, trails, and natural areas planned by conservationists for the 16 miles of the river from Ojai to the estuary. Communities along the waterway will be provided new picnic sites, river crossings, recreational areas, wildlife viewing points, and informative exhibits. Restoration of stream banks will result in improved water quality and wildlife habitat.

Diane Underhill, a Ventura native, a graduate of Ventura High School, and Stanford University 1981, currently owns and operates a small antique store on Thompson Blvd. . She has long been active in the community particularly about environmental protection issues.

BIRD OF THE MONTH – MARCH 2013

Article and Photo by David Pereksta

Say's Phoebe (Sayornis saya)



Early spring is when many of our common winter residents depart for points further north, not to be seen again until the fall. However, a common winter resident that breeds in small numbers is the Say's Phoebe.

The Say's Phoebe is a medium-sized flycatcher that is relatively small-headed with longer wings and tail than other phoebes. It is brownish-gray above, darker and browner on the head, and has a black tail. The wings show faint, narrow bars. The throat is pale gray to whitish, the breast is gray, and the belly and undertail coverts are cinnamon to rufous. The song is a fast whistled *pit-tsee-ar* and the call is a plaintive whistled *pee-ur*. It is similar to the female or juvenile Vermilion Flycatcher, but it is longer-tailed, larger, and never as white on the breast.

Say's Phoebes are highly migratory and common in open country throughout western North America in areas with warm temperatures, a lack of dense vegetation, and little rain. While Black and Eastern Phoebes live near water, Say's Phoebes shun it. This species nests in tundra, desert, prairie, fields, and ranchland. Because they do not build mud nests like the Black Phoebe, they seek out rock walls or earthen banks with crevices or ledges to support their nests and will nest under the eaves of a porch or barn. Inhabiting open terrain with few trees or shrubs, they perch on fences, shrubs, or rocks where they scan for low flying insects. Hovering low over fields like bluebirds, they snap their prey from mid-air, off low plants, or from the ground.

The species breeds from Alaska to Saskatchewan south between the coastal ranges and central prairie states to central Mexico. It winters from central California, southern Nevada, southern Utah, central New Mexico, and south Texas to south Mexico. Strays are casual in eastern North America.

Say's Phoebes are widespread in southern California lowlands, including the Channel Islands, in the winter. Formerly nesting throughout the interior portions of the coast including Simi Valley, the Cuyama Valley, and the Sespe area, it is now scarce and uncommon as a breeder. Wintering birds arrive in September and generally depart by mid-March with some lingering into April. They can be found in grassy coastal bluffs, fields, arid scrub, grasslands, and agricultural areas. Common and widespread in season, they occur throughout the county including popular birding spots like the Oxnard Plain, Canada Larga, Rancho Sierra Vista, Lockwood and Ozena Valleys, Lake Casitas, Ojai Meadows, Lake Piru, the Saticoy Ponds, and many other places along the coast and in arid valleys. There are several recent nesting records on the coastal plain (including my house!) so keep an eye out for them during the spring and summer.



MARCH 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, call the trip leader.

Birding Etiquette Reminder: As our walks have many participants, here are some reminders to insure a good experience for all: Stay behind the leader, keep up and move quietly. When socializing stay behind the group as many birds are found and identified by their songs & calls. Ask questions, but also listen to what people are pointing out.

Saturday, March 2, 9:00-12:00 a.m. Restoration Work Day, Santa Paula. Hedrick Ranch Nature Area Restoration Program. Sandy Hedrick: (340-0478). Arrive at 8:00 for birding. We will be assisting in restoration on an adjacent property. **Long pants and boots or closed shoes are required.** Bring water, gloves & sun protection. 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).

Tuesday, March 5, 8:30 a.m. Arroyo Verde Park, Ventura. Leader: Adele Fergusson (415-4304). We'll see woodpeckers & hawks and maybe some early spring migrants. **Directions:** Take Victoria Ave. north, left on Foothill Rd., right on Day Rd. entrance to the park. Meet at the last parking lot by the restrooms.

Saturday, March 9, 8:30 a.m. Canada Larga Road. Leader: Linda Easter (482-7537). Directions: Take Hwy 33 toward Ojai. Exit Canada Larga Rd. Meet near the beginning of the road. We will walk and drive this road looking for raptors, bluebirds, orioles & other early migrants.

Sunday, March 17, 8:30 a.m. Santa Clara River Estuary/Surfers' Knoll. Leader: Alexis Frangis (217-4833). We should see a good variety of shorebirds.

Take Harbor Blvd. to Spinnaker and enter the Ventura Harbor. Follow Spinnaker as it curves around to the right. Surfers' Knoll is on the left. Please bring scopes.

Saturday, March 23, 8:30-10:30 a.m. Beginners' Bird Walk. Fillmore Fish Hatchery/Lake Piru Area. Leader: Allen Bertke (640-9037) 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 and possibly see a condor. Remember to bring binoculars, a field guide, and water. **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 car pool,** 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.

April 19 – 21 Weekend Trip to Carrizo Plain Nat'l Monument & Wind Wolves Preserve: Saturday - Carrizo Plain; Sunday – Wind Wolves
Lodging in Taft: The Caprice Motel (661-765-2161) will start taking reservations for April in mid-March. More information in the April Newsletter.

Mark Your Calendar

Tues. April 2 – Ojai Meadow
Sat. April 6 – Oxnard Earth Day
Sat. April 27 – Beginners' Walk – Ojai, Persimmon Hill



BEGINNERS' BIRD WALK ..Allen Bertke

After two cloudy and rainy days, the skies parted just in time to reveal a sparkling morning for our bird walk at Saticoy Ponds. In and around the front ponds we observed Tree Swallows, Great Egrets, a Blue Heron, Killdeer, several Belted Kingfishers, four Green-winged Teal, Greater Yellowlegs, Least Sandpipers, scaup, some Red-tailed Hawks, a Northern Flicker and more. Early on the walk we spotted a Spotted Sandpiper. Of course, at this time of year it wasn't spotted, but it was still a Spotted.



A few minutes later we got a great view of an American Pipit sitting on top of one of the swallow boxes. Usually these birds are seen on the ground amongst weeds and grasses, making them harder to see. But this one was teed up nicely right in front of us, preening and posing for all to see. Too bad it wasn't vocalizing. Then I could have said "We spotted a perched, posing, preening, peeping pipit." Easy for me to write, but try saying it. I've been practicing, but I still have trouble saying that one without reading it! Go ahead. Try it yourself.

One participant said she had seen a female Common Goldeneye in one of the canals, but it never presented itself to me. I guess that would be called a "non-leader bird". It was paying me back for all of the "leader birds" that I have seen on other walks. These are birds that I usually spot for just a few seconds before they disappear into trees or bushes, leaving no time for anyone else to see them after I call them out, meaning I was the only one who got to see them. Hence the name "leader birds"

We were lucky enough to see a Horned Grebe and also a few Pied-billed Grebes. The latter birds have the amazing ability to squeeze the air out of their feathers and air cavities and sink effortlessly whenever threatened or when just being cautious. One was doing this for us, holding only his neck and head out of the water, doing a perfect periscope imitation. I could imagine his little pied brain thinking "Arm the torpedoes!"

For extra credit, six of us extended the walk to the back ponds. There we saw many Canada Geese, a few Cackling Geese, some Western Grebes, Ruddy Ducks and one lone Double-crested Cormorant. Why is it that cormorants always seem to be looking up when they are floating on the water? Do you suppose they are looking for flying fish?

Thank you all. I hope you had as much fun as I did. See you on the next walk.



STATE PARKS EARTH DAY

Celebrate Earth Day by helping out locally on April 13, 2013 at McGrath State Beach. The event is being planned by Ventura County Supervisors John Zaragoza and Steve Bennett, Southern California Gas Co, Friends of Channel Coast State Parks, and California State Parks. The event will start at 9:00 a.m. and conclude at 3:00 p.m. The goal of the April event is to beautify the campground and other park areas. For more information and online registration, go to www.friendsofccsp.org/celebrate-earth-day-2013-with-us/ or email volunteer@friendsofccsp.org



NOTES FROM THE FIELD

...David Pereksta

There was an abundance of uncommon or rare passerines and other perching birds over the last month. One of the few **Red-naped Sapsuckers** of the season was found in Thousand Oaks on 1 Feb (DP). An **Eastern Phoebe** was at CSUCI 20-27 Jan (RM & AA). The **Plumbeous Vireo** continued in Rancho Simi Park through 7 Feb. Individual **Mountain Chickadees** were in Ojai on 19 Jan and 3 Feb (JG). **Pacific Wrens** were reported from several locations including Lake Casitas on 12 Jan (PL) and Arroyo Verde Park on 6 Feb (CO) although details on the sightings of this very uncommon species were lacking. An **American Dipper** was at the Wheeler Gorge Campground on 21 Jan (ASh). The **Grace's Warbler** continued at Camino Real Park through 20 Jan and other birds there included a **Black-throated Gray Warbler** found on 27 Jan (DP), the continuing **Hermit Warbler** through 19 Jan, and a continuing **Baltimore Oriole** through 11 Feb that was seen with a second bird on 19 Jan (AS & OJ et al.). A **Nashville Warbler**, likely a returning bird from previous winters, was in an east Ventura yard on 18 Jan (RM). Rare in winter, a **Green-tailed Towhee** was at a feeder along Creek Road 26 Jan-3 Feb (ST). A **Swamp Sparrow** continued at Lake Casitas through 3 Feb and **White-throated Sparrows** continued in Ojai through 13 Jan and Thousand Oaks through 7 Feb. A **Summer Tanager** was found at Arroyo Verde Park on 3 Feb (JB) and a **Yellow-headed Blackbird** was near Point Mugu 9-10 Feb (JB). **Red-breasted Nuthatches** and **Pine Siskins** continued in numbers and were reported from too many locations to list.

A variety of waterfowl continued to be reported throughout the county as their winter stays draw to a close. **Brant** appeared in numbers over the last month including 128 at Point Mugu on 24 Jan (DP, AS et al.) and 40 at the Ventura River Mouth on 4 Feb (JB). A **Ross's Goose** and a **Greater White-fronted Goose** continued at Lake Sherwood through 12 Feb and two **Greater White-fronted Geese** were on San Nicolas Island on 29 Jan (DP). One of the few **Wood Duck** reports of the season was of four from Baldwin Road near Ojai on 9 Feb (PL). Two **Blue-winged Teal** were in the Arroyo Simi on 14 Jan (CR), 30 were at Ormond Beach on 18 Jan (OJ & DP), and 2 continued at Conejo Creek through 4 Feb. Three **Redheads** continued in Oak Park through 1 Feb. **Common Mergansers** included four in the Arroyo Simi on 14 Jan (CR) with six there on 3 Feb (MC), one in Santa Paula on 27 Jan (DP & AS), and one in the Ventura Harbor on 29 Jan (PJ). **Hooded Mergansers** were in their usual haunts including three in the Ventura River on 2 Feb (KR), three continuing in the Arroyo Simi through 14 Jan, and two at Rancho Simi Park through 1 Feb.

Point Mugu hosted a number of uncommon and rare species. Continuing birds included a **Snow Goose**, five **Blue-winged Teal**, a **Black Scoter**, three **Common Goldeneyes**, and a **Burrowing Owl** through 25 Jan, two **Eurasian Wigeons** including a new individual and **Red-necked Grebe** through 24 Jan, and a **Reddish Egret** through 30 Jan. A season high of 10 **Red Knots** were there on 25 Jan (DP et al.). An **American Bittern** was outside the base near Point Mugu 9-10 Feb (m. obs.) and two **Vermilion Flycatchers** continued through 10 Feb. A massive flock of seabirds was found along PCH south of Sycamore Canyon on 18 Jan that included approximately 10,000 **Black-vented Shearwaters**, 8,000 **Common Murres**, 210 **Rhinoceros Auklets** and others including a **Pomarine Jaeger** and **Parasitic Jaeger** (OJ & AS). Elsewhere along the coast, a **Franklin's Gull** was at Ormond Beach 14-18 Jan (JB) and a **Black-legged Kittiwake** was offshore Ventura on 10 Feb (JB). Six **Black Oystercatchers** and an **American x Black Oystercatcher** hybrid continued in the Ventura Harbor through 8 Feb.

A pair of **Bald Eagles** was still building a nest at Lake Casitas and a juvenile **Bald Eagle** was also in the vicinity through 10 Feb. Reports of a **Zone-tailed Hawk** continued in the Ojai area with one seen in town on 23 Jan (JG) while another was in Santa Paula on 26 Jan (CRu). A **Ferruginous Hawk** was along Canada Larga Road 5 Jan-9 Feb (ETG), a continuing **Golden Eagle** was there through 10 Feb, and a **Burrowing Owl** was there through 12 Feb.

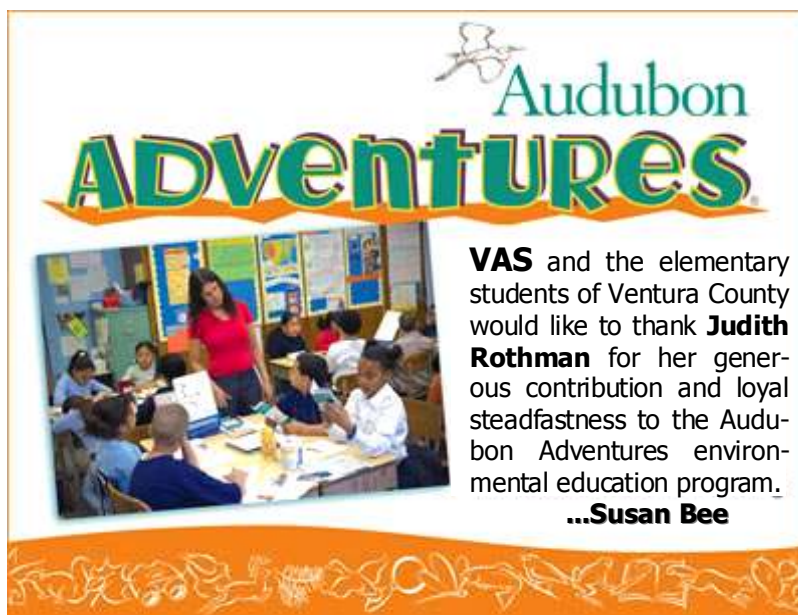
Early trips to the local mountains turned up some uncommon species. A **Ferruginous Hawk** was in Lockwood Valley on 22 Jan (JB) and three were in the Ozena Valley on Feb 6 (DP). **Northern Pygmy-Owls** were found at Wheeler Gorge Campground on 27 Jan (JB et al.) and near Pine Mountain on 6 Feb (DP). Quatal Canyon hosted a **Williamson's Sapsucker** on 22 Jan (JB) and eleven **Mountain Bluebirds** on 6 Feb (DP). A **Townsend's Solitaire** was at Reyes Creek Campground, where they can be regular in the winter, on 22 Jan (JB). **Common Poorwills** have been active in the Santa Monica Mountains this winter including two at Sycamore Canyon on 31 Jan (JB).

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), call or e-mail David Pereksta at pereksta@pacbell.net or 659-5740.

Observers: Allison Alvarado, Joel Barrett, Madison Christian, Jesse Grantham, Oscar Johnson, Penny Johnson, Peter Larramendy, Robert McMorran, Chet Ogan, David Pereksta, Kay Regester, Chris Rios, Craig Rudolph, Adam Searcy, Alison Sheehey, Elisa Taylor-Godwin, and Sarah Termond.

VENTURA AUDUBON SOCIETY

P.O. Box 24198
Ventura, CA 93002



VAS and the elementary students of Ventura County would like to thank **Judith Rothman** for her generous contribution and loyal steadfastness to the Audubon Adventures environmental education program.
...Susan Bee

VAS OFFICERS AND CHAIRS

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	Audrey Vincent	525-5826

MARCH BOARD MEETING

The Tuesday March 5th Board of Directors meeting will be held at the home of Laura Gulovsen, 157 Madera Ave. Ventura at 7:15 p.m. Call 805-652-6544 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: deepress2@gmail.com Call Editor Dee Press at 484-8415 for more information.



RIGHT IN OUR OWN BACKYARD

As most of you are aware, **VAS** suspends activity from May through August each year. Here are some possible opportunities for your enrichment during that time.

Tentative Summer Program at Wheeler Gorge Visitor Center 2013

May 11	Birds of the World	Erin Koski	11:00AM
May 18	Camp/Hike For Beginner's	David Sisolak, 2 programs	11-1:00
May 25	Wildlife/Conservation	Gordie Hemphill	10:30AM
June 1	Nature Walk	Julie Tumamait	10:30AM
June 8	Hike/Backpack For Experts	David Sisolak, 2 programs	11-1:00
June 15	Wildlife/Conservation	Gordie Hemphill	1:00PM
June 22	Naturalists	Alexa Hohensee/Jennifer Gray	10:30AM
June 29	Humane Society	Dawn Reily	11:00AM
July 6	Reptiles	Tom Hagan	11:00AM
July 13	Bears	Kelly Swedlow	11:00AM
July 20	Dinosaurs	Richard Wade	10:30AM
July 20	Day of the Meteors	Mike Havstad	1:00PM
July 27	Humane Society	Dawn Reily	11:00AM
Aug 3	Naturalists	Alexa Hohensee/Jennifer Gray	10:30AM
Aug 10	Bugs	Phil Phillips	10:30AM
Aug 10	Bats	Kris Mashburn	1:30PM
Aug 17	Volcanos	Richard Wade	10:30AM
Aug 17	Geology	Mike Havstad	1:00PM



Wheeler Gorge Visitor Center's rustic appearance and shady locale make it an inviting stop.

Wheeler Gorge Visitor Center

17017 Maricopa Highway

Ojai, CA 93023

Telephone: (805) 640-9060


Directions

To reach Wheeler Gorge Visitor Center from Ventura take Highway 33 towards Ojai at the "Y" intersection (by the Vons shopping center) turn left on Hwy 33 for 8 miles. From the Carpinteria area, take Hwy 150 east until you connect with Hwy 33 and turn left at the intersection.

Hours of Operation

The Wheeler Gorge(ous) Visitor Center is currently opened from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. every Saturday and Sunday, except Thanksgiving and Christmas.

RIGHT IN OUR OWN BACKYARD



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Thursday and Friday
March 7-8, 2013 7-9:30PM

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TIX: \$10 Each Night or \$15 for Both Nights
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