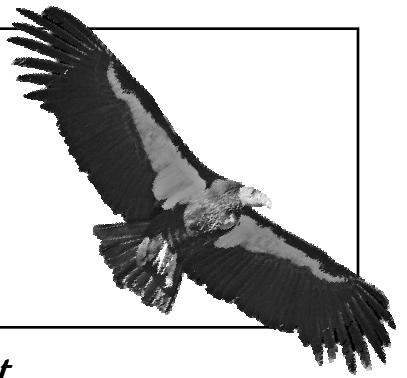


# *The* **CALIFORNIA CONDOR**

Ventura Audubon Society **MAY 2012** Volume 32 Number 9  
A Chapter of the National Audubon [www.VenturaAudubon.org](http://www.VenturaAudubon.org)



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

### ***.Migrations***

With the conclusion of the 2011-12 program year, there are some changes in store among the Board and its volunteer members who organize and manage our activities.

Most notable is that Art Marshall will step down as a Board member after more than 30 years of service to VAS. Art is one of the founders of VAS and has served on the Board since 1980. He served as President from 1985 until 1997 and as membership chair from 1986 until 2011. He has helped set up and organize our participation in many events including the Ventura County Fair, 4<sup>th</sup> of July Street Parade, Earth Day, and others. For many years, his special project was the cutting and drilling of 500 or more bird feeders that were assembled by kids and their parents at Earth Day in Oxnard. Art has, in many ways, been Mr. VAS. We appreciate his many years of service and wise counsel!

Janice Susha will step down as Program Chair, also at the end of the program year. For seven years, Janice has scheduled the very interesting programs that we enjoy every month. Managing the list of new and repeat speakers, their usually busy schedules and our meeting dates has, often, been challenging. She and Jim have

also made sure we had top notch video projection including the recently upgraded HD projector. She and Jim will remain on the Board.

To manage next year's programs, we have turned to a triumvirate. Knowing we were having difficulty finding a new Program Chair, longtime member Laura Gulovsen volunteered. And with her came Margaret Wilson and Audrey Vincent. Laura will join the Board but they will share the work. They have some good ideas for programs in addition to what has already been planned. If you have any ideas for programs that you think would be of interest to the membership, please contact Laura, Margaret, or Audrey. We appreciate their willingness to take on this important role.

This is the last issue of the year. We have enjoyed some wonderful programs and field trips. Our conservation and education programs have been successful, too.

Thank you to all the Board members and others who have contributed time and talent to our important work. There will be summer birding walks on Mondays. Check this newsletter (Page 6), the online web page, and Facebook for more information. Good birding!

### ***ANNUAL YEAR-END MAY PICNIC & MEETING***

All members are invited to the **Annual Meeting & BBQ on Saturday May 19, 2012**. IT WILL BE HELD THIS YEAR AT ARROYO VERDE PARK (5000 FOOTHILL RD. IN VENTURA, VISTA BLUFF PICNIC AREA). The cost is \$10.00 per person (half price for children). There is a parking fee on weekends (\$2.00 per hour, maximum of \$5.00 per day)—collected as you leave. Consider car pooling.

Nancy and Carl Schorsch will get us started with a bird walk beginning around 8:30 am. Around 11:00 am, we'll conduct a short business meeting to elect directors. Then, we'll eat! There will be BBQ tri-tip and chicken, garlic bread, salad and beans. Members attending are asked to bring an appetizer or dessert to round out the meal. Please bring your own table service and, if you bring a dish, please bring serving utensils. Soft drinks will be provided. Unfortunately, beer and wine will NOT be available and we cannot bring our own. The City requires insurance which VAS does not have and which is very expensive to buy.

Everyone is invited to the picnic. We hope to see new faces as well as the stalwarts! Please join with other VAS members to celebrate another successful year – and to enjoy the birds and wildflowers of Arroyo Verde Park.

**Please RSVP as early as possible** by sending your check (indicating that it is for the picnic) to the VAS post office box, or call or email Marianne Slaughter (484-8415, [birderz1@roadrunner.com](mailto:birderz1@roadrunner.com)) or Bruce Schoppe (658-2396, [bschoppe6698@sbcglobal.net](mailto:bschoppe6698@sbcglobal.net)). You may also pay at the door but please do **RSVP so that we will have enough food**.

## BIRD OF THE MONTH – MAY 2012

*Article and Photo by David Pereksta*

### *Greater Roadrunner (*Geococcyx californianus*)*



The summer months are coming, which are a great time to get out and hike trails through the hills of Ventura County. Any hike through arid, brushy habitat has the potential to yield the well-known Greater Roadrunner.

The Greater Roadrunner is a shaggy-looking large bird with a very long tail and neck; a large, long, pointed bill; and a short, ragged crest. At a distance, it appears mostly grayish and heavily streaked with dark on the neck, breast, back, and wings. When seen closer, the upperparts and tail show iridescent blue-greens and bronze. The rest of the underparts are off-white. There is a bright blue-and-red elongated patch behind the eye, but this trait is lacking in young birds. The legs are blue-gray and have heterodactyl feet (two toes forward; two toe backward). Though it is rarely seen in flight, the rounded wings display a white crescent in the primaries. The most commonly heard call is a mournful *coo, coo, coo, ooh, ooh, ooooh, ooooh* with each note slurring downward and lower in pitch than the preceding note. It also makes a rapid clacking noise with its bill.

No other bird is more associated with the southwest than the Greater Roadrunner. It is a unique, ground-dwelling, crested cuckoo that escapes predation and pursues its prey of reptiles, birds, rodents, and invertebrates by running rapidly on long, sturdy legs. While typically associated with deserts, the species is also found in chaparral, grasslands, open woodlands, agricultural areas, and even moist woodlands in the eastern part of its range in the U.S. It is often seen running at speeds up to 15 miles-per-hour with its neck outstretched and tail held parallel to the ground; it may stop suddenly, raise its neck, then pumping its tail up, letting it fall slowly before pumping it again.

The species is resident from northern California east to southwestern Missouri, western Arkansas, and northwestern Louisiana, and south into Mexico. A permanent resident, some birds (young?) may wander considerable distances.

In Ventura County, Greater Roadrunners are uncommon residents in desert scrub, coastal sage scrub, chaparral, and other brushland habitats. They can be encountered in appropriate habitat at Rancho Sierra Vista, Sandstone Peak, Wildwood Park, Cal Lutheran University, Camarillo Regional Park, Canada Larga Road, Rose Valley, Cuyama Valley, Quatal Canyon, the Santa Clara River Valley, Rustic Canyon, and in the Ojai Valley. Wary and easily overlooked, they are best found in spring when males reveal their presence with mournful calls that resemble the whimper of a puppy.



## *MAY 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.

**A Special Thanks to all our leaders this year!  
You are invaluable!**

**Saturday, May 5, 8:00 a.m. Hedrick Ranch Nature Area, Santa Paula.** Leader: Sandy Hedrick (340-0478). We will bird this lovely area with the possibility of seeing Least Bells Vireos, Yellow-breasted Chats, & a Thick-billed Kingbird. Long pants and boots or closed shoes are suggested. **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). **To carpool,** meet at 7:30 a.m. at Pacific View Mall, Coastal View Entrance off Mills Rd., park in the lot directly across from the parking garage entrance.

**Monday, May 7, 8:30 a.m. Lake Casitas.** Leader: Adele Fergusson (415-4304). We should see egrets, herons, and spring migrants. **Directions:** **To car pool,** meet at the Museum of Ventura Co., 100 E. Main, (side parking lot) at 8:00 a.m. 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.

**Saturday, May 12, 8:30 a.m. Taft Gardens, Ojai.** Leader: John Pavelko (640-9040). Rain-out Reschedule. Limit 25. VAS members given preference. You will need to re-register. Registration begins Thurs. 5/3 at 9:00 a.m. E-mail Judy [catmai03@yahoo.com](mailto:catmai03@yahoo.com) or call 642-0842. **Directions:** Please carpool. From Ojai, meet at Nordoff H.S. at 8:15. From Ventura, meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Museum of Ventura Co, 100 E. Main (side parking lot). Take Hwy. 33 to Hwy. 150 (Baldwin Rd.). Turn left onto Hwy 150 and go for 2.4 miles, crossing over the Ventura River and past the entrance to Rancho Matilija housing development on the right. One-fourth mi. past the entrance you will come to a bend w/an unmarked

road (a group of mailboxes & a short wall), turn right and proceed through the entrance gate. This is a private road. Stay on the main road & avoid disturbances to the neighbors. After the 2<sup>nd</sup> creek crossing, the parking lot will be ¼ mile ahead. Meet there.

**Sunday, May 13, Tejon Ranch, 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.** Leader: Ranch Staff. Pre-registration required. This loop usually has many wildflowers and birds through the fields and gullies along the Antelope Valley side of the ranch which is located off Hwy. 138. There are no restrooms (at least none w/walls or paper). No smoking or dogs. Specific instructions & directions will be given to those registered. **To car pool,** meet in Ventura at the Buena H.S. lot directly across from the post office at Telegraph & Wake Forest at 6:45 a.m. & from Ojai meet at the Park'n Ride lot at Ojai Ave & Fox at 6:45 a.m.

**Saturday, May 19, 8:30 a.m. Arroyo Verde Park.** Leaders: Carl & Nancy Schorsch (643-5825). Bird/Plant Walk followed by the Annual Meeting & Picnic! \$10.00 for lunch. Meet at the last parking lot with restrooms on the left. The park is at Day Rd. and Foothill Rd. in Ventura.

**Saturday, May 26, 8:30 – 10:30 a.m. Beginners' Bird Walk, Canada Larga Road.** Leader: Allen Bertke (640-9037). **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 Blue Grosbeaks, orioles, swallows & maybe a Lazuli Bunting. Bring binoculars, a field guide, hat & water.

**Check the Newsletter, Page 6, for summer birding on Mondays.**

Your next issue will arrive in late August. Many thanks to all our contributors, including proofreaders Susie Williams, Bruce Schoppe, and Marianne Slaughter!

Dee Press, Editor

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

Emma Wood Park provided our beginner's bird watching group with a surprisingly large array of ducks for so late in the season. We observed Red-breasted Mergansers, Northern Shovelers, Buffleheads, Green-winged Teal, Mallards, Ruddy Ducks and of course the omnipresent coots. There was also a Pied-billed Grebe, Eared Grebe and Western Grebe as well as a gathering of Brants.

Along the shoreline we saw several Black-bellied Plover, sans the black bellies, a number of Ruddy and Black Turnstones, turning over seaweed rather than stones, and some Sea Lions playing in the surf.

As we were gazing at the turnstones, Larry pointed toward the water line at a small peep and said "Next to that tennis ball, what do you think that is?" "Probably one of our two most common sandpipers", I said. "I think it's a Wilson's", he said. "Wilson's Sandpiper"? "No. Wilson's Tennis Ball". "Oh". I said. "I was leaning more toward a Spalding". We eventually compromised and just called it green. By the way, at least we agreed on the sandpiper. It turned out to be a Least.

Other than a Mew Gull, some California Gulls and a giant flock of Western Gulls, we didn't really see many other species. Although it was rather a slow day for birding, it was still fun and we all had an enjoyable outing. Birding, like life, needs to be taken with a grain of salt. Of course if you mix it with a slice of lemon and a shot of tequila, everything gets much better.

### **ON TO THE FUTURE!**



We have made a big decision! The Board decided at its April meeting to **discontinue printing and mailing the newsletter after December 2012**. We think there are better ways to spend the nearly \$4,000 it costs to print and mail the newsletter each year. We'll still have a monthly newsletter but it will only be available online and by email delivery.

This was not a snap decision. We've been thinking about it for a long time. The cost of the newsletter is a significant part of our annual budget. The cost of paper and printing continues to go up. And, in January, the postal service will implement some additional requirements that make its delivery even more difficult and expensive.

The newsletter has been available in electronic form for several years and we have encouraged members to sign up. In addition to earlier delivery, it is in full color and you can print a copy if you wish. Currently, about 175 members receive their newsletter in this manner.

If you do not now receive the newsletter electronically, please send an email to **Jackie Worden**, Membership Chair, at [jbworden7@gmail.com](mailto:jbworden7@gmail.com) to request an email copy. Sending an email to Jackie is the best way to assure that she gets the correct email address.

Of course, the newsletter will continue to be available on the website. Alexis and Socrates Frangis will soon unveil a redesigned website. The Facebook page Alexis created is very successful. Many people use Facebook regularly and several who have found a VAS field trip or meeting that way also became members. Alexis has also set up a *PayPal* account on the website that can be used for joining, renewing or contributing! In addition, we plan to explore the use of email based communication service. You may already receive emails from organizations that use such programs. Jim Susha is spearheading this effort. We'll be able to tell you of meetings and field trips in a timelier manner. And, be assured, VAS will never share or sell your email address or any other personal information about its members.



## NOTES FROM THE FIELD

...David Pereksta

Spring migration is now in full swing and numbers of birds are streaming north through Ventura County. Raptors, shorebirds, flycatchers, vireos, warblers, grosbeaks, orioles, and others have been widely reported thus far and hopefully are foretelling an exciting few months of migration ahead of us.

A number of migrant **Swainson's Hawks** were reported over the last month including one individual on 1 Apr and two on 7 Apr from east Ventura (RM), two over the Ojai Meadows Preserve on 2 Apr (JG), one over Highway 33 in east Ventura on 6 Apr (JG), one over Oak View on 7 Apr (MA), and one over Canada Larga Road on 11 Apr (FD). This species is normally very uncommon in the spring so this many sightings are exceptional.

Migrant passerines have been moving north through the county and a few wintering birds continued to linger. The last day for the **Eastern Phoebe** that wintered in Camarillo was 4 Apr. **Hammond's Flycatchers** are an uncommon migrant in the spring so notable was an individual at Sisar Canyon on 6 Apr (MP) and two at Wheeler Gorge on 13 Apr (DP). The first **Bell's Vireo** of the season was reported from the Hedrick's Preserve in Santa Paula on 29 Mar (AS). A **Plumbeous Vireo** singing in Oak Park on 8 Apr may have been an individual that wintered in that vicinity at Mae Boyar Park (DC). A pair of **California Gnatcatchers** was at CSUCI on 24 Mar (AS et al.). Rare in winter were two **Lapland Longspurs** that were with a flock of **Horned Larks** at Ormond Beach 21-22 Mar (AS). A **Black-and-white Warbler** was at Bubbling Springs Park 2-16 Mar (DC) and likely wintered there. A **Swamp Sparrow** in a yard in Ojai 13 Mar-6 Apr (JG) was an unusual location for that species. A **White-throated Sparrow** continued at a feeder in Lake Sherwood through 7 Apr. Twenty-four **Lawrence's Goldfinches** at Rancho Sierra Vista on 30 Mar (DP) was an unusually high count for the Santa Monica Mountains.

Early **Common Poorwills** were calling at Hill Canyon on 24 Mar (AS) and at Lake Sherwood on 2 Apr (MH). A **Red-naped Sapsucker** was reported from Ventura on 30 Mar (JP). Lowland reports of **Hairy Woodpeckers** came from the Hedrick's Preserve on 29 Mar (AS), the Buenaventura Golf Course on 30 Mar (DP), and Canada Larga Road on 13 Apr (DP).

Waterfowl and other waterbirds continued to be reported over the last month. The most exceptional sighting was that of a **Curlew Sandpiper** on the Oxnard Plain on 6 Apr (LS) that was seen briefly and could not be subsequently relocated. A **Snow Goose** was at the Santa Clara River Estuary on 15 Mar (JA). Ducks of note included a **Wood Duck** in the Arroyo Simi in Moorpark 14-30 Mar (MC), 11 continuing **Blue-winged Teals** at Point Mugu through 16 Mar and 10 near Point Mugu on 7 Apr (DP & LS), a **Redhead** at Rancho Sierra Vista on 30 Mar (DP), and three continuing **Black Scoters** at Point Mugu through 16 Mar.

Two **Greater White-fronted Geese** and the **Eurasian Wigeon** continued at Arroyo Simi Park through 2 Apr (MC). Individual **Least Bitterns** were reported at Matilija Lake on 19 Mar (MP) and at the Ojai Meadows Preserve on 6 Apr (JG). At least three **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons** continued at Point Mugu through 16 Mar and three **Thayer's Gulls** continued at Bubbling Springs Park through 16 Mar. Early arriving **Elegant Terns** included four at the Channel Islands Harbor on 11 Mar (NV) and two at Point Mugu on 16 Mar (DP). A **Black Skimmer** was seen at Point Mugu on 16 Mar (DP) and two were at the Ventura River Estuary on 17 Mar (KR).

Other continuing birds included the **Red-necked Grebe** in the Ventura Harbor through 6 Apr, the **Burrowing Owl** there through 14 Mar, and two **Pacific Golden-Plovers** along Arnold Road through 17 Mar.

Thank you to those who reported sightings during the last year. 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: John Adams, Michael Allen, Dennis Cabral, Madison Christian, Dan Cooper, Frank DeMartino, Jesse Grantham, Mary Hansen, Robert McMorran, Matthew Page, David Pereksta, Jim Philpott, Kay Regester, Chris Rios, Larry Sansone, Adam Searcy, and Norm Vargas.

## **VENTURA AUDUBON SOCIETY**

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### **AUDUBON SUMMER BIRDING**

We will meet for 7 Mondays from 8:30-10:30. All level of birders are welcome. We are fortunate that Allen "Leader Bird" Bertke (805-640-9037) will lead the walks!

\***June 11** Ojai Meadow Preserve: Take Hwy 33 toward Ojai & follow it to Nordoff H.S. The Preserve is signed; parking spots available on street. Or carpool from the Museum of Ventura Co., 100 E. Main (side parking lot), at 8 a.m.

\***June 18** Canada Larga: Hwy. 33 toward Ojai; exit Canada Larga Rd. Meet near beginning of road.

\***June 25** Steckel Park-Santa Paula: Entry fee; car pool 8 a.m. from Starbucks on Telegraph Rd. in Victoria Shopping Plaza or meet 8:30 at park. Ojai-Santa Paula Rd.-Santa Paula.

\***July 2** Surfer's Knoll: Meet in the parking lot across from Ventura Harbor.

\***July 9** Ennisbrook Nature Trail, Montecito: Carpool at 8:00 from side parking lot parking lot at Museum of Ventura Co. North on 101, exit San Ysidro Rd.; turn right (N) toward mountains. Right at San Leandro Lane; follow San Leandro through left/right jog, continue until you see a white picket fence and a pump house on the left (N) side of road. Park there.

\***July 16** Arroyo Verde Park-Ventura: Day & Foothill Dr. Meet in the back area.

\***July 23** Carpinteria Salt Marsh: To car pool meet at the rear parking lot of the Ventura Museum at 8:00. Take Hwy. 101 N to Carpinteria- exit Casitas Pass Rd.- right on Carpinteria Ave., left on Linden, right on Sandyland Rd. to Ash. Park along Ash. This will be our last outing & we have been invited to bring a sack lunch & beverage to Debby Burn's ocean front home. Details later.

### **VAS OFFICERS AND CHAIRS**

President	Bruce Schoppe	658-2396
Vice-President	Neil Zeigler	983-7207
Secretary	Joyce Schoppe	658-2396
Treasurer	Marianne Slaughter	484-8415
Conservation	Sandy Hedrick	643-2408
Field Trips	Judy Dugan	642-0842
Publicity/Education	Susan Bee	640-0779
Science/Webmaster	Reed Smith	652-0706
Programs	Janice Susha	983-3929
At Large:	Jim Susha	983-3929
	Jack Gillooly	646-3867
	John Connor	654-1805
	Jan Lewison	339-0644
	Nancy Schorsch	643-5825
	Art Marshall	642-1585
	Alexis Frangis	217-4833
<b>Non Board:</b>		
Membership &	Jackie Worden	652-0577
Newsletter Mailing		
Newsletter Editor	Dee Press	484-8415

### **MAY BOARD MEETING**

The Tuesday, May 1st Board of Directors meeting will be held at **6:00PM** at **CBC Federal Credit Union Conference Room, 2151 E. Gonzales Road, Oxnard**. Note change of time and place.

**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 Call Editor Dee Press at 484-8415 for more information.