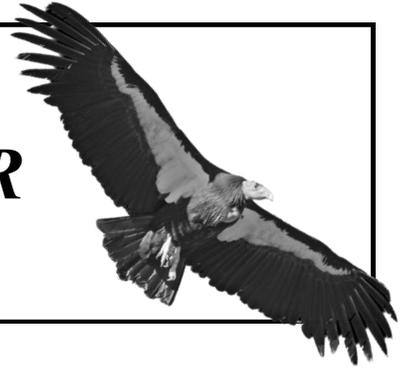


# *The* **CALIFORNIA CONDOR**

Ventura Audubon Society **February 2018** Volume 42, Number 6  
A Chapter of the National Audubon [www.VenturaAudubon.org](http://www.VenturaAudubon.org)



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

The Christmas Bird Count, delayed two weeks by the Thomas fire, is complete, although Frank has some follow-up work to do before finalizing the count. As of count day, we had 175 species which equals our long-term average. We may add a couple as Frank gathers the remaining information. The results should be especially interesting since more than half the count circle was burned by the Thomas fire. The fact that the number of species was “average” is encouraging – birds can get out of the way of fire. Thanks to all who participated.

Frank enlisted a number of new participants, many of whom counted birds in their backyards near the burn areas. Cynthia Hartley and Adele Fergusson were also able to access part of the Rancho Ventura Conservation Trust land at their invitation. The hilltop land is within the count circle. We appreciate the opportunity to include that land on count day. The count circle also includes some of the properties managed by Ventura Land Trust (formerly, Ventura Hillside Conservancy) with whom we have long collaborated. We appreciate having both as partners.

We have heard stories of mouse and rat proliferation adjacent to the burn areas and of evidence that homeowners may be using anticoagulant rat poisons. Such materials can also mean death for birds and larger mammals that consume the dead rodents. There are alternatives. <https://diabloaudubon.org/WhoWillSaveUs-E.pdf>

Some suggest that cats be used to manage the rodent population. Outdoor cats also kill birds! In fact, there are studies that show that cats kill [billions](#) of birds each year. Discussions of this subject can be emotional, to say the least!! An interesting article on the subject appeared in the November – December issue of *National Wildlife* magazine. Click on link to read: <https://www.nwf.org/Home/Magazines/National-Wildlife/2017/Oct-Nov/Animals/The-Cat-Conundrum>

We believe the best option is to encourage owls to populate the area. Consider putting up an owl box, one sized for barn owls. Plans and specs are available online or you may obtain one at Wild Birds Unlimited stores.

## ***FEBRUARY PROGRAM***

**From Victorian Hats to Modern Beaches, Audubon Activism Then and Now**  
*7:30 p.m. Tuesday, February 13 Poinsettia Pavilion, 3451 Foothill Road, Ventura*  
*By Cynthia Hartley*

We often hear how the Audubon Society began in response to the slaughter of millions of water birds. Join our VAS chapter vice-president, Cynthia Hartley, for an overview of the origins of the Audubon Society 100 years ago. Then we'll move forward in time and look at modern day least tern and snowy plover conservation work at Ormond and Hollywood Beaches. Learn about life and death in the dunes, and the work done by our current day activists to help protect our nesting shorebirds.

Cynthia has worked with western snowy plover and California least tern conservation at Ormond Beach since the mid-1990s. She has a master's degree in geographic information science (GIS) from the University of Maryland and teaches GIS (computer mapping) at CSUCI. She is also a member of the Ormond Beach Scientific Advisory Committee that advises The Nature Conservancy, The City of Oxnard and the California Coastal Conservancy as they plan for the Ormond Beach Restoration project.



## NOTES FROM THE FIELD

...David Pereksta

Three **Ross's Geese** were at Lake Casitas on 30 Dec (KK et al.) and four were along Casper Road on 24 Dec (JM). **Snow Geese** included 1 at Point Mugu on 5 Dec (JP & AP), 8 there on 16 Dec (RM), 11 along Casper Road which likely included the ones seen earlier at Point Mugu on 24 Dec (JM), and 3 at the Santa Clara River Estuary on 28 Dec (NA). Eight **Cackling Geese** were at Rancho Simi Park on 27 Dec (DP & SP) and three continued at Lake Piru through 15 Dec. Rarely seen in the county, a **Tundra Swan** made a brief stop at Point Mugu on 8 Dec (AP). **Blue-winged Teal** reports included 16 at Point Mugu on 16 Dec (DP et al), 1 in the Arroyo Simi on 27 Dec (DK), five at Camarillo Regional Park on 31 Dec (BH), and as many as 3 continuing at the Ventura Settling Ponds through 30 Dec. **Redheads** were reported from several locations including 13 at Lake Sherwood on 2 Dec (MH), as many as 4 at Lake Eleanor 14-16 Dec (KR, LE), 2 at Camarillo Regional Park 15-16 Dec (JM), 2 near CSUCI 16-21 Dec (JB), 1 at Point Mugu 16-22 Dec (DP et al.), and 1 at the Fillmore Fish Hatchery on 31 Dec (JM). As many as seven **Greater Scaup** were in Mugu Lagoon 15-29 Dec (AP, JP, DP). A **Black Scoter** was in Mugu Lagoon 11-31 Dec (JP) and a **White-winged Scoter** was at Pitas Point on 30 Dec (DP). A **Red-necked Grebe** at Point Mugu 15-31 Dec is likely a returning wintering bird from the past 5 years (DP).

As many as four **Reddish Egrets** continued at Mugu Lagoon through 31 Dec. **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons** continued through the end of December at the Ventura Settling Ponds with a high of five there on 24 Dec (AS). The **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** population at the Point Mugu Naval Base is steadily increasing and 50 were recorded there on 16 Dec (DP et al.). Three **Red Knots** continued at Point Mugu on 1 Dec with no more than two seen throughout the rest of the month and a **Ruff** continued near Point Mugu through 31 Dec. Seven **Iceland (Thayer's) Gulls** were at Point Mugu on 16 Dec (DP et al.) and three were at the Ventura Harbor on 30 Dec (DP). **Black Skimmers** numbers dwindled in Mugu Lagoon to 15 birds on 1 Dec and 6 by 15 Dec.

Continuing **Bald Eagles** included one at Point Mugu and elsewhere on the Oxnard Plain through 29 Dec, two at Lake Piru through 31 Dec, and the pair at Lake Casitas through 30 Dec. A **Ferruginous Hawk** was in Piru 18-29 Dec (DS).

A **Lewis's Woodpecker** remained near Lake Sherwood through 29 Dec (MH). Two **Red-naped Sapsuckers** were at the Steelhead Preserve near Casitas Springs on 30 Dec (JG et al.). Continuing **Red-naped Sapsuckers** included one at Krotona in Ojai through 17 Dec and another at Lake Casitas through 30 Dec. The **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** along Canada Larga Road was reported through 3 Dec. The **Tropical Kingbird** at Calleguas Creek was reported through 31 Dec. As many as 6 **Vermilion Flycatchers** continued at Point Mugu through 22 Dec and another **Vermilion Flycatcher** was at River Ridge Golf Course on 25 Dec (GP). The **Pacific Wren** at Rincon Creek continued through 2 Dec. Three **Mountain Bluebirds** were at Point Mugu 13-31 Dec (AP). Two **Lapland Longspurs** continued at Point Mugu through 16 Dec. A surprising late-season find was a **Bay-breasted Warbler** at Sycamore Canyon on 1 Dec (DP & MR). The **Black-and-white Warbler** continued at Valle Lindo Park in Camarillo through 31 Dec. A **Clay-colored Sparrow** was in a Ventura yard through 30 Dec (RM). A **Baltimore Oriole** returned for another winter at Chumash Park and was seen 30-31 Dec (JM).



Landbirds discovered during the Thousand Oaks CBC included a **White-winged Dove** in Camarillo on 16 Dec (CS & CL), and another **White-winged Dove** in Camarillo 16-31 Dec (LH), a **Dusky-capped Flycatcher** (second county record!) at CSUCI 16-31 Dec (JB), a **Golden-crowned Kinglet** at Borchard Community Park 16-23 Dec (CB et al) with a second one there 20-23 Dec (AS), a **Sage Thrasher** along Calleguas Creek on 16 Dec (SB & JM), a **Palm Warbler** at Point Mugu on 16 Dec (DP & TM), a **White-throated Sparrow** at Los Robles Golf Course on 16 Dec (DK, CK & TM), and a **Yellow-headed Blackbird** at Point Mugu on 16 Dec (DP).



## ***FEBRUARY 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.

### **Saturday February 3 2018, 9 a.m. Work Day Fillmore Fish Hatchery**

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

This is a new venue for restoration planting for the balance of this work season. Planting native plants for a future interpretive center on 5 acres at the entrance to the Fish Hatchery. There will be opportunity to do some birding around the outside of the hatchery structure before work starts at 9. Just like at HRNA long pants and closed shoes are required. Bring water, gloves, and sun protection.

**Directions:** Meet at the Fish Hatchery which is located to the right off Highway 126 just 1.2 miles East of Fillmore and 26 miles from Ventura.

### **Saturday February 10, 2018, 8:30 a.m. Canada Larga.**

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

We will drive and walk as we bird this beautiful canyon road and one of our best birding hotspots.

**Directions:** From 101 N, take the 33 and exit Canada Larga Road. Meet at the beginning of the road. **IMPORTANT NOTE:** This is a fairly busy county road, so please use good birding etiquette. Do not stop your car in the middle of the road and always bird from the shoulder. Target birds will include: Red-shouldered Hawk, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Nuttall's Woodpecker and White-breasted Nuthatch.

### **Saturday, February 10, 2018, 8:30 a.m. Carpinteria Salt Marsh.**

**Leader: Rocky Ludes (805) 208-9648**

The Salt Marsh Reserve on Ash Ave. is an excellent birding location due to the estuary, wetlands and upland habitats. Special birds of concern can be found here, including Belding's Savannah Sparrow and Clapper Rail.

**Directions:** To car pool, meet behind Carrows on Harbor Blvd next to the gas station at 8:00 a.m. sharp. Take HWY 101 North, Exit Casitas Pass Road. and turn left (south). At Carpinteria Ave., turn right, then left on Linden and right on Sandyland Road. to Ash. Park along Ash.

### **Monday February 19, 2018, 8:30 a.m. Barranca Vista Park**

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

This is a beautiful barranca and park. We hope to see townsend warblers, nuthatches and red shouldered hawk. We will start at the park and walk up to Kimball park right below the 126 freeway and then walk back on the west side of the barranca. The walk is flat and approximately 2 miles. The birding varies, for the Christmas bird count we saw over 40 species.

**Directions:** Meet at the Barranca Vista Park building on Ralston. You can park in the Barranca Vista Park parking lot or on Ralston

# ***GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT***

## ***FEBRUARY 2018***



Cooper's Hawk  
By Jim Susha, 1992

Launched in 1998 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, the Great Backyard Bird Count was the first online citizen-science project to collect data on wild birds and to display results in near real-time.

Now, more than 160,000 people of all ages and walks of life worldwide join the four-day count each February to create an annual snapshot of the distribution and abundance of birds.

We invite you to participate! For at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count, February 16-19, 2018, simply tally the numbers and kinds of birds you see. You can count from any location, anywhere in the world, for as long as you wish! Or, join us on Monday February 19, 2018, 8:30 a.m. at Barranca Vista Park with [Adele](#) Fergusson (805) 415-4304.

If you're new to the count, or have not participated since before the 2013 merger with eBird, you must [create a free online account](#) to enter your checklists. If you already have an account, just use the same login name and password. If you have already participated in another Cornell Lab citizen-science project, you can use your existing login information, too.

In 2017, Great Backyard Bird Count participants in more than 100 countries counted more than 6,200 species of birds on more than 180,000 checklists!

During the count, you can explore what others are seeing in your area or around the world. Share your bird photos by entering the photo contest, or enjoy images pouring in from across the globe. You can even add photos and sounds to your checklist. [Read more.](#)

Your help is needed every year to make the GBBC successful!

Then [keep counting throughout the year with eBird](#), which uses the same system as the Great Backyard Bird Count to collect, store, and display data any time, all the time.

*The Great Backyard Bird Count is led by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, with Bird Studies Canada and many international partners. The Great Backyard Bird Count is powered by [eBird](#). The count is made possible in part by founding sponsor [Wild Birds Unlimited](#).*



## *Year of the Bird*

### **HOW BIRDS BIND US**

*Mark Jannot is the vice president of content for Audubon, and the Editor-in-Chief of Audubon magazine.*

In such a divisive age, those things with feathers bring people together in so many inspiring—and creative—ways.

Just a few years ago, in the fall of 2014, Audubon released our Birds and Climate Report, which used data from the Christmas Bird Count and breeding bird surveys to project that more than half the bird species in North America would face serious peril from the effects of global warming in the coming decades. The news hit hard, and not just among the cadre of dedicated bird lovers you'd expect to recoil at such an announcement, but among a far vaster population: the bird likers, the bird curious, even the *Birds? I barely notice them except in the spring when they start singing again in the tree outside my bedroom window* people.

It seems that even when self-interest isn't enough to rouse ourselves to action against an amorously intractable foe like climate change, there's something about imagining its impact on *birds*—about conjuring a future in which that birdsong outside the window fails to return one spring—that breaks through. And it breaks through in a way that can bust up the carved-in-granite tribal political loyalties that seem to characterize our current age. In our research after the study came out, we discovered that a great many people who reject the proposition that humans are the primary drivers of climate change are actually willing to support actions to mitigate its effects when they learn that doing so might help protect birds.

Around the same time the Audubon Report was released, I made the acquaintance of a young art dealer who had opened a small storefront gallery in the northern reaches of west Harlem. Avi Gitler, I learned, had also just begun commissioning artists to paint birds on the roll-down security gates that guard businesses during off hours in the neighborhood around his gallery. Why birds? Because the gallery happened to be located in the same general patch of northern Manhattan where John James Audubon himself had spent the last 10 years of his life (along with the entirety of his afterlife, buried in Trinity Church Cemetery just a few blocks north of Avi's place).

Inspired by Gitler's vision, and still imbued with the passion for action that reading the Audubon Report (*half of all North American birds!*) tends to spark, I heedlessly proposed that we partner up and get artists to paint murals not just of birds but of *climate-threatened* birds—and not just the dozen or so that Gitler had envisioned, but *all 314 species* that Audubon's science had shown to be at risk. And so the Audubon Mural Project was born. The first artist Gitler had commissioned had already finished his mural—of an American Flamingo: not a climate-threatened species. So the artist came back and painted it over with a don't-mess-with-me rendering of a Tundra Swan. In the three years since, we've painted birds—82 so far, and the pace is accelerating—all over John James's old stomping grounds. And not just on security gates, but on doors, walls, and the sides or even façades of six-story buildings.

Of the 61 artists who have participated, I'd say most would not have called themselves ardent bird lovers, but the plight of the birds is certainly what inspired them. There's something about birds—their beauty? Their grace? Their tenacity?—that pierces the heart and spurs the imagination. (On one of the many mural tours I've led for classes of early-elementary-school students, I gestured toward the top of a six-story mural and asked if the first-graders had any idea how the artist might have managed to get all the way up there. Immediately, and with utter certainty, one young boy shouted, "Flew on the back of a really big eagle!")



We pride ourselves in solid science as we work with our partners to move the conservation needle forward for the benefit of the fish, wildlife, plants, habitats, and people of the central and Southern California coast. This year, we have many successes to celebrate.

For the first time in nearly 70 years, we saw western snowy plovers nesting on beaches in Los Angeles County, a testament to the perseverance of land managers who work to educate beachgoers and implement on-the-ground restoration.

Along with our state partners, we rescued a population of rare fish from near certain extinction from the damaging effects of wildfire. We then released them back into the wild where they have since been documented successfully breeding.

We worked alongside volunteers within our community to document bird and marine mammal mortalities along our coastline, which provided critical data during a domoic acid event and continues to help us understand the long-term impacts of the Refugio oil spill.

With our partners at the University of California, we broke ground on a restoration project to convert a former golf course into a productive wetland, which will not only provide habitat for wildlife, but will provide a place for visitors to enjoy and explore nature.

We worked diligently and collaboratively with a private landowner to develop and implement vigorous conservation measures for a plant species once thought to be extinct and currently a candidate for listing under the ESA.

And, we approved the first Conservation Bank bordering San Benito and Santa Clara counties, which will permanently protect more than 2,000 acres of habitat for two rare amphibian species while a family's ranching legacy lives on.

At the end of a robust year of conservation, we can be proud that our passion and perseverance made a difference for the living things that call this beautiful stretch of coastline home. It is because of the tenacity, grace, and enthusiasm of our team, that I am so proud to work for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Thank you.

Stephen P. Henry  
Field Supervisor, Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office



### **...NOTES FROM THE FIELD** (Continued from Page 2)

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: Noah Arthur, Joel Barrett, Stacey Bergman, Catherine Bourne, Linda Easter, Jesse Grantham, Linnea Hall, Mary Hansen, Bruce Henderson, Chrystal Klabunde, Don Klabunde, Karl Krause, Carol Langford, Justina Martelli, , Teodelina Martelli, Robert McMorran, John Mueller, Andrew Partin, David Pereksta, Sandy Pereksta, Giles Pettifor, Jeremiah Psiropoulos, Martin Ruane, Karen Rusch, Adam Searcy, Debbie Senechal, and Cayenne Sweeney

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

#### **Saturday February 24, 2018 8:30 a.m. Ormond Beach**

**Leader: Tevin Schmitt (661) 904-1563**

Join us at this excellent coastal location, where we will look for a variety of waterfowl. We should see Willets, Whimbrels, Black-necked Stilts, Black-bellied Plovers and other interesting birds. We will also look for Peregrine Falcon, and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers. Dress in layers, as the morning may be chilly. Please bring a scope if you have one.

**Directions:** From Ventura, take Hwy 101 south and exit on Rice, turn right and continue to Hueneme Road. Turn right on Hueneme Road. After Olds Road. take a left on Arnold and continue to the end of the road. **Please note:** Avoid leaving valuables in your car if you are parking it at the end of Arnold Road. **To car pool, meet at 8:00 a.m.** behind Carrows, next to the gas station, located in the Vons Shopping Center at the corner of Harbor and Seaward. If there is time afterwards, and at the leader's discretion.

### **...HOW BIRDS BINDS US** (Continued from Page 5)

The way the artists and the entire community in upper Harlem have come together around the murals (and have spread the word about the threats to birds) has been inspiring, but it really shouldn't be seen as surprising. Not, at this point, to me anyway. In the nearly five years I've served as the editor-in-chief of *Audubon*, I've seen a zillion amazing and wide-ranging examples of people coming together and rallying around birds, from volunteers with New York City Audubon monitoring (and, when necessary, shutting down) the memorial 9/11 spotlights to save migrating birds, to people recreating habitats and even entire islands for their benefit, to using them as aids for bringing struggling veterans back from the brink.

Even the Christmas Bird Count whose data made the climate report possible is a tremendous example. There's something extraordinary about the eager willingness, for 118 years now, of tens of thousands of Americans to give of themselves—their time, their attention—to benefit science, our understanding of the world, birds. But then again, are they sacrificing? Of course not. I suspect that the number of humans who have participated in a Christmas Bird Count and have felt diminished by the experience can be expressed in a single digit, and I further suspect that said digit is a zero.

That's why I'm excited about Year of the Bird—excited for everyone who signs to take action this year on birds' behalf. We and our partners at National Geographic, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and BirdLife International have assembled a full slate of monthly calls to action—opportunities to participate in community science projects, information on easy steps to a bird-friendlier home, even simple suggestions for how to turn a child into a lover of nature. None of them are arduous in any way, but neither are any of them small. Birds inspire us and have an almost magical way of bringing us together—and when we act together on behalf of birds, we can accomplish truly meaningful things.



<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
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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>	
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At Large	John Connor Jackie Worden	(805) 654-1805 (805) 657-2837
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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](mailto:debburns38@gmail.com) and she will check it out for you.

**BOARD MEETING:** The next Board of Directors meeting will be on Tuesday, **January 2**. Future meetings will be 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 Oxnard at 7:30 p.m., September through April. The May meeting is a barbecue. Call the President for information. Board Meetings are held bimonthly on the first Tuesday of the month. A membership form is available on the VAS web site.

**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.*

