

The CALIFORNIA CONDOR

Ventura Audubon Society **MAY 2015** Volume 35 Number 9
A Chapter of the National Audubon www.VenturaAudubon.org



CALL NOTES ...Bruce Schoppe, President



May brings the end of another Ventura Audubon Society program year. So, the first order of business must be to thank all those who supported VAS by contributing time, energy and treasure. Without you, we wouldn't have programs, a newsletter, field trips and all the other things that VAS does.

Thank you especially to the Board and committee members who have contributed many hours to Ventura Audubon. Board and committee chairs are listed at the end of the newsletter. Please take a moment to thank them for their service. Two members of the Board are retiring this year: Neil Ziegler and Judy Dugan will step down at the end of their terms in June. Both have served a long time and contributed significantly to birding and the conservation of birds and habitat. Thank you!

Please plan to attend the Annual Meeting and BBQ on Saturday, May 16, 2015 **at a new location**. The Annual Meeting will be at Church of the Foothills, 6279 Foothill Road in Ventura at 11:00 am, followed by a catered BBQ. Cost is \$14.00, half price for children. Please see the details in this newsletter. Birding will precede the event at 9:00 am at the Atwater Ranch on Foothill Road west of the intersection with Victoria Avenue.

Finally, we have plover and tern nests on the beaches and we need your help. Many beachgoers do not understand the reasons for the symbolic fencing and the need to allow these birds to remain undisturbed. Some don't accept that there should be any restrictions on their use of the public beach. That's where you come in.

We need volunteer docents. Docents help people learn how to "Share the Shore" with plovers and terns. Given the history of unregulated access to many of our sites, a variety of people use the beach for a variety of acceptable and unacceptable recreational activities. Many people are simply unaware of the impacts of their activities. Public education is intended, over time, to minimize the unacceptable practices without diminishing the acceptable ones and to implant the idea that our beaches are used and relied upon for survival by species other than humans. Docents are an essential component to successful management and recovery of threatened and endangered species. Alexis Frangis is organizing the docent program through State Parks. She has scheduled a training program for new docents on May 2nd and June 7th.

Please see the details in this newsletter (Page 5) and plan to attend. We have had a dozen or so stalwarts the last two years but, more are needed.

*Enjoy summer bird watching
trips with Allen Bertke...
See Page 5 for dates!*



NOTES FROM THE FIELD

...David Pereksta

MARCH 2015

March is often a slow month for birding locally as most of our wintering species are lingering, but starting to depart, while northbound migrants are just starting to trickle in. However, this March brought a few unexpected rarities to our area. The most exciting find during March was Ventura County's first **Neotropic Cormorant** at a private pond on the Oxnard Plain 26-27 Mar (LS & DP). This was only the second coastal record of the species from southern California with the other just occurring last October in San Diego County. This species is now a regular breeding species in the Imperial Valley near the Salton Sea so coastal records may increase.

Wintering waterfowl diminished noticeably in March, but a few notable species lingered. A **Eurasian Wigeon** continued at Conejo Creek North Park through 17 Mar. Wintering **Blue-winged Teal** remained in many places including one at the Ventura Settling Ponds through 29 Mar, 11 at Point Mugu through 20 Mar, 2 on the Oxnard Plain through 29 Mar, 10 at Ormond Beach through 28 Mar, and 2 in the Arroyo Simi through 9 Mar. A **Redhead** was at the Ventura Settling Ponds 1-15 Mar (DP) and four were in the Santa Clara River Estuary on 19 Mar (CK & DK). Thirteen **Greater Scaup** continued at Mugu Lagoon through 20 Mar and 1 remained at the Ventura Settling Ponds through 27 Mar.

Wintering waterbirds, waders, and shorebirds continued during March with a few new birds showing up that may have been overlooked earlier in the season or perhaps they were early northbound migrants. A **Red-necked Grebe** was found at Point Mugu during a Ventura Audubon field trip on 20 Mar (DP et al.) and the wintering individual was seen in the Ventura Harbor through 21 Mar. A **Brown Booby** was seen again on Anacapa Island 17-29 Mar (JB). Seven **American White Pelicans** were at Mugu Lagoon on 20 Mar (DP, MR et al.) and five remained at the Santa Clara River Estuary through 19 Mar. An **American Bittern** was near Round Mountain 7-8 Mar (JM) and another was near Point Mugu on 29 Mar (DP). Two **Reddish Egrets** continued at Mugu Lagoon through 15 Mar and **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons**, which are now breeding locally, continued at Point Mugu through March. The wintering **Sandhill Crane** remained on the Oxnard Plain through March. Three **Common Gallinules** continued at the Ventura Settling Ponds through 15 Mar with one remaining through 28 Mar. Another **Common Gallinule** was at the Santa Clara River Estuary on 21 Mar (BH). Two **Ruffs** were a surprise find on the Oxnard Plain 12-21 Mar with one continuing through 31 Mar (LS). Eight **Red Knots** continued at Mugu Lagoon through 20 Mar.

Uncommon raptors and other birds of prey were sparsely reported again this month, but the following were notable. **California Condor** reports included two at Lake Piru on 2 Mar (JH & MH), seven near Hopper Mountain on 20 Mar (TM) and one north of Fillmore on 28 Mar (AS, GJ & DM). Northbound **Swainson's Hawks** included two over Canada Larga Road on 11 Mar (BH) and another in the Ojai Valley on 19 Mar (DB et al.). The nesting **Bald Eagle** pair continued at Lake Casitas through March. A **Short-eared Owl** was at Mugu Lagoon on 24 Mar (AS & DP).

Migrant landbirds were starting to appear in March, but most of the species highlighted here were those likely overwintering. A **Lewis's Woodpecker** was in Ojai 29-31 Mar (DR & BO), four were on Mount Pinos on 13 Mar (DP), two were at the Mount Pinos Campground on 31 Mar (BH), and three continued at Lake Sherwood through 29 Mar. A pair of **Vermilion Flycatchers** continued at Point Mugu through March where it appeared they are going to nest for a second consecutive year. The **Tropical Kingbird** at Point Mugu remained through 20 Mar. A **Summer Tanager** was in Camino Real Park on 18 Mar (SR), which may be the same bird that was seen in early Jan. A **Swamp Sparrow** continued on the Oxnard Plain through 9 Mar and two others were found in the same vicinity on 29 Mar (DP). A **Yellow-headed Blackbird** was on the Oxnard Plain on 27 Mar (DP). An **Evening Grosbeak** was at a feeder in Thousand Oaks 10-12 Mar (fide SL).

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>

Good birding,

Observers: Joel Barrett, David Bell, Joanie Hubinger, Bruce Henderson, Mark Hubinger, Gareth Jones, Chrystal Klabunde, Don Klabunde, Scott Logan, Teodelina Martelli, Judy Matsuoka, Dan Maxwell, Becky Oliver, David Pereksta, Steve Ritt, David Roine, Martin Ruane, and Larry Sansone



MAY FIELD TRIPS ...Karin Kersteter

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.

Saturday, May 2, 8:30 a.m. Ojai Meadow Preserve. Leader: Allen Bertke (805) 640-9037. The Preserve is a birder's paradise, with restored, native plants, natural wetlands, cattail marshes and plenty of birds. Expected species include kingbirds, yellowthroats, Red-Winged Blackbirds, Bullock's Orioles, Ash Throated Flycatchers, Western Bluebirds and White Tailed Kite. We will meet at the entrance sign. **Directions:** 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 the nearby high school or church, if necessary. **To car pool,** meet at the parking lot behind Carrows at the Vons Shopping Center at Harbor and Seaward at **8 a.m.**

Tuesday, May 5, 8:30 a.m. Ventura Settling Ponds. Leader: Adele Fergusson (805) 415-4304. The Settling Ponds at the Ventura Harbor is a reliable place to find ducks, gulls and geese. We will also look for spring warblers, such as Orange-crowned, Yellow and Nashville Warblers, as well as Black-headed Grosbeak. **Directions:** take Harbor Blvd to Spinnaker Dr and enter Ventura Harbor. Turn left on Angler, just before Spinnaker curves to the right. Park in front of the gate (there is a sign that says "Birder Parking." You are permitted to park on the red curb here. Meet in front of gate.

Saturday, May 9, 8:30 a.m. Hedrick Ranch Nature Area. Leader: Sandy Hedrick (805)340-0478. A special day of birding at the ranch! **NOTE: This is not a work day!** We will look for Least Bell's Vireos in the willows, along with other spring specialties, such as Blue Grosbeak, Black-headed Grosbeak, Yellow Warbler and if we are lucky, we may even see the elusive Yellow-breasted Chat! We will be birding along the recently dedicated Reed Smith Memorial Trail. Bring water, hats, field guides and sun protection. **To car pool,** meet at the parking lot behind Carrows at the Vons Shopping Center at Harbor and Seaward at **8 a.m.** **Directions:** Take Hwy 126 to Santa Paula, 10th St. Exit. Go under freeway, right on Harvard, right on 12th and cross the Santa

Clara 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).

Saturday, May 16, Annual Meeting & BBQ. See Page 4 for more information.

Saturday, May 23, 8:30 a.m. Wheeler Gorge Campground. Leader: Kay Register (805) 652-1073. Abundant insects and running water in Wheeler Gorge make for some excellent birding in this scenic area. Target species include: Western Wood Peewee, Black-headed Grosbeak, Bullock's and Hooded Orioles, Yellow Warblers, and Pac-Slope Flycatchers. Feeders at the nearby visitor's center give close-up views of Black-chinned Hummingbirds and Steller's Jays. Bring insect repellent, water, hat, sunscreen and your field guide. **Directions:** Car pool 7:30 a.m. from Ventura Museum, 100 E. Main (side parking lot). Car pool 8:00 a.m. from Nordoff H.S. in Ojai. **Directions:** From Ventura, take Hwy 33 towards Ojai. At the "Y" intersection, turn left on Hwy 33 and go past Matilija Springs through 2 tunnels (about 8 miles) & meet at the campground entrance.

Saturday, May 30, 8:30 a.m. Beginner's Bird Walk, Canada Larga Road. Leader: Allen Bertke (805) 640-9037. Spring is the most exciting time of year to bird and drive this long county road. Target species will include Warbling Vireo, Black-headed Grosbeak, Barn Owl, Bullock's and Hooded Orioles, Lark Sparrow, Roadrunner, Phainopepla, and various species of swallows and raptors. Special emphasis will be placed on locating Blue Grosbeak and Lazuli Bunting, and perhaps a Bell's Vireo. We will also look for various flycatcher species, including Ash-throated Flycatcher and Pacific-slope Flycatcher. This is a public county road...please use good birding etiquette. Pull completely off the road when stopping, and do not stand in the middle of the road. **Directions:** Take Hwy 33 toward Ojai. Exit Canada Larga Rd and turn right. Meet near the beginning of the road. Bring binoculars, a field guide, hat & water.



BEGINNERS' BIRD WALK ...Allen Bertke

Last month's beginner's bird walk was at the end of Arnold Road, leading to Ormond Beach. We were greeted by Walter, the ever-present steward of the area, who gave us some pointers on where to look. We got some great views of nesting Black-necked Stilts and some flocks of the D birds – no, not ducks, but Dunlins and Dowitchers.

That's not to say that there weren't any ducks. We saw Northern Shovelers, Wigeons, Ruddy Ducks and Cinnamon Teal in relative abundance. There were also barn, tree and rough-winged swallows. No Cliff Swallows that day. I love the story of the Mission San Juan Capistrano Cliff Swallows that supposedly come in from Argentina on the exact same morning of March 19th every year. I think it's on one of those Saint's days – Saint Swallow's Day, maybe?

Coots, doves, egrets, starlings, blackbirds, sandpipers, Black-bellied Plovers, Whimbrels, Song and White-crowned Sparrows, a Marsh Wren, Northern Harriers, Avocets, and one very cute Snowy Plover were among the 42 species seen that day. We looked hard for the Bald Eagle that had been spotted a couple of weeks prior, but no such luck.

Speaking of large raptors, I saw one of those little Smart cars in the parking area. (How's that for a seamless segue to nowhere? Trust me. I'll tie it in.) Those Smart cars are too scary for me. They look so fragile. I understand half their sales come from customers leaning too hard against the car and totaling it. The "If you break it, you buy it" rule. Since the new hybrid ones are so quiet, I think they would make a great mobile blind for bird watching. Only thing is, I'm afraid it might look more like a meal than a blind to a big raptor, and I might get carried off by a Golden Eagle. (See? I told you I would come full circle.)

Smart cars are easy turning vehicles. To make a left turn, all you need to do is stick your open palm out the window and it will turn on its own. They get great gas mileage, but the initial models were only 37hp. When I popped the hood on one of them I was in for a surprise. Evidently, "hp" stands for hamster power. 37 little hamsters on their wheels were looking up at me! At least it has environmentally friendly emissions. If you decide to buy a Smart car don't get a brown one. That Golden Eagle may swoop down on you thinking your car is a rabbit on steroids – yet another way to total the car.

See you on the next walk – Smart car owners welcome.

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING

**The Annual Meeting of the Ventura Audubon Society will be held:
Saturday, May 16, 2015 at 11:00 AM
Church of the Foothills
6279 Foothill Road, Ventura, CA**

If you plan to participate in the birding before the Annual Meeting, please gather at the Church at 8:45 am on May 16 to carpool to the site. Parking is very limited at the entrance to Atwater Ranch.

The annual meeting is followed by a BBQ lunch available for \$14.00 per person (\$7.00 for children). The menu will include chicken, tri-tip, veggie beans, two salads, garlic bread and special steamed vegetables for our vegetarian members. If you would like the vegetarian menu, please order when you make your reservation. 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. VAS will provide water. If you wish to have the BBQ, reservations are required by May 8, 2015. You may call Marianne or Bruce with your reservation and pay at the event.



The Agenda includes election of directors for the 2015-2016 Program Year. The candidates for Director recommended by the Nominating Committee are listed below. Nominations from the floor will also be accepted.

Adele Fergusson
Alexis Frangis
John Connor
Laura Gulovsen
Sandy Hedrick
Karin Kersteter

Joyce Schoppe
Bruce Schoppe
Marianne Slaughter
Janice Sussha
Jim Sussha
Jackie Worden

VOLUNTEER DOCENTS NEEDED!

Ventura Audubon is seeking volunteer docents to assist with educational efforts on beaches in Ventura County where Snowy Plovers are beginning to nest right now. The beaches where docents can serve include Ormond, Hollywood, Mandalay and San Buenaventura State Beach. The most critical times are early mornings, early evenings and weekends, especially holiday weekends. Docents function as a positive ambassador who greet the public and interpret information about western snowy plovers, California least terns and their habitat to beach users, record basic data and interpret site rules and regulations to the public in ways that encourage visitors to voluntarily comply with those rules.

Docents help people learn how to share the beach with plovers and terns. Given the history of unregulated access to many of our sites, a wide variety of people use the beach for a host of acceptable and unacceptable recreational activities. Many people are simply unaware of the impacts of their activities. Public education is intended, over time, to minimize the unacceptable practices without diminishing the acceptable ones and to implant the idea that our beaches are used and relied upon for survival by species other than humans. Once people have begun to learn, they can begin to care. People who understand why they should care about the birds are more likely to change their behavior.



The Beach Docent position is an essential component to successful management and recovery of threatened/endangered species. We welcome your help. In addition, there are many other tasks we could use help with at Ormond Beach, such as fence maintenance or visitor and dog metrics.

Time and Dates: 9-12 noon Saturday, May 2, 2015 or Sunday, June 7, 2015.

Location: California State Parks Channel Coast District Office, San Buenaventura State Beach, 911 San Pedro St, Ventura. Upon entrance please let the person in the kiosk know you will be attending the training and he/she will show you where to park if you have not been here before.

For more info please contact: Alexis Frangis at 805-585-1852, or email: Alexis.Frangis@parks.ca.gov or Cynthia Hartley, email: 1surfbird@gmail.com

We ask that trainees commit to a 2 hour shift at either State Parks beaches, Hollywood Beach or Ormond Beach on a weekly basis.

SUMMER BIRDING TRIPS with Allen Bertke



Plan to join us for 7 Mondays from 8:30-10:30. We will once again be led by the lively & knowledgeable Allen Bertke.

*June 8- Ojai Meadow Preserve. If you want to car pool meet at the downtown museum (100 E. Main) rear parking lot at 8:00. Take HWY 33 toward Ojai & follow it to Nordoff H.S. Park in north part of lot.

*June 15- Canada Larga. Take HWY 33 toward Ojai, exit Canada Larga Rd. Meet near the beginning of the road. We will walk & drive.

*June 22- Arroyo Verde Park in Ventura-Day and Foothill Rd. Meet in the back area.

*June 29- Carpinteria Salt Marsh. To car pool meet at the downtown museum back lot at 8:00. Take HWY 101 North to Carpinteria, exit Casitas Pass Rd., rt. on Carpinteria Ave. left on Linden & rt. on Sandylane Rd. to Ash. Park along Ash.

*July 6- Surfer's Point. Meet across from Ventura Harbor.

*July 13- Ennisbrook Nature Trail, Montecito. To car pool meet at 8:00 at the rear parking lot of the downtown museum (100 E. Main). Head north on US 101 and exit at San Ysidro Rd., turning right (north) towards the mountains. Turn rt. at San Leandro Lane, then follow San Leandro through a left/right jog & continue until you see a beige picket fence and a pump house on the left (north) side of the road. Park on both sides of the road.

*July 20- Surprise destination. Meet at the Marina Village Center/Carrows Restaurant parking lot, 2401 Harbor Blvd., Ventura. Park in left hand section in vicinity of Chase Bank-2497/2499. Look for people with binoculars. We will car pool to nearby private property for an unexpected treat. You must meet here & car pool in order to gain admittance.

VENTURA AUDUBON SOCIETY

P.O. Box 24198
Ventura, CA 93002



This is the last newsletter for the VAS year 2014-2015. The new VAS year (2015-2016) and your next newsletter, will begin in September, with submissions for the September edition due August 1, 2015.

My deepest appreciation and thanks to regular contributors: David Pereksta; Bruce Schoppe; the Program Committee; Laura Gulovsen, Audrey Vincent, and Margaret Wilson; Allen Bertke, Karin Kersteter; and regular proofreaders Susie Williams and Marianne Slaughter! It takes a village....

Enjoy the summer!

Dee Press, Editor

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	Karin Kersteter	901-2203
Publicity	Jim Susha	983-3929
Webmaster/Science	Alexis Frangis	217-4833
Membership	Jackie Worden	657-2837
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	John Connor	654-1805
	Janice Susha	983-3929
	Judy Dugan	642-0842
Newsletter Editor	Dee Press	484-8415
Program Committee:	Laura Gulovsen	642-6544
	Margaret Wilson	647-7962
	Audrey Vincent	525-5826

If you are not sure if your membership has expired, please **email** Jackie at jbworden7@gmail.com and she will check it out for you.

BOARD MEETING: There will be a Board of Directors meeting on **Tuesday, May 5th** at the Schoppe's, 4875 Mascagni St. in Ventura. Call (805) 658-2396 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 Oxnard at 7:30 p.m., September through April. The May meeting is a barbecue. Call the President for information. Board Meetings are held bi-monthly 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 **10th** of the month preceding the next issue.* E-mail to: deepress2@gmail.com.