

# *The* **CALIFORNIA CONDOR**

Ventura Audubon Society **NOVEMBER 2013** Volume 34 Number 3  
A Chapter of the National Audubon [www.VenturaAudubon.org](http://www.VenturaAudubon.org)



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

Birding is Good for You. Well, being in the outdoors for whatever reason is good for you. An article by John Carey in a recent issue of the National Wildlife Federation magazine *National Wildlife* pointed to several studies and anecdotal evidence that being outdoors helps people live longer lives. The article mentions some seniors in New Mexico that stay fit by regularly hiking above 10,000 feet, led by an 82 year old. And, I think we have seen evidence of this within VAS where many of our members continue to enjoy field trips well into their 80's and even 90's!

Of course, we know that exercise, whether indoors or outdoors, is good for us. Too many of us spend way too much time in front of the TV. And, many kids grow up watching TV and playing video games rather than playing outdoors. This has led to epidemic obesity and other health issues.

I know that I enjoy our field trips. The exercise isn't always aerobic but, still, we're moving and breathing fresh air. The people are fun and the trips that walk on the beach provide a heck of a workout for the legs, sloging through soft sand. Searching and listening for birds and trying to identify species can be intellectually stimulating. I have a heck of a time remembering all the field marks and their seasonal variations! But, I learn every time out. Ventura County hosts well over 300 species at various times during the year. And, lately -- especially this year, we have been treated to a number of rare and unusual visitors.

Ventura Audubon conducts nearly 50 field trips each year attended by more than 1,000 people. But, many of the attendees are the same people week after week! And, there are not many kids -- which surprises and concerns me. We know that instilling respect for and love of nature in youngsters is important and part of our mission; yet, we appear to be failing!

Our field trips are scheduled nearly every Saturday and some Tuesdays for those who may have other commitments on Saturday. All are led by experienced birders, and birders of all skill levels are welcome on any walk. The most avid birders often bring scopes which help to bring the birds even closer. One of the walks each month is designated as a "Beginners' Walk", even though birders of all skill levels are welcome on that one as well. Allen Bertke is always interesting. He brings binoculars for those who don't have them and his voice is amplified so you can hear his descriptions (and, jokes)!

Many of our 750 members have never been on a field trip. Join us! It may even help you live longer!

## ***NOVEMBER PROGRAM- "Population Status of the Western Snowy Plover"*** ***7:30 p.m. Tuesday, November 12th, Poinsettia Pavilion, 3451 Foothill Road, Ventura***

**ANDREA JONES**, Coastal Program Director for Audubon California, leads the shorebird conservation efforts and works with the network of Audubon chapters across the state to implement conservation projects at high priority Important Bird Areas (IBAs). Andrea received her M.S. in Wildlife Conservation/Ornithology and her B.S. in Wildlife Biology and Management from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

Andrea's program will focus on conservation efforts along the California Coast for the threatened Western Snowy Plover. She will highlight the beaches where Audubon chapters are engaged in conservation efforts, from restoration to education on their breeding and wintering sites. The historic and current population status of the snowy plover population will be discussed, highlighting successful conservation efforts as well as challenges in their recovery. Overall, Andrea will also highlight the importance of coastal beaches and estuaries to migratory shorebirds along the Pacific Flyway.

***...Margaret Wilson, Program Committee Co-Chair***

## ***BEYOND BASICS ...Article and Photos by David Pereksta***

### ***Introduced Species in Ventura County: Which Ones Are Established, Which Ones Are Not, Who Decides, and Welcome to the Nutmeg Mannikin***

Birders who maintain lists of the birds they see can easily keep track of species native to the areas they bird in, but knowing what is countable or not can get confusing when accidental or introduced species are involved. The AOU, ABA, and state checklist committees all have criteria and a process for determining which species are “countable” and when it comes to introduced species we may see on a day-to-day basis, they are not treated equally. While each birder’s list is their own, if they are going to submit their list totals to the ABA, compete with other birders, or try to compare their lists to others including big days and big years, there are rules regarding the countability of introduced species.

The California Bird Records Committee (CBRC) has criteria for adding introduced species to the state list. The CBRC reviews records of breeding populations of introduced species not on the state list and will add them if they are proven to be viable. To be judged viable, a population must: (i) have bred in the state for 15 consecutive years, (ii) in general, be increasing or stabilized after an initial period of increase, (iii) be judged to have occupied all geographically contiguous suitable habitat to such a degree as to sustain the population and be thought unlikely to significantly diminish, and (iv) occupy an environment judged similar enough in ecological factors (e.g., climate, vegetation, food, shelter, competitors, predators) to the species’ natural habitat, or to other successful introductions, that permanent establishment seems likely. They are pretty conservative about adding introduced species due to the ephemeral nature of many introduced populations; a good example of which is the Spotted Dove, which has all but disappeared from most of its formerly established range in southern California including Ventura County. When a species does meet the thresholds described and is added to the state list, the ABA will subsequently evaluate whether it meets their criteria for addition to the ABA list.



Spotted Dove



Nutmeg Mannikin

The CBRC recently reviewed the status of the Nutmeg Mannikin and found that it met the criteria for addition to the California list. The ABA also added it to their list immediately thereafter. Since the CBRC considered the species established in Ventura County, it is now the latest addition to the Ventura County list. Introduced species that are established and considered countable in Ventura County based on their local status and acceptance on the California checklist are Chukar, Wild Turkey, Rock Pigeon, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Spotted Dove (if there are any left), Red-crowned Parrot, European Starling, House Sparrow, and Nutmeg Mannikin. Introduced species present in Ventura County, but not established or countable include Mute Swan, Ring-necked Pheasant, Nanday Parakeet (and a variety of other parrots and parakeets), Orange Bishop, and others.

While some of these species are countable elsewhere in the ABA Area, or in the case of the Ring-necked Pheasant countable elsewhere in California, they are not established or self-sustaining locally and do not warrant inclusion on the county checklist.

The countability of introduced species is a hot topic amongst birders with three general camps. Some count the species accepted by the States/ABA/AOU, others count everything they see, and others refuse to count any introduced birds (The No Introduced Birds (NIB) crowd). Listers are certainly attracted to adding as many species to their list as possible, but others are concerned over the potential environmental damages caused by introduced species and are cautious of being champions for them in any way. Whether you count them on your list or not, keeping track of free-flying introduced species in the wild via eBird or other means will help to understand their patterns of establishment and population growth. As a result, other introduced species may find their way on to the checklist in the future based on careful tracking and understanding of their status and distribution, and potential environmental consequences.



Nanday Parakeet



## *NOVEMBER 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.**

**NEW trip! Sat Nov 2, 8 a.m. Arroyo Hondo, Santa Barbara.** Join us as we explore a beautiful, private reserve. A docent-led hike will begin at 10am and last until noon. We are encouraged to bring our lunches and spend the rest of the afternoon exploring if desired. We should see a wide variety of birds due to the riparian habitat (lagoons, canyons, streams and oaks). RSVP to [venturabirding@yahoo.com](mailto:venturabirding@yahoo.com) required. Carpooling will be strongly encouraged to minimize cars. To carpool, meet at the Museum of Ventura Co., 100 E. Main St. (side parking lot) at 8:00 a.m. We will caravan to the preserve (about an 1 ½ hour drive).

**Sunday, Nov 3, Restoration Work Day, Santa Paula. Hedrick Ranch Nature Area Restoration Program. Sandy Hedrick: (805)340-0478.** Arrive at 8:00 for birding which usually yields some interesting birds. **Work from 9am – noon. 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 12<sup>th</sup> 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, Nov 5, 8:30 a.m. Ventura Wildlife Ponds. Leader: Adele Fergusson (805) 415-4304.** Take Harbor Blvd to Spinnaker and enter Ventura Harbor. The Water Treatment plant is on Angler, a left turn before Spinnaker curves to the right. Turn in left and meet inside the gate. We should see a variety of herons, egrets, and waterfowl. Bring scopes if you have them!

**Saturday, Nov 9, 8:30 a.m. Carpinteria Salt Marsh. Leader: Rocky Ludes (805)208-9648. Directions:** Take Hwy. 101 north to Carpinteria, exit Casitas Pass Rd., left on Casitas Pass Rd., right on Carpinteria Ave., left on Linden, right on 3rd St. to the marsh. **To car pool,** meet at the Museum of Ventura Co., 100 E. Main (side parking lot) at 8:00. We should see a variety of exciting shorebirds, including yellowlegs, dowitchers, teals and grebes, as well as kingfishers, warblers and shrikes.

**Friday, Nov 15, 7:50-noon. Pt. Mugu Naval Base. Leaders: Mugu Staff & David Pereksta. For those registered, please note:** You must have picture ID cards with names matching the names on the list. Vehicles, articles, and personnel are subject to search. Cameras and video equipment are not allowed. Please bring a scope if you have one. **Directions:** Meet at the main entrance at Naval Air Rd. and Mugu Rd. near Buildings 112 & 116. Drive to gate-1 at Frontage Rd and turn at the stop sign onto Main rd at Point Mugu.

**Saturday, Nov 23, 8:30 a.m. Soule Park, Ojai. Leader: Allen Bertke (805)640-9037.** Birds are a bonus amid the autumn colors & the rugged Topa Topas rising above. Brisk mornings bring out winter feeding flocks: sparrows, bluebirds, thrushes, warblers. Big trees give us woodpeckers, flickers, and raptors. Bushes hide thrushes & thrashers. Join us for an easy, flat walk around one of our most scenic birding spots. **Directions:** From Ventura, go north on Hwy 150 through Ojai, turn right on Boardman Rd, and turn right at park entrance. **IMPORTANT:** There is no parking allowed outside the gate! \$4 entry fee per vehicle is enforced. Meet at lot just inside the gate. **To car pool,** meet at the Museum of Ventura Co., 100 E. Main St (side parking lot) at 8:00 a.m.

**Saturday, Nov 30, 8:30 a.m. Beginners' Bird Walk. Lake Piru/Fillmore. Allen Bertke (805)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 (near Trader Joes).



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

*Oh Lord, it's hard to be humble  
When you're perfect in every way*

-Mac Davis  
Country Music Singer

I had a humbling experience while leading this past month's Beginners' Bird Walk at Surfer's Knoll. While walking down the beach, we passed a few dead birds, which is normal for the area. I stopped at one to impress the group with my bird anatomy knowledge. I wanted to show everyone the big oil gland that birds use to preen themselves, but I couldn't locate it! Then I realized that I was trying to find an oil gland on one of the few birds that DON'T have a developed oil gland, a Double-crested Cormorant. Pardon my red face. So much for my superior bird knowledge. I tried to make up for it by explaining that the lack of oil actually helps them swim better and dive deeper, but the gaffe had already been made.

It was a lovely walk on a rare 80 degree day at the beach. There was a proliferation of Marbled Godwits, Willets, and Heerman's Gulls, all sharing the same feeding spots, but each probably dining on different cuisine, based on respective bill size and length. With every incoming wave, a new course was served up. Nothing like a 500 course meal. I wonder what they do for dessert?

We walked by the new SCRE fountain, graciously installed by some government agency to drain the estuary. Quite an elaborate set up, but it seems to be draining pretty slowly. Maybe we will see our mud flats again in two or three years. I could have saved them a lot of money and time with a rented bulldozer, but then that's just me. I wasn't in on the decision, which is probably a good thing.

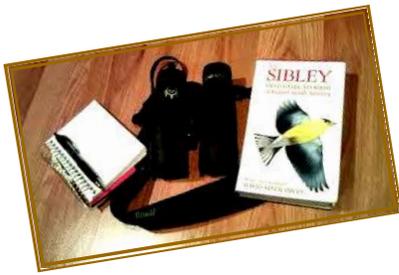
Barn Swallows, Western Grebes, Brown Pelicans, Ruddy Ducks, Gadwalls, an early Northern Shoveler, two Northern Harriers, Snowy Egrets, a Great Blue Heron, Red-winged Blackbirds, a Black and a Say's Phoebe, lots of gulls, and a very cute Snowy Plover were among other birds sighted.

We also observed many Elegant Terns and a late Least Tern, who evidently didn't get the memo to leave with his buddies. No, I will not inflict any more Tern jokes on you. I have terned the corner on that. Oops! Sorry about that. It's just too easy! It won't happen again. I almost forgot the Wandering Tattler that we saw. I wonder where they wander and who they tattle on?

I'm outta here. See you all on the next walk.



**VAS**  
**Christmas Bird Count!**  
**January 4, 2014**



## *NOTES FROM THE FIELD*

*...David Pereksta*

The big story of September was the unprecedented invasion of **Blue-footed Boobies** along the California coast that started on 12 Sep with numbers of individuals increasing dramatically over the next few weeks. Sightings occurred from San Diego to Mendocino County, and Ventura County had its share of reports. One was found on the outer breakwater of the Ventura Harbor on 14 Sep (JD, MS & JS) and the assumed same individual was there through 27 Sep. Another **Blue-footed Booby** was seen flying by the Channel Islands Harbor on 21 Sep (JB). On Anacapa Island, 10 **Blue-footed Boobies** were found on 18 Sep (DP) with that number increasing to 18 by 21 Sep (JB) and 22 by 28 Sep (NL & PG). During this Booby frenzy, the previously reported **Brown Booby** was seen just offshore of Ventura or on its favorite channel marker in the Ventura Harbor 6-28 Sep. Other birds in the harbor and Marina Park seen by those seeking boobies included the continuing two **American x Black Oystercatchers** through 21 Sep and one there through 29 Sep, a **Red Knot** 17-21 Sep (MZ), a **Pigeon Guillemot** 15-28 Sep (DP et al.), a **Red-throated Pipit** 26-27 Sep (DDJ), and one to two "**Large-billed**" **Savannah Sparrows** 15-28 Sep (DDJ et al.).

Southbound shorebird migration continued through the county with several notable species being found. Two **Pacific Golden-Plovers** were seen sporadically along Arnold Road 16-28 Sep (JB). **Solitary Sandpipers** included one in Camarillo 9-10 Sep (FD), one in Revolon Slough 19-22 Sep (DP), and one at McGrath State Beach on 26 Sep (AF). Unusual on a fallow field along Arnold Road were three **Red Knots** on 28 Sep (DP). Five **Red Knots** were in Mugu Lagoon on 19 Sep (DP) and a **Baird's Sandpiper** was near Point Mugu on 6 Sep (LS & DP). **Pectoral Sandpiper** reports included one at McGrath State Beach on 11 Sep (AF & KK), two were there on 26 Sep (AF), and several near Point Mugu 1-6 Sep with a high of seven there on 6 Sep (DP & LS).

The local tamarisk rows on the Oxnard Plain produced their usual variety of uncommon or rare migrants in September. The Laguna tamarisks had an impressive variety of birds including a **Yellow-green Vireo** 26-30 Sep (DP) and another on 28 Sep (FD), **American Redstarts** 14-16 Sep (AS) and 26-30 Sep (BL), a **Black-and-white Warbler** 23 Sep (KK), a **Tennessee Warbler** 25-26 Sep (PG), and a **Brewer's Sparrow** 26-27 Sep (AS). An unusual looking Empidonax Flycatcher here 15-22 Sep may have been a **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** and photos are circulating among experts for their opinions (DP). A **Black-and-white Warbler** was at the Wolff Road tamarisks on 24 Sep (JB).

Away from the heavily birded tamarisks, notable passerines were widely reported. An immature **Vermilion Flycatcher** was at Freedom Park in Camarillo on 25 Sep (PG) and a **Tropical Kingbird** was at the Camarillo Airport on 26 Sep (PG). The previously reported **Vermilion Flycatcher** near Point Mugu continued until 1 Sep, but was not seen thereafter. A **Purple Martin** was with a mixed flock of swallows in Camarillo on 9 Sep (FD). An **Ovenbird** was well-described from the Ventura River estuary on 2 Sep (ETG). Other reports included a **Red-eyed Vireo** at Sycamore Cove on 27 Sep (DC), a **Chestnut-sided Warbler** along Arnold Road 27-30 Sep (DC), a **Clay-colored Sparrow** at the Ojai Meadows on 9 Sep (JG), and a **Summer Tanager** in a Moorpark neighborhood on 21 Sep (MZ).

Owls of note included a **Burrowing Owl** on Anacapa Island on 21 Sep (JB) and a **Northern Pygmy-Owl** near Ojai on 19 Sep (BT).

Uncommon pelagic species were reported from several excursions to Ventura County waters. A multi-day pelagic trip that passed through Ventura County offshore waters in early September had several notable birds including a **Buller's Shearwater**, **Least Storm-Petrel**, and **Sabine's Gull** on 3 Aug and a **Black-footed Albatross**, seven **Leach's Storm-Petrels**, and a **Red-billed Tropicbird** on 5 Sep (TM, JF, AS et al.). A **Manx Shearwater** was offshore of Ventura on 8 Sep (OJ & AS). A trip south of Anacapa Island on 18 Sep found a **Flesh-footed Shearwater**, **Least Storm-Petrel**, two **South Polar Skuas**, and a **Long-tailed Jaeger** (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 nuisance bird calls), email or call David Pereksta at [pereksta@pacbell.net](mailto:pereksta@pacbell.net) or 659-5740.

Observers: Joel Barrett, Dan Cooper, Frank DeMartino, Don DesJardin, Jon Dunn, Jon Feenstra, Alexis Frangis, Peter Gaede, Jesse Grantham, Oscar Johnson, Karl Krause, Bill Langford, Nick Lethaby, Todd McGrath, Matthew Page, David Pereksta, Larry Sansone, Mark Scheel, Janet Scheel, Adam Searcy, Bob Tallyn, Elisa Taylor-Godwin, and Michael Zarky

## VENTURA AUDUBON SOCIETY

P.O. Box 24198  
Ventura, CA 93002



### **ATTENTION All Camera Buffs!**

Attention All YOU camera buffs! Do we have an idea for you! We see you clicking away on our field trips and sometimes you share a quick glimpse of a beautiful or unusual bird in the view finder, but how would you like to share some of your best efforts with your fellow bird lovers?

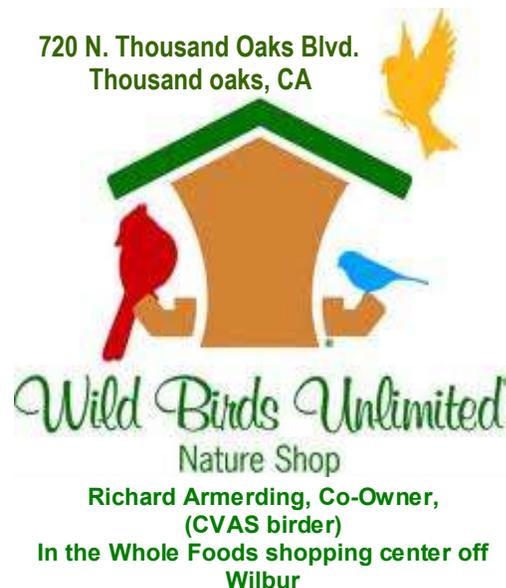
We would love to see some of those special pictures at our January 14th 2014 meeting!

We have planned a "Show and Tell" and will allot up to 10 minutes per person.

Please contact Laura Gulovsen at 642-6544, Audrey Vincent at 525-5826, or Margaret Wilson at 647-7962 by November 23rd if you'd be willing to participate. You have only 3 special photos? Sign up anyway! We would love to see them!

Thanks- Your Program Committee: Laura, Audrey, & Margaret

720 N. Thousand Oaks Blvd.  
Thousand Oaks, CA



### **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
At Large:	Adele Fergusson	415-4304
	John Connor	654-1805
	Nancy Schorsch	643-5825
	Janice Susha	983-3929
	Judy Dugan	642-0842
Membership	Jackie Worden	652-0577
Newsletter Editor	Dee Press	484-8415
Program Committee:	Laura Gulovsen	642-6544
	Margaret Wilson	647-7962
	Audrey Vincent	525-5826

### **NOVEMBER BOARD MEETING**

The next **bi-monthly** Board of Directors meeting will be held on November 5th at the home of Neil Ziegler, 1921 Holly Avenue, at 7:15 p.m. Call 805-983-7207 for more information. Any VAS member is welcome.

**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 bi-monthly 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, preferably in WORD format, or in the form of an e-mail message. *The deadline is noon on the 1st of the month preceding the next issue.* E-mail to: [deepress2@gmail.com](mailto:deepress2@gmail.com). Call Editor Dee Press at 484-8415 for more information.