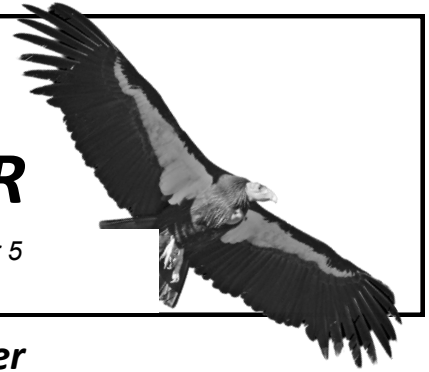


# *The* **CALIFORNIA CONDOR**

Ventura Audubon Society *January 2019* Volume 48, Number 5



## **CALL NOTES...Debra Barringer**

### ***Recent Local Planning Issues that Affect Birds and Their Habitats***

#### **Santa Clara and Ventura River Levees**

**Website:** <http://pwa.vcpublishworks.org/wpd/santaclarariverlevee/>

#### **Santa Clara River (SCR)-1 Levee Improvements**

Per new federal (FEMA) mapping efforts additional homes and businesses near local rivers are now considered within 100-yr floodplains and therefore levees need to be strengthened and in some areas heightened. The alternative chosen for a portion of the Santa Clara River (SCR) includes the addition of soil cement (hardscape) to the river side of dirt levees. VAS members who participated as stakeholders at SCR-1 meetings were concerned about the hardening of the south riverbank for potentially 5 miles north of Hwy 101, the additional difficulty for wildlife species to access the river, and the loss of riparian vegetation that will be cleared from around levees. The stakeholders are still negotiating to add bike paths, benches, fences, interpretive signs, and new river access. Although VAS loves getting people into nature, we still have concerns about more people being introduced into a portion of the river that was fairly isolated and is near the endangered least Bell's vireo and other sensitive birds' territories, especially during nesting seasons.

#### **SCR-3 Levee Improvements EIR**

VAS members were disappointed that the County Watershed Protection District decided on the addition of a 968-ft long, 6-ft high block wall along the SCR next to Ventura Road. As with the SCR-1 river reach, our concerns include limiting wildlife access to the river corridor, and the additional native vegetation losses to be cleared along levees, which reduces nesting opportunities for riparian birds and good habitat for other species.

*CALL NOTES...(Continued on Page 2)*

## **JANUARY PROGRAM**

### ***Seabird Restoration on the California Islands.....with Annie Little USFWS***

**7:30 p.m. Tuesday, January 8th, Poinsettia Pavilion, 3451 Foothill Road, Ventura**



Cassin's Auklet  
Todos Santos, 2016

The presentation will highlight restoration efforts for seabirds on the Channel Islands and Baja California Pacific Islands, including invasive species removal, habitat restoration, and social attraction. The Western Gull chicks seen here (left), the Scripps Murrelet, and Cassin's Auklet are some of the bird species we'll discuss.

For the past 22 years, Annie Little has worked as a Wildlife Biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Based out of the Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office in southern California, she initially worked on endangered species conservation in Los Angeles, Orange, and San Diego Counties. Since 2002, Annie has been the lead avian biologist for the Montrose Settlements Restoration Program.

*CALL NOTES...(Continued from Page 1)*

### **Ventura River (VR)-1 Levee Rehabilitation**

**Website:** <http://vcpbublicworks.org/wpd-programs-and-projects/ventura-river-levee-vr-1>

Similar to the issues for the SCR remapped floodplains, updated FEMA regulations have added many more homes to the flood-prone areas near the Ventura River. Still in its pre-scoping process, several stretches along the Ventura River are being looked at to strengthen and raise levees and to add hardening material. In addition to the armored riverbanks, VAS members are concerned about vegetation, especially in the estuary, near levees that will be cut back. We hope they will do bird surveys before and during this removal and include habitat replacement.



Ventura River

### **Santa Clara River Estuary Special Studies Working Group**

**Website:** [www.cityofventura.ca.gov/1109/Estuary-Studies](http://www.cityofventura.ca.gov/1109/Estuary-Studies)

The City of Ventura and stakeholders met over a couple of years to determine how to adjust the tertiary treated water that Ventura Water should divert for reuse and how much discharge (if any) is needed to benefit the estuary and protect its native species. Wildlife interests voiced that a reduction in discharge is not always adverse for every species as assumed. For example, many migratory birds use the estuary when mudflats form during low water conditions. In addition, if sandbars increased or formed they may become good nesting habitat for species such as snowy plovers. The resulting management plan will be adaptable to ensure there are no negative impacts to sensitive species.



Santa Clara River Estuary

*CALL NOTES...(Continued on Page 3)*

**Ventura County General and Local Coastal Plan (LCP) Updates, (Unincorporated Ventura County)**

**Website:** <https://www.vcrma.org/divisions/planning/>

**Local Coastal Plan update topics:**

- **Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (ESHA)** (County Board of Supervisor's Hearing Dec. 4, 2018 was postponed)

The issue most related to VAS work is new ESHA protections for beaches and dunes. The late snowy plover mentor Reed Smith convinced the Hollywood Beach Harbor Department to avoid beach grooming near the dunes where nesting occurs and only working outside the breeding season. During writing of the updated Draft LCP, Debra coordinated with the County Biologist to craft language to codify and strengthen these protections. She has also presented the idea of nonnative plant removal from dunes that have grown unnaturally high. This could provide more suitable nesting habitat for beach-nesting birds. The County and Coastal Commission agree with the idea, permitting and funding are pending issues.

Another LCP ESHA issue that may affect native birds, other wildlife and their habitats involves homeowners in the Santa Monica Mountains (SMM) portion of the County. Currently, these homes are required to clear a 100-ft vegetation radius around structures as "fuel modification" for fire safety. Clearing done before 2003 did not have to pay mitigation for removing what is now known as ESHA, which in the proposed LCP changes is more clearly defined to include native coastal sage scrub/chaparral (CSS/chap). Mitigation is required per the California Coastal Act. CSS/chap habitat is unique to southern California, supports many sensitive species, and is quickly disappearing or becoming fragmented to render remaining patches insufficient for many species. Under the current LCP, mitigation for new ESHA removal is very expensive and time consuming and often involves buying land. In the LCP update, the County wants to add a fee option to provide another way to mitigate new CSS/chap losses, similar to what LA County does in the SMM. Still expensive, no open land would have to be found/bought but fees would be pooled for the County to buy or improve similar habitats in protected areas.

A group of current SMM residents that have already cleared land are concerned about the threat of fire and some that spoke at the August 23, 2018 County Planning Commission Hearing believe that cutting more native vegetation (up to 200 ft radius of structures) will make them safer. They do not believe they should have to mitigate or pay for this additional ESHA habitat loss that is the equivalent of clearing 6 acres (vs. 2 acres for the 100-ft buffer around a typical dwelling). That extra 4 acres is a large loss of resources and territories for many small animals and birds for each home that clears more.

A Ventura County Fire official spoke at the Planning Hearing stating that while in some cases more vegetation removal may be a good idea, he believes making the structures "harder" is more important. This includes fire-resistant roofing and siding, and no wood decks, wood furniture, fences, or firewood piles near structures, or dried leaves/needles in gutters that can catch and spread embers. Information is available explaining why clearing more than 100 ft from homes has no advantage and may have negative consequences (e.g., allowing fire-prone grasses to fill in, increased land erosion potential) at: <https://www.nfpa.org/Public-Education/By-topic/Wildfire/Preparing-homes-for-wildfire> and on the valuable and unique yet often-maligned chaparral habitat we are surrounded by at: <http://www.californiachaparral.org/bprotectingyourhome.html>.

**– Sea Level Rise (SLR) Working Group**

**Website:** <https://vcrma.org/vc-resilient-coastal-adaptation-project>

Threats to natural coastal areas include increased erosion, higher tidal inundation and flooding, reduced sediment (sand) supply, and increased pressure from human development and recreational activities on coasts. Debra participated on a natural resource specialists' team who selected the most vulnerable species for beaches, dunes, freshwater and estuarine habitats. A long-time favorite of VAS, the snowy plover, was chosen for dunes. Keeping an eye on these indicators will help the County develop adaptation strategies to affect future policies and ordinances to deal with SLR.



Snowy plover by Alexis Frangis, State Parks

## CALL NOTES...(Continued from Page 3)

In areas where open lands still exist, the County is considering ways to keep and enhance the open space to allow natural habitat migration away from eroding coastlines. They are also considering sediment management plans for all vulnerable beaches.

### **General Plan amendment - Wildlife Corridors/Habitat Connectivity Working Group**

**Website:** <https://vcrma.org/habitat-connectivity-and-wildlife-movement-corridors>

Major landscape connections that link natural habitats on a large scale through the County were determined by an independent scientific research group (South Coast Wildlands partnering with many NGOs and agencies). For development considered ministerial, the County has no influence. For discretionary permits, the County wants to steer development away from blocking/narrowing these crucial corridors for wildlife travel, dispersal, and access to breeding partners and habitats. Stakeholders who weighed in included ranchers, farmers, and rural landowners as well as agencies and wildlife interests. We discussed clustering development, types of fencing, lighting, and riparian areas' importance.

### **City of Oxnard - Parks Focus Group**

Oxnard is working on a Parks and Recreation Master Plan. At this first focus group meeting (September 27, 2018) they were gathering general ideas about parks improvements in the city. The group agreed that more parks in urban areas are needed, more bike trails to access them, more trees and native plants, and Debra submitted the idea for more dog-friendly parks away from beaches (where dogs can disturb breeding and migrating birds).

## **JUST A REMINDER...VENTURA AUDUBON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT**

**Audubon Invites You to Join  
the 119th Annual Christmas Bird Saturday, January 5th, 2019**

<b>Section</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Section Leader</b>	<b>Section Leader Email</b>	<b>Telephone #</b>
Section 1	Ventura River	Kay Regester	<a href="mailto:kayregester@gmail.com">kayregester@gmail.com</a>	805-258-1025
Section 2	Lake Casitas	Jesse Grantham	<a href="mailto:ojaishwimmer@gmail.com">ojaishwimmer@gmail.com</a>	805-746-0975
Section 3	Ojai	Rick Burgess	<a href="mailto:burgess1312@aol.com">burgess1312@aol.com</a>	805-449-2326
Section 4	Cañada Larga	Linda Easter	<a href="mailto:lindita517@yahoo.com">lindita517@yahoo.com</a>	818-519-2833
Section 5	Wheeler Canyon	Sandy Hedrick	<a href="mailto:Valley.view@verizon.net">Valley.view@verizon.net</a>	805-643-2408
Section 6	Ventura City	Frank DeMartino	<a href="mailto:frank@colynx.com">frank@colynx.com</a>	856-906-8733
Section 7	SCRE & Coast	Alexis Frangis	<a href="mailto:alexisraehamilton@gmail.com">alexisraehamilton@gmail.com</a>	805-217-4833
Section 8	Ocean	David Pereksta	<a href="mailto:pereksta@pacbell.net">pereksta@pacbell.net</a>	805-404-8265

The end of day review includes a potluck dinner at the Church of the Foothills. 6279 Foothill Road, Ventura at 6:30 P.M. The potluck is open to members, friends and guests; you do not have to be a field observer to be included. Those attending are requested to bring the following types of dishes based on the first letter of your last name.

Main Dish: A - J      Salad: S - Z      Dessert: K - R

Please bring your own place settings, utensils and beverages (water and hot coffee are provided).





## **NOTES FROM THE FIELD ...David Pereksta**

November brings the tail end of the main push of fall migration for most of our passage migrants, and marks the arrival of many of our winter visitors including waterfowl, raptors, and a variety of landbirds. September and October were less eventful than normal for vagrants this year, but a number of uncommon and rare species were found in November; some of which may continue for the next few months.

The **Masked Booby** originally found in September continued on Anacapa Island through 18 Nov. Other birds of note on Anacapa Island included a **Burrowing Owl** 15-16 Nov, a **Long-eared Owl** 14-15 Nov, a **Short-eared Owl** on 14 Nov, a **Mountain Bluebird** 14-15 Nov, a **Clay-colored Sparrow** 14-16 Nov, and a **Palm Warbler** on 16 Nov (AS). San Nicolas Island still had some uncommon migrants moving through in early November including a **Long-eared Owl**, **Hammond's Flycatcher**, and **Tennessee Warbler** on 8 Nov (MR & GP).

**Redheads** were reported from several locations including Conejo Creek North Park on 25 Nov (BH) and Mugu Lagoon 29 Oct-6 Nov (JP). Two **White-winged Scoters** were off Point Mugu 26-30 Nov (MR). **Common Goldeneyes** were at the Ventura Settling Ponds on 16 Nov (JM) and as many as five were at Point Mugu 16-21 Nov (AP & JP) with one remaining through 24 Nov. Away from their regular wintering location in the Arroyo Simi, **Hooded Mergansers** were in Port Hueneme on 24 Nov (ST), NBVC Port Hueneme on 28 Nov (JP & MR), and the Ventura Settling Ponds 24-26 Nov (SK, KD).

A **Ruff** continued on the Oxnard Plain through November and five Red Knots were in Mugu Lagoon on 19 Nov (DP). Rare waders at Mugu Lagoon included a continuing **Tricolored Heron** through 30 Nov and as many as 5 **Reddish Egrets** through November. Away from the resident population at Point Mugu, two **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons** continued at the Ventura Settling Ponds through November.

The returning **Zone-tailed Hawk** was seen again over Ojai on 4 Nov (BS) and continued around the Ojai Valley throughout the month. A **Harlan's Red-tailed Hawk** was at the Ventura Settling Ponds on 24 Nov (ST). Two **Bald Eagles** continued at Lake Piru through 26 Nov.

A **White-winged Dove** was at Canada Larga on 10 Nov (KR & MH). A **Lewis's Woodpecker** returned for another winter at Lake Sherwood on 24 Nov (MH). **Red-naped Sapsuckers** included individuals in Ojai on 17 Nov (DP) and

Canada Larga on 26 Nov (AK). The **Plumbeous Vireo** returned to Pitts Ranch Park in Camarillo for another winter 27-30 Nov (BH). A **Pacific Wren** and a **Clay-colored Sparrow** were along Matilija Creek on 10 Nov (JG). Another **Pacific Wren** was in Wheeler Gorge on 24 Nov (DP). Backyard birds of note included a **White-throated Sparrow** in a Thousand Oaks yard on 17 Nov (RF) and a **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** in Ventura 28-29 Nov (CH).

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,  
David Pereksta

Observers: Kathy Duret, Rick Farris, Jesse Grantham, Mary Hansen, Cynthia Hartley, Bruce Henderson, Sangeet Khalsa, Aaron Kreisberg, John Mueller, Andrew Partin, David Pereksta, Giles Pettifor, Jeremiah Psiropoulos, Kay Register, Martin Ruane, Adam Searcy, Bill Shanbrom, and Steve Tucker



## ***JANUARY 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.

### **Sunday, January 6, 2019, 8:00 a.m., Hedrick Ranch Nature Area**

**Leader: Sandy Hedrick (805) 340-0478. This is a work day**

Arrive at 8:00 for self-guided birding which usually yields some interesting birds. Work from 9am – noon. Long pants and boots or closed shoes are required. Bring water, gloves and sun protection.

**Directions:** Take Hwy 126 to Santa Paula, 10th St. Exit. Go under freeway, right on Harvard, rt. on 12th and cross the S.C. River Bridge. Go 3.7 miles to 20395 S. Mountain Rd. Turn left onto the dirt road & follow it to the end (approx. ½ mile). Even a little rain can make the road impassable; if in doubt, call Sandy to check road conditions.

### **Saturday, January 12, 2019, 8:30 a.m., Ormond Beach**

**Leaders: Cynthia Hartley 805-795-4115 and Adele Fergusson 805-415-4304**

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

**Directions:** Hwy 101 south and exit on Rice, turn right and continue to Hueneme Rd. Turn right on Hueneme Rd. After Olds Rd. 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 Rd. To carpool, meet at 7:50 a.m. at Carrows on Harbor Blvd near Seaward, in the parking lot behind the restaurant next to the Chevron gas station.

### **Saturday January 19, 2019, 8:30 a.m., Soule Park**

**Leader: Linda Easter 818-519-2833**

Situated in east Ojai, this large park offers grasslands, large deciduous trees and riparian habitat that bring out winter feeding flocks of sparrows, bluebirds, & warblers and year-round habitat for thrashers, woodpeckers, raptors and more. A section of Thatcher Creek that serves as the north border of the park will be enjoyed. 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. Meet at lot just inside the gate -\$4 per vehicle.

**Note:** Parking along Boardman Road to avoid the \$4 per vehicle fee is prohibited so please do not park along Boardman Road. To car pool, meet at 7:45 a.m. behind Carrows, located in the Vons Shopping Center at the corner of Harbor and Seaward.

### **Sunday January 27, 8:30 a.m., Canada Larga**

**Leader: David Torfeh 805-794-5334**

Meet near the beginning of the road off Hwy 33. We will carpool from that location as we walk and drive this long county road. Target species will include Barn Owl, Western Bluebirds, Lark Sparrow, Roadrunner, Phainopepla and various species of swallows.

**Directions:** Take Hwy. 33 toward Ojai. Exit Canada Larga Rd, make a right. Meet near the beginning of the road. Bring binoculars, a field guide, hat & water.

<b>VAS OFFICERS &amp; BOARD MEMBERS 2018 - 2019</b>		
<b>Officers</b>		
President	Bruce Schoppe	805-658-2396
Vice President	Tom Black	805-985-2325
Vice President/Conservation	Cynthia Hartley	805-795-4115
Treasurer	Sherry Dorris	805-985-7273
Secretary	Alexis Frangis	805-217-4833
<b>Board Members</b>		
Conservation	Sandy Hedrick	805-643-2408
Publicity	Jim Susha	805-983-3929
Field Trips	Adele Fergusson	805-415-4304
At Large	Jackie Worden	805-657-2837
Membership	Deborah Burns	805-933-0647
Christmas Bird Count	Frank DeMartino	856-906-8733
Newsletter	Janice Susha	805-983-3929
At Large	Debra Barringer	303-880-0308
At Large/CSUCI Audubon Club	Kat O'Dea	818-916-4154
<b>Chairs &amp; Committee Members</b>		
Webmaster	Christi Lester	310-722-9557
Education	Betsy Bachman	805-646-4407
<b>Conservation Committee</b> Cynthia Hartley - Chair <b>Shorebird Recovery:</b> Debra Barringer Alexis Frangis Cynthia Hartley Kat O'Dea	<b>Santa Clara River Issues:</b> Sandy Hedrick <b>Ventura River/Least Bell's Vireo:</b> Jackie Worden <b>Coastal Planning Issues:</b> Debra Barringer	

**MEMBERSHIP EXPIRATION:** If you are not sure whether your membership has expired, please **email** Deborah at debburns38@gmail.com and she will check it out for you.

**BOARD MEETING:** The next Board of Directors meeting will be on Tuesday **March 5th, 2019**. Our meetings are 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 Ventura at 7:30 p.m., September through April. Board Meetings are held bimonthly on the first Tuesday of the month. A membership form is available on the VAS web site. Our May meeting is a barbecue.

**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 15th of the month preceding the month of publishing.

Follow us on



Like us on



View us on

