

The CALIFORNIA CONDOR

Ventura Audubon Society **APRIL 2020** Volume 60, Number 17
A Chapter of the National Audubon www.VenturaAudubon.org



CALL NOTES...Cynthia Hartley

In all the past years of our chapter, April is when we have held our major annual fundraiser, the Birdathon. This month's newsletter Call Notes was going to feature the Birdathon, highlight the accomplishments of our chapter and seek donations to continue our work. Instead we find ourselves facing an unprecedented situation globally and within our local communities due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. So, this month's Call Notes is a notice to our membership about the changes and adaptations VAS is making to adjust to this situation, and to reassure all of you that we will not be stopping our work.

Our typical VAS program season runs September through May, and concludes with our final annual meeting/celebration in May when we vote on the next year's board of directors. So, with just 2 months left for this season, we find ourselves under Ventura County and State shelter in place orders. All indications are that it will take several months to be on the other side of this pandemic, and as long for these directives to be lifted. The pandemic is causing us to adapt and innovate, and on a positive note I'm sure things will come out of this that will improve how we work.

Our board has passed several measures to ensure that we all remain safe, but to also continue our work and stay connected. So, with all of this in mind, we are taking the following actions:

1) Group activities have been cancelled or rescheduled for the rest of our 2019-2020 year in order to keep our members safe and reduce the chance of spreading CORVID-19.

- Birding field trips through the end of May are cancelled. Our field trip Chair will plan summer 2020 field trips and we will wait and see if it is safe to again gather in groups when those months arrive.
- Our March and April chapter programs have been rescheduled to fall 2020.
- We have cancelled the April conservation committee meeting.
- The May annual meeting will be rescheduled to fall, or whenever it is safe to meet in groups again.

2) We will utilize and further explore online ways to connect and conduct business.

- We will be conducting our May board meeting online.
- We are converting the Volunteer Naturalist program to online training. Even though we are not conducting a formal volunteer program, we believe it is important to engage our members with this information. We hope attendees will donate volunteer time protecting least terns and snowy plovers when we are back to business. Contact volunteer@venturaaudubon.org if you are interested in dialing in to one of these sessions or want more info. **The next online training will be April 4th.**
- We will be planning some online socials for core volunteers.

CALL NOTES..(Continued from Page 1

- We encourage everyone to follow our social media outlets (Facebook and Instagram) to stay connected. We will continue to post and send out updates, and of course information and legislation that impacts birds. We welcome your comments and questions, and would love to hear from all of you online.
 - We are networking with USFWS and the western snowy plover recovery unit teams to problem solve monitoring during pandemic conditions.
- 3) **Out of sensitivity to the economic strain this has put on our community, our annual Birdathon fundraiser will be postponed until fall**, or whenever it is deemed safe for groups to meet again. That said, we will be taking a painful loss by missing our only fundraiser. **We will gratefully accept donations online.** Click on the Birdathon button on our website, www.venturaudubon.org.
- 4) **The core of our mission is the protection of birds and their habitat, and that goes on despite human problems.** Our snowy plover and California least tern monitoring and protection efforts continue on Ormond and Hollywood beaches, although while doing so we are carefully adhering to social distancing guidelines and minimizing field time. We will not be taking on any trainees until this is over. As ever, we will continue to monitor and respond to legislation that needs our attention.

Personally, I find great relief from coronavirus news fatigue by focusing on the signs of spring I see in my yard. The hooded orioles are arriving, 2 males and a female so far, and they are already draining my hummingbird feeders. Our first black headed grosbeak has just arrived in my neighborhood, I am very much looking forward to their song and seeing their fledglings at my feeders in a few months. We found the first snowy plover nest this week, and many more pairs are making scrapes. Once the weather warms, we expect many more nests, and then the California least terns will arrive from their long migration from off the coast of Brazil.

It is reassuring and hopeful to see the rhythm of life continuing in these familiar friends, independent of the frightening pandemic affecting our species. I take away from this experience a reminder that on some level we need birds almost as much as they need us. **This renews my resolve to continue our important mission to protect birds and their habitat, because birds are facing an even more frightening future from climate change and assaults on the legislation that protects them from humans.**

Stay safe and healthy,
Cynthia Hartley

Proposed Candidates for 2020-21 Board of Directors:

Debra Barringer
Rainey Barton
Tom Black
Deborah Burns
Frank DeMartino
Sheryl Dorris
Adele Fergusson
Cynthia Hartley
Sandy Hedrick
Kaitlyn O'Dea
Bruce Schoppe
Cody Swanson



NOTES FROM THE FIELD ...David Pereksta

Twenty-four **Greater White-fronted Geese** continued on the Oxnard Plain through 22 Feb. A **Eurasian Wigeon** was at Bard Lake on 21 Feb (m. obs.). **Redheads** included one on the Oxnard Plain 17-22 Feb (DP et al.), two continuing at Oak Canyon Community Park through 16 Feb, and six continuing birds at Lake Casitas through 14 Feb. The wintering **Red-necked Grebe** continued off Point Mugu through 29 Feb. The **Ruff** continued near Point Mugu through 29 Feb. **Black-legged Kittiwakes** were seen offshore of Ventura including one on 7 Feb (GVH) and two on 9 Feb (JB). Ten **Black Skimmers** were early arrivals at Mugu Lagoon 13-14 Feb (AS). A **Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel** was in the Santa Barbara Channel on 9 Feb (JB). Individual **Brown Boobies** were reported offshore of Ventura on 28 Feb (BH) and 29 Feb (JB), and as many as three were on Anacapa Island 17-22 Feb (JB). A **Cattle Egret** was on the Oxnard Plain on 17 Feb (DP). As many as 5 **Reddish Egrets** continued in Mugu Lagoon through 28 Feb. Sixty-five **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons** at Point Mugu on 13 Feb was a new single location high count for the state (AS). Away from Point Mugu, two **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons** continued at the Ventura Settling Ponds through 29 Feb.



Away from their usual haunts in the county, a **California Condor** was along Canada Larga Road 14-20 Feb (KW). **Bald Eagles** continued at Lake Piru through 25 Feb and Lake Casitas through 27 Feb. The two **Swainson's Hawks** wintering near Point Mugu continued through 29 Feb and the wintering **Zone-tailed Hawk** continued near Lake Casitas through 8 Feb.

Four **Mountain Bluebirds** were in the Ventura County portion of Quatal Canyon 6-15 Feb (DP). A **Townsend's Solitaire** was in the Lockwood Valley on 15 Feb (SC) and 12 **Red Crossbills** were on Mount Pinos on 15 Feb (SC). Rarely seen locally in winter, an **American Redstart** and a **Palm Warbler** were on the Oxnard Plain on 17 Feb (DP).

A number of birds continued from earlier in the winter including a **White-winged Dove** in Camarillo through 24 Feb, individual **Lewis's Woodpeckers** at Canada Larga through 27 Feb and Lake Casitas through 29 Feb, a **Red-naped Sapsucker** at CSUCI through 22 Feb, a **Tropical Kingbird** at CSUCI through 29 Feb, a **Painted Redstart** at Arroyo Verde Park through 29 Feb, a **Green-tailed Towhee** at Wildwood Park through 29 Feb, a **Clay-colored Sparrow** at Pitts Ranch Park through 24 Feb, and a **Lark Bunting** in the Upper Las Virgenes Canyon Open Space continued through 5 Feb.

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: Joel Barrett, Sammy Cowell, Bruce Henderson, David Pereksta, Adam Searcy, Gerard Van Heijzen, and Ken Ward

2019-2020 Conservation Notes

Bruce Schoppe, VP Conservation

**From Audubon California
About the Western Snowy Plover**

The Western Snowy Plover is listed as Threatened under the Endangered Species Act



Photo: Mike Baird

The Western Snowy Plover is a threatened small shorebird, approximately the size of a sparrow. During the breeding season, March through September, plovers can be seen nesting along the shores, peninsulas, offshore islands, bays, estuaries, and rivers of the United States' Pacific Coast from Oregon to California. Plover nests usually contains three tiny eggs, which are camouflaged to look like sand and barely visible to even the most well-trained eye. Plovers will use almost anything they can find on the beach to make their nests, including kelp, driftwood, shells, rocks, and even human footprints.

Snowy Plovers have natural predators such as falcons, raccoons, coyotes, and owls. There are also predators that humans have introduced or whose populations they have helped to increase, including crows and ravens, red fox, and domestic dogs. Humans can be thought of as predators too, because people drive vehicles, ride bikes, fly kites and bring their dogs to beaches where the western snowy plover lives and breeds. All of these activities can frighten or harm plovers during their breeding season.

Energy is very important to this small bird. Every time humans, dogs, or other predators cause the birds to take flight or run away, they lose precious energy that is needed to maintain their nests. Often, when a plover parent is disturbed, it will abandon its nest, which increases the chance of a predator finding the eggs, sand blowing over and covering the nest, or the eggs getting cold. This can decrease the number of chicks that hatch in a particular year. Did you know that a kite flying overhead looks like a predator to a plover? A kite over a nesting area can keep an adult off the nest for long periods of time.

There are many key things YOU can do to help save the western snowy plover! Allowing these small birds to remain in their breeding area, undisturbed, throughout the breeding season is most important. People should be able to recreate on the beaches AND there should be room for plovers to nest too. The idea is to "Share the Shore." This means having fun while protecting our natural environment at the same time.

The Western Snowy Plover has been living on the Pacific Coast for thousands of years but was listed by the federal government as threatened in 1993, due to low population and decreased habitat. Let's help ensure the plovers' success! Remember that when a species goes extinct, it is gone forever! We are privileged to be able to be stewards of the beach, its habitat, and its occupants, including the western snowy plover. Protect your beach and the plants and animals that use it and most importantly, share your knowledge with friends and family. Get the word out; we can make a difference and that difference starts with you.

Thank you for your support and interest.

VAS OFFICERS & BOARD MEMBERS 2019-2020		
Officers		Email Address
President	Vacant	
Vice President/CSUCI	Kat O'Dea	Katy.odea@gmail.com
VP, Conservation	Bruce Schoppe	vpconservation@venturaausubon.org
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Executive Director		
Executive Director	Cynthia Hartley	ED@venturaaudubon.org
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At Large	Tom Black	
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Webmaster	Jim Susha	
Education	Betsy Bachman	


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 is **TBD**. 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.

CONSERVATION COMMITTEE MEETING: The next meeting is **TBD**. Our meetings are held in the meeting room at the back of the Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf on E. Main Street and Telephone Road in Ventura. Meetings begin at 6:30 PM and go until 8:30 PM. Anyone interested in helping VAS' conservation effort is invited to join us.

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.

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.

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