

The California Condor

Ventura Audubon Society
Bird-tober 2024 Volume 66, Number 2
A Chapter of the National Audubon Society
venturaaudubon.org

Our vision for Ventura County is a place where native birds thrive in healthy habitat, and humans co-exist respectfully with birds and other wildlife





Call Notes

by Rachel Ameche , VAS President

Fall is finally here, and the season's migratory birds are making appearances in Ventura County. I love waking up to the beautiful song of white-crowned sparrows. It's a great time of year to get outside and bird, which is perfect because Birdathon is underway! Our annual Birdathon fundraiser—affectionately dubbed "Bird-tober," helps us to operate our chapter, organize field trips, host speaker meetings, and protect birds. At VAS, we are dedicated to protecting birds and their habitats, while also offering educational opportunities within our community. Support from Birdathon helps us keep working on our mission. From nesting boxes at the settling ponds to songbirds of the Santa Clara River and the shorebirds of Ormond Beach, your support makes a significant impact for birds across Ventura County. See below to find details on how to contribute.

Our October speaker is a local favorite, Dave Pereksta. Dave is an avian biologist with the Pacific OCS Region of the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management in Camarillo, California, and an excellent birder. He is our go-to expert on bird ID and a gifted teacher. If you want to improve your birding skills and learn more about our local species you won't want to miss this month's program.

Last month we enjoyed a night learning about the Ventura Water Pure project. Linda Sumansky, the program director of Ventura Water Pure, filled us in on the details about the project and the environmental stewardship of the Santa Clara River estuary. If you missed it, this important and informative program will be up for viewing on our website shortly.

September marked the end of the nesting season on Ormond Beach, and VAS had a special event to say thank you to the amazing team of volunteers. They are essential to the success of the shorebird recovery program and we are grateful to all who donated their time and hard work. Thank you to all who participated this year! To get final updates on the season visit the bird blog via our website. We hope to see everyone again this spring for the 2025 nesting season.

Finally, as we approach an election, we encourage you to make your voice heard—your vote can help protect our wildlife and wild spaces. Audubon supports Proposition 4, the climate action bond that will fund California's natural treasures, ensure safe drinking water, enhance wildfire prevention, improve air quality, and strengthen our communities. Read on to discover why Audubon advocates for a Yes vote on Prop 4, and visit this link for more information.

Thank you for reading and for your continued support! We are especially grateful to our members who champion our mission during Bird-tober and throughout the year.

Here's how to support Birdathon

You may contribute either online or via mail:

Online contribution

1. Go to our website, www.venturaaudubon.org. During October, this will take you to our Birdathon home page.
2. Click on the "Donate to Birdathon- PayPal" button, this will take you to the our PayPal page. There you can donate with either a credit card or a PayPal account.

Mail-in contribution:

- If you received a mailer, just fill out the pledge form and return it with a check in the pre-addressed envelope that has been provided with this letter.
- If you did not receive a mailer, send a check payable to:
Ventura Audubon Society, P.O. Box 24198, Ventura, CA 93002

For all checks, write "Birdathon" in the memo line

Donate for Birdathon

What do Birdathon donations support?

Ventura Settling Ponds



The Ventura Settling ponds are an important community resource. Ventura Audubon continue to advocate for this valuable habitat and recreation area. We are monitoring the [Ventura Water Pure](#) project as the City of Ventura implements waste water treatment improvements that will help to restore the Santa Clara River estuary to a more healthy system. We have expressed our concerns for the future of the settling ponds to the City of Ventura and to the California Coastal Commission.

We have also revamped our tree swallow nest box program. We have installed new nest boxes, baffles and heat shields. This year we also started to monitor the nest through the season. Look for a recap in a future newsletter.





Public Comment

Our conservation committee was created in 2018 to improve our efforts to monitor and comment on local developments and proposals that impact birds. We have spoken at both the Port Hueneme and Oxnard City Councils on issues that impact nesting snowy plovers and least terns. Below are a list of comment/support letters on issues that we have submitted. Our [website](#) has links to many of these letters.

- Opposition to Reyes Peak Logging
- City of Port Hueneme General Plan update
- Ventura County Local Coastal Plan
- Member of Ormond Beach Scientific Advisory Committee
- Tree Trimming Guidelines
- Construction of a large car storage near Ormond Beach

- Condor Take Permit
- Ventura Water Pure
- City of Ventura
- Bird Friendly Landscaping Practices
- Offshore wind farms
- California Coastal Commission
- Costco Construction in Camarillo

Shorebird Recovery Program Nest Monitoring



Our part time staff have grown this year to 4 biologists plus our volunteer coordinator. We have 3 biologists working hard training with our lead biologists to get earn their own State and Federal permits. We locate nests, track outcome, determine reasons for any nest failures and engage the Ormond Beach land owners to improve nesting success for these species.

[Bird Blog](#)

Photo: snowy plover on Ormond Beach in 2024, by Annette Patterson

Snowy Plover and Least Tern Habitat Protection

On Ormond Beach we maintain fencing around **4 large nesting areas**, enclosing a total of **120 acres** of high value nesting habitat with **3 miles of fence** line.

This picture at the left is an aerial image of our fence line on Ormond beach. This shows how important fences are to dune habitat:



Left - inside nesting habitat
Right - outside habitat

Beach Naturalists Volunteer Program



Volunteer Appreciation Sept 14, 2024



Our dedicated Beach Naturalists play a critical role in Ormond and Hollywood Beach stewardship. Volunteers assist with important tasks that protect our beach nesting birds and their habitat.

Each year we offer at least 2 free workshops for those interested in becoming Beach Naturalists. The training includes three hours of classroom instruction and two hours of hands-on field training. After completing the workshop, volunteers are ready to serve shifts at either Ormond or Hollywood Beach.

Beach Naturalists participate in a variety of activities, such as:

- Conducting outreach and education
- Tabling at local events
- Reporting and documenting ordinance violations
- Maintaining fences and signs
- Recruiting Dog Rangers to support beach stewardship efforts

Our volunteers contributed over 800 stewardship hours so far in 2024!

Dog Rangers



Photo: Michael Perkins

Dog Rangers reframes the public conversation around the disturbance of shorebirds and seabirds by dogs, letting beachgoers know how their dog can help birds. The pledge directly asks dogs to make following promises, in support of birds:

- I will never chase birds or wildlife.
- I will wear my leash at the beach to help birds feel safe.
- I will give birds about 100 feet of space to relax and refuel.
- I won't climb the dunes or walk-through established nesting areas.

Dogs have been taking the pledge to protect birds and we already have a growing team of over 50 rangers.



Why take the Dog Rangers pledge?

Unleashed dogs:

- Frighten birds (birds see them as predators)
- Interrupt eating and resting
- Lead to nest abandonment
- Damage sensitive nesting habitat



Birding Field Trips



This is by far our most popular activity. Fostering a love of birds and understanding of their needs is critical to protecting them and inspiring the next generation of birders. We provide trip leaders at

Some of the local hot spots we visit include:

- Arroyo Verde Park
- Camino Real Park
- Santa Clara River Estuary

local birding hotspots. Currently we hold field trips twice monthly. We provide enough trip leaders that we can break into small intimate groups.

- Ormond Beach
- Settling Ponds
- Ventura River Estuary
- Carpenteria Salt Marsh

October VAS Field Trips



Ormond Beach



SATURDAY, OCTOBER 12th 8:30 AM

One of the top birding areas in Ventura County used by over 200 shorebird, raptor, and migratory bird species. Includes a protected nesting site for the endangered California Least Tern and the threatened Western Snowy

Matilija



Photo by Chuck Engel

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 26th 8:30 AM

This trip is moderately strenuous and may include steep hills, off trail hiking, and wet stream crossings. Waterproof boots recommended. For safety we are limiting the number of participants with priority given to society members. This trip is not

Plover. Notable visitors can include Black-Necked Stilt, Yellow Headed Blackbird, and Peregrine Falcon. Walking will be mainly on dirt paths and sandy beaches.

recommended for beginning birders.

The Matilija Riparian and Lake is a well known local birding hotspot if somewhat difficult to access. The old dam has a silted up lake behind it fed by the Matilija creek which becomes a major tributary of the Ventura River. There are a wide variety of birds here including residents such as Sora and Green Heron; sometimes seen mountain species such as Chickadees and Quail; and migrants including Warblers and Vireos.

Visit our field trips [webpage](#) to sign up for a field trip or for more details

Beginners are welcome on all field trips. Light drizzle does not necessarily cancel trips, but heavier rain will. For all trips, please wear appropriate clothing (layers are suggested), comfortable shoes, and bring snacks, water, hats, sunscreen, binoculars and field guides.

Questions or need help? Email fieldtrips@venturaaudubon.org

October Speaker Program



Chasing Rare and Spectacular Birds in the World's Wild Places

Speaker: David Pereksta

Date/Time: October 8th at 7 PM PDT

Location: Poinsettia Pavilion 3451 Foothill Rd, Ventura

Presentation Summary: Some people may think that David Pereksta never leaves Ventura County. While he does hold all the local birding records, David's quest as a birder and ornithologist often takes him to far away corners of the world. Taking advantage of a number of unique opportunities, both personal and professional, his adventures have taken him to remote and little visited areas of North America, Mexico, Central and South America, the Caribbean, the Tropical Pacific, the Russian Far East, and Europe. He has also been to several islands that are nesting sites of some of the world's rarest seabirds. David will take us on a journey to some of these incredible destinations and will share stories and photos of a diverse array of rare, endemic, and just plain spectacular birds that he has encountered during these travels. This promises to be a fun and inspiring talk with lots of great photos and crazy stories.



Speaker Bio: David Pereksta is an Avian Biologist with the Bureau of Ocean

Energy Management, where he studies and analyzes the effects of offshore oil and gas, and renewable energy development on birds off the Pacific coast, Hawaii, and the US territories in the Pacific. Prior to his position at BOEM, Dave spent 16 years working on endangered species issues with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Ventura. Throughout his career with various Federal and State agencies, he has studied several imperiled bird species including Snowy Plovers, Piping Plovers, Least Terns, Ospreys, Northern Goshawks, Brown Pelicans, Spotted Owls, Marbled Murrelets, and Ivory-billed Woodpeckers. An avid birder for 50 years, Dave has traveled throughout the regions identified above including leading trips to Mexico, Belize, Costa Rica, Peru, and Chile, as well as leading hundreds of pelagic trips in the Pacific and Atlantic. He has seen over 2,400 species of birds in his travels; photographing more than 1,800 species along the way.

For more information and a Zoom link visit our programs page [HERE](#)



**VAS International Birding Trip
Belize and Guatemala:
Neotropical Birds and Mayan Ruins
February 16 - 24, 2025
With
Frank DeMartino**



In what are now the countries of Belize and Guatemala, the ancient Maya civilization once flourished, leaving behind cities, temples, pyramids, and observatories still standing, enshrouded in tree cover.

Amid rainforests and valleys, archaeological sites tell the

story of this culturally rich region while also providing habitat for a diversity of flora and fauna, including hundreds of bird species. As you seek out resident and migratory avifauna across a variety of ecosystems, you'll also gain a behind-the-scenes look at Audubon's current bird-based tourism initiatives and flyway conservation efforts in partnership with local community-based organizations.

Highlights

- Discover both concentrated flocks and rare sightings of avifauna, such as the Jabiru, Yellow-headed Parrot, Yucatan Jay, and Yucatan Woodpecker, in the wetlands and pine savannas of Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary.
- Examine Maya history at the Tikal, Yaxha, and Cahal Pech archaeological sites, and go birding amid the ancient structures and surrounding forests.
- Meet with members of the Petén Birding Association, a local group dedicated to birding, environmental education, and conservation through ecotourism.
- Hike the trails at Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Refuge, a tropical moist forest sheltering some 300 avian species, including trogons, tanagers, flycatchers, and the Yellow-billed Cacique.
- Learn about a community-based conservation project in the village of Red Bank aimed at saving and creating habitat for the Scarlet Macaw.
- Enjoy up-close encounters with some of the country's native fauna, including a pair of Harpy Eagles, at the Belize Zoo.

[Click Here for More Information and to Sign-Up](#)

I Bird, I Vote

Join bird lovers across the country and PLEDGE TO VOTE in the 2024 election. In addition to the much talked about federal races, there are state and local elections this year that will have an impact on what happens next: on the future of our communities, habitats, and the birds

we love.

The decision makers that will take office will have an important influence on the ways that laws are written and enacted at every single level of government.

The best way to protect birds and the places they need is to make sure that you vote this year on or before Election Day on Tuesday, November 5, 2024.

Birds can't vote, but you can. Sign the pledge to say you're in!

[Sign the Pledge Here](#)

This November 5th, all Californians will have the opportunity to vote for a brighter, cleaner, healthier future for our communities, by voting Yes on Prop 4 (the Climate Bond)! This historic bond would be the single largest investment of public funding for climate resilience in California history.

We invite you to join us in envisioning a future that works for all of us. Supporting this bond means investing in our environment, our treasured biodiversity, and the well-being of all Californians, creating a brighter future for everyone.

VAS is proud to support the Yes on Prop 4 campaign and encourage all Californians who care about our shared future to vote for this unprecedented opportunity.

- The need for action is urgent—according to Audubon’s science, nearly two-thirds of North American bird species could face extinction by the time someone born today in the U.S. reaches their average life expectancy of 76 years, by the year 2100.
- These are urgent investments in proven solutions - from conserving rapidly disappearing habitats and protecting our natural treasures, to ensuring clean drinking water for all communities and preventing disastrous wildfires, resources will go where it is needed most to secure a resilient future.
- Proposition 4 will be uniquely equitable because it dedicates at least 40% of its funding to underserved and climate-vulnerable communities.

[Click Here for More Information](#)

Other ways you can support the Ventura Audubon Society

Do you work for a company that uses Benevity?

If you volunteer for Ventura Audubon your volunteer hours go even further with matching funds

Check with your employer



Thank you to our supporters!

Financial contributions to our chapter allow us to continue our work protecting birds and their habitat.

Businesses, Organizations and Agencies

- The Nature Conservancy
- National Foundation of Fish and Wildlife (NFWF)
- National Audubon Society, Audubon in Action Grant
- California Coastal Commission Whale Tail Grant
- The Port of Hueneme
- The City of Port Hueneme
- Patagonia
- 1% for the planet
- Ventura Coast Brewing Company
- Topa Topa Brewing Company
- The Walter and Karla Goldschmidt Foundation



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