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The California Condor

Ventura Audubon Society
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venturaaudubon.org



Ormond Beach western snowy plover - photo by Alecia Smith

Call Notes

by Cynthia Hartley VAS Executive Director

Love is in the air! Our Shorebird Recovery team has recently seen canoodling snowy plovers and found their nest scrapes on Ormond Beach. With nesting season approaching, we are also ramping up our Beach Naturalist program. If you want to learn more about beach ecology and how you can help protect snowy plovers and least terns on Ventura County beaches please join us! We always need community help with this program. Our March training class will be the first in-person training we've done in 2 years. We will be at the Poinsettia Pavilion AND we will offer a Zoom online option. Please join us through whichever format you feel most comfortable. See the articles in this newsletter to find out more about this program and how you can attend.

This month's speaker is our own Alecia Smith, Ventura Audubon's Beach Naturalist program coordinator and trainer. In addition to being a professional plover and tern ambassador, Alecia is an accomplished bird photographer with an impressive 5000+ followers on Instagram. Please join us to see birds through her eyes and learn about her approach to birding and photography. We will be hosting this program at the Poinsettia Pavilion as a live meeting for the first time in 2 years, and also with a Zoom option. The past 2 years of meeting online have taught us a lot about creative ways to connect with everyone, so moving forward we are going to try holding hybrid in-person/Zoom meetings. We miss the personal connection of in-person meetings, but love the flexibility of meeting remotely. The article about the program below has links and more program information.

Finally we are very excited that we have been nominated for and accepted as a

nonprofit partner with 1% for the Planet. This just happened since the beginning of the year. If your are, or know, of a business that participates in this important program, please consider supporting Ventura Audubon. Click on the logo to learn more and see our supporters.



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Membership News

We've reached 100 VAS Members!
This is in addition to our National Audubon Members

As always, if you have any questions regarding membership, please contact membership@venturaaudubon.org.

Thank you to all of our 100 dedicated Ventura Audubon members! We encourage new members to join Ventura Audubon directly, as 100% of your membership fees support our chapter. You may still join National Audubon, but only the first year of your membership supports the local chapter. Let's keep the list growing and make 200 members by the end of the year!

Join or renew here

NEW - Members Only Newsletter!

Look for a special edition newsletter covering the snowy plover nesting season later this spring.



March Speaker

Alecia's Little Big Year:
An Inner and Outer Journey Inspired by Birds



Speaker: Alecia Smith Date: Mar 8, 2022 Time: 7 PM PDT

Program Description: We are pleased to present an evening of outstanding bird photography with a tale of an epic birding journey across 13 US states and over 10,000 miles. Many of you are already familiar with Alecia's photography and her distinctive style through her work for Ventura Audubon, but tonight is a chance to get to know the woman behind the photography.

Late last year Alecia went on a solo road trip across the United States simply seeking to deepen her connection with birds. She didn't have a detailed plan, a huge checklist or an ambitious "Big Year" goal when she set out. She simply wanted to experience, photograph and get to know new bird species. While she traveled on this long journey from California to South Carolina, she



found she was never completely alone. As she connected with new birds, she also deepened her connection with many bird-obsessed friends along the way through sharing the joy of birds and nature photography. While we see Alecia's images and hear about the birds, she will also discuss how she captures birds with her distinctive style and hear her thoughts on ethics in wildlife photography. If you're a fan of birds (especially shorebirds), or a fan of Alecia's, join us for tales and images from her "Little Big Year".



To join the program via Zoom:

visit our Monthly Speaker webpage

Then click the "Watch Virtually Via Zoom" button at the top of the webpage

To join the program in person:

We will be at the Santa Paula room, Poinsettia Pavilion 3451 Foothill Rd, Ventura, CA 93003 google maps

Speaker Bio: Alecia Smith, bird

photographer and Beach Naturalist Coordinator at Ventura Audubon Society, has been helping protect Ventura County's endangered shorebirds through our Shorebird Recovery Program for 5 years. Even before joining the program she recognized that her connection with birds was deeply healing for her and felt compelled to return the favor. As Alecia followed her journey with birds over the years, she's become increasingly attuned to shorebird behavior and the critical habitat on which they rely. Ethics in bird



photography and observation is never far from her mind. Using what she's learned, she advocates for birds, and completes the circle of giving by teaching our Beach Naturalists to become ambassadors for shorebirds, and to deepen their own connection with birds. You can find Alecia's photography featured in the book, <u>Birds of Instagram: Extraordinary Images from Around the World</u>, edited by David Allen Sibley. Her photography is also featured in our annual Shorebird Recovery fundraiser calendar and shared regularly on her Instagram account <u>@alecia_birds</u> where she has over 5,000 followers!

If you have topic requests or would like to recommend a speaker, please email or Sabrina, our program chair programs@venturaaudubon.org

For those of you who missed or want to revisit our very popular February program, "Identification & Biology of California Daytime Raptors" with Alvaro Jaramillo the recording has been posted to YouTube and linked on our website programs page. Or click here-to-go-directly-to-the-recording.



Diversity is Important for both Birds and Birders

Ventura Audubon Society is committed to fostering and preserving a birding culture of diversity, equality and inclusion. Promoting birding to a diverse audience is critical to the future of birds, benefits humans, improves our chapter and supports our mission to protect birds and their habitat. As an audience member if you ever feel we are not living up to this promise please feel free to reach out and let us know.

March Birding Field Trips

A message from Adele Fergusson, Field Trip Coordinator

Beginners are always welcome on field trips!

Please do not be shy if you are learning bird ID or are just curious. We love having and encouraging beginner birders



COVID-19 safety measures:

- All participants sign up no less than 24 hours in advance for field trips this
 allows us advance time to ensure we have enough trip leaders to provide for
 social distancing
- Participants sign and return a COVID release form
- All participants must be vaccinated this includes our leaders too
- Everyone must wear a mask and social distance during the field trip
- Field trips will be closed if we get can't keep our ratio of participants to field trip leaders small

Sign up early to participate in a field trip:

- 1. Visit our Field Trip webpage to sign up
- 2. Scroll to the bottom of the field trip descriptions, and fill out; your name, email address and select the trip you want to attend
- 3. You will be sent an email by our Field Trip Coordinator
- 4. Fill out the form and email back, or bring with you to the trip

Field trips close if we have more than 6 participants per trip leader, so sign up early!

Questions or need help? Email fieldtrips@venturaaudubon.org

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

March Field Trips



Gadwall: By Vince Kinsch

Bubbling Springs is a fantastic place to view many gulls and ducks up close such as Western Gulls, Mallards and Widgeons etc. Also warblers and hummingbirds. Then we will check out the J St Canal and will hopefully see more ducks, herons, egrets and pied billed grebes, . If time allows we will walk towards the pier where we could see a variety of gulls, grebes and shorebirds.

Bubbling Springs

Wednesday, March 9th, 2022 Meeting Time: 8:30am Directions: Take Ventura Rd south, make a left on Hueneme Rd. Make a right onto Surfside Drive. Go several hundred feet and you will see the stream on the right, park on the street or in the parking lot for Walter B. Moranda Park

GOOGLE MAPS



Canada Geese; by Vince Kinsch

Ventura Settling Ponds

Saturday, Mar 12, 2022 Meeting Time: 8:30am

The settling ponds at the Ventura Harbor is a reliable place to find ducks, grebes, gulls and terns, as well as songbirds and raptors. We should hear Spotted Towhees, Yellow Rumped Warblers and Bluegray gnatcatchers.

Directions: Take Harbor Blvd to Spinnaker Dr. and enter Ventura Harbor. The water treatment plant is on Angler, a left turn before Spinnaker curves to the right. Park either across the street from the entrance on Angler in the 4 hour parking areas on the curb. Use caution when crossing the road at the blind curve. Meet in front of the gate on Angler.

GOOGLE MAPS



Western snowy plover--Alecia Smith

Ormond Beach

Saturday Mar 26th, 2022 Meeting Time: 8:30am

Join us at this excellent coastal location, where we will look for a variety of birds, such as Willets, Whimbrels, Long Billed Curlew, Black Bellied Plovers and other migrating shorebirds. We will also look for Peregrine Falcon, Loggerhead Shrikes and Blue-Gray Gnatcatchers. Dress in layers, as the morning may be chilly.

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. This is an isolated area so please be careful and lock your car.

GOOGLE MAPS

Visit our Field Trip webpage to sign up!

Hedrick Ranch Conservation Workday with Friends of the Santa Clara River (FSCR)



Saturday Mar 6th, 2022 Meeting Time: 9:00am - 12 noon

also, there are upcoming work days on: April 2nd. 2022

For more information about attending and updates, please visit the Friends of the Santa Clara River website. This is their Hedrick Ranch Nature Area workday webpage



Ventura Audubon Costa Rica Birding Trip

by Frank DeMartino

From February 10th - 16th members of Ventura and Conejo Audubon journeyed to the birders paradise that is Costa Rica. We explored the lowlands of Sarapiqui up to the high elevations of San Gerardo de Dota in the Talamanca Mountains. Our eleven travelers enjoyed an amazing journey through many types of lush habitat. Our guide, Chito, entertained and educated us throughout the week and enthusiastically led us to many birds.



In the gardens of our first hotel we were reminded of the numerous North American species that winter in the region, as we saw Tennessee Warblers, Philadelphia Vireos, Baltimore Orioles and Tropical Kingbirds galore. A couple owls were spotted during the morning and we got great looks at a Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl and a Mottled Owl. There were also a few species getting ready for nesting season, including: Rufous-collared Sparrow, Brown Jay, Hoffmann's Woodpecker, and Rufous-naped Wren.

Our journey through Costa Rica included a fair amount of time birding from the bus, but even that did not disappoint! Roadside sightings of King Vulture, White Hawk, Laughing Falcon, Gray Hawk, Northern Jacana, and Southern Lapwing made the rides a pleasure.

We stopped at many local hotspots that featured fruit feeders and hummingbird feeders-- those were difficult places to leave behind! The feeders offered great looks at: Blue-gray Tanager, Violet Sabrewing, Red-headed Barbet, Northern Emerald-



Toucanet, Red-legged Honeycreeper, and Purple-throated Mountain Gem.

Lesser Violetear
photo by Richard Armerding

Of course, there was some hiking to be done along heavily wooded trails, rushing rivers, and spectacular waterfalls. Our expeditions brought us sightings of many Trogon species (Slatytailed, Gartered, Black-throated), Toucans (Yellow-billed, Keel-billed), Scarlet Macaws, Great Green Macaws, Shining Honeycreeper, Snowy Cotinga, Flame-throated Warbler, Collared Redstart, Volcano Junco, and Blackbilled Nightingale-Thrush.



Yellow Throated Toucan

photo by Richard Armerdingn



Resplendent Quetzal photo by Richard Armerding

One of the target species for this trip was the Respledent Quetzal and we had plenty! Our guide exceeded our expectations by leading us to not one, but two breeding pairs of quetzals! We enjoyed long views of both the male and female birds excavating nest cavities.

All in all, we saw over 230 species and had a great time! The food was delicious, the accommodations were superb, and the birds were simply breathtaking! Many thanks to those who attended, our guide, our driver, and the wonderful people of Costa Rica. I am looking forward to the next trip!

VAS would like to extend a special thank you toDebbie Jordan and <u>Holbrook Travel</u> for putting together and organizing this special trip! This trip helped raise \$1,000 for VAS. We are considering another trip for 2023, possible destinations include either Ecuador, Costa Rica, Colombia or the Yucatan Peninsula. Stay tuned!...

Shorebird Recovery Program Update





Western snowy plover nesting season starts this month! The "official" start of nesting season is March 15th according to the USFWS, although snowy plovers adhere to their own schedule. It seems the warm weather in February has inspired our snowy plovers, as they are already making nest scrapes. If you go to the beach to look for snowy plovers you might have noticed they are a little harder to find now. Our biologists are seeing them inside the nesting habitats, and less so at the tideline these past few weeks. They are spreading out and claiming territories, while those that nest elsewhere are

moving to their breeding destinations. The first snowy plover nest of the season has even been reported in Monterey County the week of Feb 21st.

Habitat Fences

A critical part of protecting the the western snowy plover and the later arriving California least tern is to fence their nesting habitat to minimize disturbance from beach recreation. At Ormond Beach we fence four areas where most of the nesting occurs. However in the fall we take down the fences at the tideline in order to protect them and the dunes from winter winds and shifting sand. So now, just before nesting season, it all goes back up. We have installed all the tideline fences that front the 100 acres of fenced nesting habitat. This was accomplished by the <u>C.R.E.W.</u> at the end of February. They put up 1.5 miles of fencing that week, plus they repaired mesh fencing in other areas that have been damaged by the strong winds from last winter. THANK YOU CREW!



The CREW

New Signs for Nesting Habitats

We have ordered fresh signs for the beach and they will be installed in the next week or two. Thank you to everyone who donated to the Shorebird Recovery program in the past year! Your donations allowed us to replace signs stolen in 2021. While we were ordering new signs we've also updated our designs:







Predator Exclosures and Trash Pickup

We are also building predator exclosures and removing trash from the habitats. Our Beach Naturalists and the Channel Islands Audubon Club turned out in force on February 28th to clean up the South Habitat nesting area and help with repair and construction tasks.



Thank you to everyone who have spent their weekends helping with these tasks! If you'd like to get involved, please consider joining our Beach Naturalist program.

Beach Naturalist Training Class

Would you like to join our Beach Naturalist team?

Join Biologist Kat and Volunteer Coordinator Alecia for the March installment on:

Saturday, March 19th 9:00-11:30 AM PST

You'll learn about dune ecology, and special status species such as California least terns and Western snowy plovers that rely on Ormond and Hollywood Beaches for nesting habitat. This training will also cover some of our data collection apps and projects that you can get involved with!

This month will be our first in person training in 2 years, although we are also



offering a Zoom option of this class at the same time. This classroom training is followed with an in-person field training at Ormond Beach. We will schedule it within a week or two of classroom training and will plan it to fit your schedules. Both trainings are free of charge thanks to our FWS Section 6 grant funding.

In-person option

Santa Paula room, Poinsettia Pavilion 3451 Foothill Rd, Ventura, CA 93003 google maps

Online Option

A Zoom link will be sent to everyone who registers

We will broadcast our training lecture via Zoom live during class

Register on our website signup page and/or email volunteer@venturaaudubon.org with your questions. More dates will be added in the coming months.

Channel Islands Audubon





Channel Islands Audubon has been busy recruiting more members through club collaborations with other environmental clubs on campus including hikes and birdwatching. On the 19th, CI Audubon hosted a BioBlitz. A BioBlitz is an event that centers around searching for and identifying different species of plants, animals, and fungi in a given area during a set time period -- it's a great way for people to engage with their environment while creating real data for science. BioBlitz had a great turnout and members logged 566 data points! 250 unique species were identified on campus through the iNaturalist app, 23 of which were birds ranging from Scaly-breasted Munia to American Kestrel. This highly successful event benefitted the capstone project of CI Audubon's Vice President, Viviana McKinley, who is tracking CSU Channel Island's biodiversity trend over time. The club is looking



forward to its next event on the March 5th, when they'll pick up trash in the North Habitat on Ormond Beach, as well as hanging signs and fixing fences.







Lesser Goldfinch



Western Meadowlark

Classes for Birders



Bird ID Class: Raptors with Frank the Bird Guy

Sat, March 12th at 2pm

Facebook Event Link Zoom Link

We are going to take a closer look at some birds of prey! This class will go in-depth on identifying raptors like owls, falcons and hawks. We'll include species from all across North America and even listen to their calls.



Speaker Programs Central Coast Audubon Chapters

Conejo Valley Audubon Society



Creating an Evolving Backyard Habitat



Speaker: Don and Chrystal Klabunde

Time: 7:30 - 9 pm Date: March 7th

Over the past 35 years, the Klabunde's have worked to create a comfortably natural environment in their half acre of rocky clay hillside in Simi Valley. Many bird, mammal and reptile species, visit them regularly to shelter, nest, and feed. To enhance the productivity of this backyard habitat, they've gravitated toward more and more native plants from Douglas Irises to a magnificent Valley Oak. On March 7th, they'll talk about what has grown successfully and what hasn't, and they'll share pictures of the birds that inhabit their yard now, including the ones that have come to nest there. Don and Chrystal Klabunde are retired physicist and animator respectively. They are

long-time active members of CVAS, both serving on the board.

more info (including zoom link)



Fifty Years of California Raptor Natural History and Conservation Efforts



Photo by Noel Snyder

Speaker: Dr. Peter Bloom Time: 7:00 - 8:30 pm Date: March 21st

For the past 50 years, Dr. Peter Bloom has been studying various California raptors, most notably Red-Tailed Hawks, Red-Shouldered Hawks, Golden Eagles, Ospreys, Turkey Vultures and Swainson's Hawks. Much of Pete's research involves banding, tagging, and occasionally fitting transmitters on these important predators, each with their own ecosystem needs. By analyzing their movements in Southern California and beyond, these studies have contributed valuable information to conservation efforts throughout California. Pete will share insights gained during these decades-long studies, including what he hopes to achieve with future research.

more info (including zoom link)





Ornitherapy: For Your Mind, Body and Soul

Speaker: Holly Merker

Time: 7:30pm Date: March 23rd

Watching birds: not only fun, but good for you!

Learn why getting your daily dose of Ornitherapy is just what the doctor ordered.... Ornitherapy leads to a more mindful approach to the observation of birds, benefits our mind, body, and soul. We're pushed and pulled in many directions, no matter our age. If we allow birds and nature to slow us down, we are practicing a form of "selfcare". Research shows that exposure to nature actively reduces stress, depression, and anxiety, while helping build a stronger heart and immune system.

Birds are gateways into deeper experiences with nature, magnifying these benefits. Through observation, we can learn not only about birds, but gain insight into our own lives while exploring our connection to the world around us. This fosters stewardship and bolsters conservation. Within the program, we'll delve into our connections to birds, how to practice Ornitherapy for optimal benefits, and learn about the latest research in the power of nature for overall wellbeing. Come listen to how watching birds can bring you more than just the enjoyment.

more info (including zoom link)

Notes from the Field

Nov-Dec 2021 by David Pereksta

Several birds were found locally in November that have had no or very few records in Ventura County. Coincident with a recent irruption of the species into San Diego and Riverside Counties, a Harris's Hawk was at the Ojai Meadows on 30 Nov (KLG). If this was indeed a bird of natural origin (which it likely was), it constitutes a first record for Ventura County. Ventura County's fourth American Tree Sparrow was at Sycamore Canyon on 14 Nov (DKB). Two small wrens were at Sycamore Canyon 15-23 Nov with one clearly a Pacific Wren and the other likely a Winter Wren (BD et al.). If the identification of the Winter Wren is confirmed, that would be the second county record of that species.

A Ross's Goose and 14 Snow Geese were on the Oxnard Plain 19-24 Dec (DP & LS). A pair of Wood Ducks continued at the Ventura Settling Ponds through 20 Dec. Other Wood Ducks included one at Lake Sherwood on 6 Nov (MH) and two at the Soule Park Golf Course 30 Nov-18 Dec (LLG, JM & BT). A Eurasian Wigeon was at Mugu Lagoon 5-16 Dec with a second one being found on 16 Dec and a third on 19 Dec (DP). Another Eurasian Wigeon was at Conejo Creek North Park on 19 Dec (DK & CK). A White-

winged Scoter was at Mugu Rock 26-29 Nov (RC). A male **Black Scoter** was at Mugu Lagoon on 18 Nov (DP) and likely the same individual was at Ormond Beach on 24 Dec (SS). A female **Black Scoter** was at Sycamore Cove on 16 Nov (MB) and another or the same was at Mugu Lagoon 5-19 Dec (DP).

Red Knots were largely absent from Mugu Lagoon this fall and early winter with the only two on 5 Dec (DP). Shorebirds continuing on the Arnold Road sod fields included a Mountain Plover through 1 Nov and a Buff-breasted Sandpiper through 3 Nov. Black Skimmer numbers at Mugu Lagoon remained high through November and December with a high count of 156 there on 5 Dec (DP). The Neotropic Cormorant continued at Ormond Beach through 12 Dec and an American Bittern was there 26-27 Dec (SS). A Tricolored Heron returned for its fourth winter at Mugu Lagoon 8 Nov-22 Dec (MR). Yellow-crowned Night-Herons have become a regular resident in recent years, but 88 at Mugu Lagoon during the Thousand Oaks CBC on 19 Dec was a new high count (DP et al.). There were also 7 Reddish Egrets there on 19 Dec, which was the high count for the period (DP et al.).

A **Zone-tailed Hawk** continued in Ojai through 14 Dec, although there may have been more than one bird present including another individual at Lake Casitas 30 Nov-15 Dec (JM). A **Short-eared Owl** was at Mugu Lagoon on 19 Dec (DP).

A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was at Lake Casitas 23 Nov-12 Dec (JM) and another was in Moorpark on 8 Dec (MZ). Red-naped Sapsuckers included individuals at Eureka Canyon on 2 Nov (DKB), Conejo Creek North Park 4-26 Nov (GR), and the Stagecoach Inn Museum on 19 Dec (RA & CB). A Williamson's Sapsucker was in Thousand Oaks on 6 Nov (GR) and another two were on Mount Pinos on 28 Nov (GR). A Gray Flycatcher was found during the Ventura CBC at Arroyo Verde Park 18-20 Dec (BCB, SB, StB). The Tropical Kingbird returned for another winter at Ormond Beach 10-29 Nov (ZA). A Harris's Sparrow was in east Ventura 21-22 Dec (RM) and a Swamp Sparrow was in the Kimball Barranca on 6 Nov (AM). Nearly a dozen White-throated Sparrows were reported locally during November and December.

Several of our returning wintering birds from previous years disappeared after the cold storms at the end of December. The **Plumbeous Vireo** at Pitts Ranch Park was last seen on 19 Dec and the **Painted Redstart** at Arroyo Verde Park was last seen on 25 Dec. Other **Plumbeous Vireos** included one in Thousand Oaks 5-12 Dec (GR) and one in downtown Ventura on 2 Nov (NA). Another **Painted Redstart** was along Creek Road near Oak View on 14 Nov (KC). An **Orchard Oriole** returned for another winter at the Ventura Community Park 18-20 Dec (SS & SC). Rare warblers continuing at the Ventura Settling Ponds included a **Chestnut-sided Warbler** through 24 Nov and a **Black-and-white Warbler** through 11 Dec. Another **Black-and-white Warbler** was in the Ventura River bottom on 16 Nov (SK & MB). A **Palm Warbler** was at Oxnard College on 4 Nov (NA) and another was at Lake Casitas 18-24 Dec (SK). A **Summer Tanager** continued in the Kimball Barranca through 31 Dec when a second individual was found there (NA).

Good birding, David Pereksta

Observers: Zach Abbey, Richard Armerding, Noah Arthur, Marc Better, Mario Borunda, Catherine Bourne, Sage Bylin, Stephen Bylin, Kirsti Carr, Bonnie Clarfield-Bylin, Rick Constantino, Brian Daniels, Mary Hansen, Deven Kammerichs-Berke, Sangeet Khalsa, Chrystal Klabunde, Don Klabunde, Kathryn Le Grice, Lukas Le Grice, Jerry Maryniuk, Robert McMorran, Ava Molnar, David Pereksta, Griffin Rohrer, Martin Ruane, Larry Sansone, Spencer Seale, Bob Tallyn, Michael Zarky

Ways to Support Ventura Audubon Society

Please consider donations to VAS as part of your year end giving.

Ventura Audubon Society is a registered tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization.

Prints and Post Cards Fundraiser

All net proceeds go to Shorebird Recovery Program photography by Alecia Smith

To find out more or to place your order, please visit this website



Willet Pair at Dusk



Western Snowy Plover 8X12



Black Oyster Catcher



Western Snowy Plover Card Flat Card 4'x5.5' on Linen Photographic Paper)

Thank you to our grant funders!

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

Grants

- California Department of Fish and Wildlife and United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Endangered Species Act Section 6 Grant
- National Foundation of Fish and Wildlife (NFWF)

• National Audubon Society, Audubon in Action Grant

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VOLUNTEER: Fill out this SURVEY FORM





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