

## The California Condor

Ventura Audubon Society  
December 2024 Volume 66, Number 4  
A Chapter of the National Audubon Society  
[venturaaudubon.org](http://venturaaudubon.org)



*Photo by: Chuck Engel*

### Call Notes

by Rachel Ameche  
President

I hope you have had a cozy and comforting Thanksgiving and are looking forward to the rest of the holiday season. We want to thank our members who make this community of

bird lovers so awesome. I know this season I personally have felt especially grateful for opportunities to connect with others who share my love for conservation and wildlife. Thank you sincerely to all who participate in our events and to those who have donated to our "Birdtober" Birdathon fundraiser. Our chapter could not be what it is without you.

As you may know December is when every Audubon chapter mobilizes to conduct the annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC). This year Ventura Audubon will be counting our area on Saturday, December 21st. To prepare, the VAS December speaker program will feature our CBC coordinator Frank DeMartino, who will give a CBC overview and training class. If you're on one of our count teams, interested in joining a team, or just want to learn more about the Christmas Bird Count this meeting is for you! If you would like to volunteer on one of the count teams this year please contact Frank at [venturabirdcount@gmail.com](mailto:venturabirdcount@gmail.com). This newsletter is devoted to the CBC, so read on for more information.

Finally, this past spring, volunteers installed new tree swallow nest boxes at the Ventura Wildlife ponds. Check out the wrap up below. We would like to extend a special thanks to VAS member Linda England for leading the project.

## Update from the Membership Coordinator



We would like to thank everyone who joined or renewed their annual membership in 2024! We have the most members in our history and our membership continues to grow. If you're not a member, you can still join by clicking one of the links below. Look for your renewal reminder in your email inbox.

If you have any questions or concerns about your membership, please feel free to send an email to [membership@venturaaudubon.org](mailto:membership@venturaaudubon.org).

We look forward to an exciting 2025!

*By joining our local chapter, your donation directly supports Ventura Audubon's mission.*

[Membership Webpage](#)

[Join VAS via PayPal](#)

## December 2024 Speaker Program

**Top 10 Most Wanted Yard Birds - A Christmas Bird Count Primer**

**Speaker: Frank DeMartino**

**Ventura Audubon CBC Coordinator, CVAS President**

**Date: Tuesday Dec 10, 2024**

**Time: 7pm**

**Location: Poinsettia Pavilion, 3451 Foothill Rd, Ventura and Zoom**

It's Christmas Bird Count season! Ventura's count is Saturday, December 21st. That means it's time to start checking those backyard birds! This presentation will focus on the history of the Christmas Bird Count, the importance of community science, how you can participate in our upcoming count, and what birds to look for in your yard. We will also take a look at some local trends that we've observed over the past 45 years. Finally, we'll go over the birds that we most want to find for the CBC. You may have one and not even realize it!



Photo: Chuck Engel

Frank is an avid birdwatcher whose passion for birds has led him to serve on the board of both Ventura Audubon Society and Conejo Valley Audubon Society where he is currently President. He is the owner of the Wild Birds Unlimited store in Ventura as well as the coordinator and compiler for the Ventura Christmas Bird Count. During the pandemic, Frank began offering bird education classes online as "Frank the Bird Guy" and has shared the joy of birds with thousands worldwide.



To join the program via Zoom, visit our

[Monthly Speaker webpage](#)

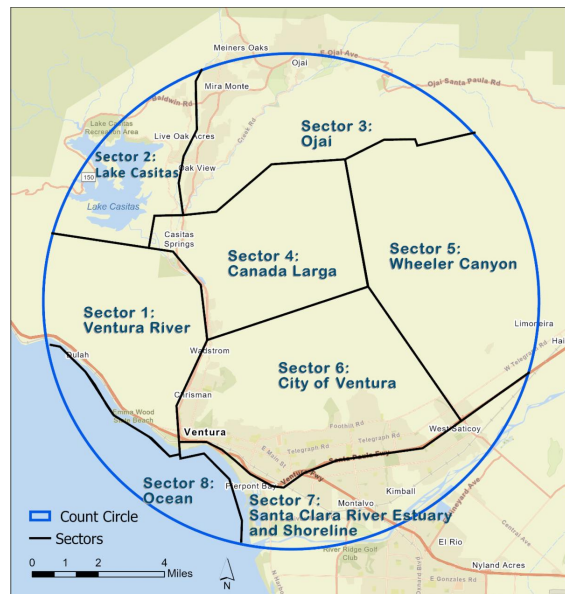
Then click the "Watch Virtually Via Zoom" button at the top of the webpage

## Ventura Audubon Christmas Bird Count Saturday December 21st, 2024

### Ventura Count Circle

Each winter the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is a chance to participate in the oldest and longest running community science project. Click [here](#) for information from National Audubon on the history of the CBC, and [here](#) for reports from 1900-present.

Each Audubon chapter counts a 15-mile diameter "count circle". The same circle is counted each year for consistency. The Ventura Audubon count circle is subdivided into 8 sectors (see map to the right). Each sector has a leader who organizes teams within their sector, and the entire circle is organized by our CBC coordinator and compiler, Frank DeMartino. Frank will report the data after the count is completed to the National Audubon Society database.



If you would like to participate this year, either in the field or from your backyard, please do one of the following:

- Email Frank DeMartino at [venturabirdcount@gmail.com](mailto:venturabirdcount@gmail.com),
- Visit or call the [Wild Birds Unlimited](#) store in Ventura

Our December speaker program features Frank DeMartino who will talk about the Christmas Bird Count.

## What are we learning from the CBC?

Each year CBC data is added to a database and is available to researchers and the public. The Ventura count has been held each year since 1980. Brad Sillasen created an interactive database that shows trends in bird populations within Ventura Audubon's Count Circle. Below is an overview of the data we have collected. To explore the data, please visit the website link below:

[Click to visit the Ventura Audubon CBC database](#)

**Years on Record: 44**  
Total Species Recorded: 304  
Most Species Recorded: 202 (1987)  
Least Species Recorded: 156 (1981)  
Average Species Recorded: 178

## Ventura Audubon Birding Field Trips

### 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!**

- We request that 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*
- This also enables us notify participants of any changes

Sign up early to participate in a field trip:

1. Visit our [Field Trip webpage](#)
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

Questions or need help? Email [fieldtrips@venturaaudubon.org](mailto: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.*

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## December Field Trips



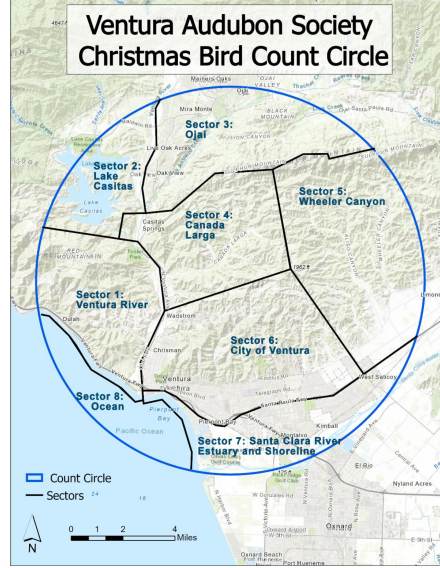
## Ventura Settling Ponds

**Saturday Dec 7th, 2024**  
**Meeting Time: 8:30am**

An easy walk along dirt paths around the shore of the settling ponds, one of the top birding locations in Ventura County. We'll be looking for Ducks, Grebes and Herons. Gulls and Pelicans are likely, and Hawks and Harriers possible. No restrooms or drinking water, nearest public restrooms are at Surfer's Knoll parking lot.

Go to our field trip page to sign-up

[Sign-Up Here](#)



## Christmas Bird Count

**Saturday Dec 21st, 2023**  
**Meeting Time: Check with your sector leader**

Today we count all species, numbers of birds of species and we visit every nook and cranny in our Ventura Audubon count circle. Birders of all skill sets are involved in the CBC. If you are a beginning birder, our coordinator will pair you with an expert.

If your home is within the boundaries of a CBC circle, then you can stay at home and report the birds that visit your feeder on count day as long as you have made prior arrangement with our count compiler.

If you would like to participate this year, please contact Frank at [venturabirdcount@gmail.com](mailto:venturabirdcount@gmail.com)

**Ventura Wildlife Ponds Tree Swallow  
Nest Box Project**  
by Linda England



Nest boxes at the Ventura settling ponds have been attractive to cavity-nesting Tree Swallows (*Tachycineta bicolor*) for decades. This last spring VAS volunteers built updated boxes and placed them in locations to better protect the birds and to encourage them to nest.

There were two waves of nest occupation by the swallows. The first arrived in April and the second in late May. Each pair marked their selected box with a few feathers and took a week or two to build a nest. Each nest ultimately contained 4-6 pale pink eggs. The parents incubate the eggs for about 2 weeks. It takes about 3



weeks for the chick to fledge from the time they've hatched.

We had three teams of two people rotating to check the boxes twice weekly, totaling 100 hours, and recording the data on the Cornell Lab NestWatch app. A total of nine broods were recorded, with 34 fledglings. The boxes have now been removed for repair and cleaning over the winter.

We'll be calling on volunteers next spring who might be available to help with nest box installation and monitoring in the spring. We look forward to expanding to twelve boxes and to continuing to learn about these amazing swallows.

## Birding Classes with Frank at Wild Birds Unlimited Ventura



### Beginner Bird ID Winter Edition - Sunday, December 15th at 2pm on ZOOM

Is your yard full of little brown birds? Are you wondering where all of the colorful birds have gone? Join us as we talk about the variety of birds that spend the winter in in Southern California and learn some ID tips for common backyard birds that occur this time of year. We will talk sparrows, finches, woodpeckers, nuthatches, and more! The Christmas Bird Counts are coming soon, so this will be a great prep for participating in a CBC! This talk is at 2pm PT

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## Thank you to our supporters!

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

- The Nature Conservancy
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF)
- National Audubon Society, Audubon in Action Grant
- California Coastal Commission Whale Tail Grant
- Patagonia
- 1% for the planet
- Ventura Coast Brewing Company
- Topa Topa Brewing Company
- Linda England

- Dennis Cabral (in Honor of Elke Cabral)

## Support Ventura Audubon Society

Please consider VAS in your year end donations.  
Ventura Audubon Society is a registered tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization.

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