

Ventana Wildlife Society

2011 Annual Report

APRIL 1, 2010 through MARCH 31, 2011



Ventana Wildlife Society

mission:

To conserve native wildlife and their habitats

Ventana Wildlife Society is a non-profit organization dedicated to the survival and health of California's native wildlife. We were successful at the reintroduction of the Bald Eagle to Central California, and are now working to restore a wild population of California Condors.

Our long-term research and monitoring programs track key populations and habitats to support the continued health of a rich diversity of wildlife species.

Ventana Wildlife Society's extensive public education programs focus on serving youth. Through fun, hands-on experiences, we inspire a lifelong love of nature and build the capacity for informed environmental stewardship.

Dear Friends,

We accomplished a great deal this year and in this report we proudly share with you the work we've done. Thank you all for helping us with our mission of conserving native wildlife and their habitats. In this report, you will see the outcomes of our programs and member events ranging from outdoor youth education, California Condor and Bald Eagle conservation, bird monitoring and shorebird conservation, and more.

Today's kids are bombarded with information and most of it having nothing to do with actually being outdoors. Some have coined this "nature deficit disorder". Our generation and beyond played outside all the time and we didn't have handheld computers and the like to distract us from the fact that we were part of nature. While our mission is focused on conserving native wildlife and their habitats, we strongly feel that providing meaningful, outdoor youth opportunities is essential to this mission. For without a focus on the next generation, we would be spinning our wheels.

The recovery of the California Condor to the wild was once thought to be impossible, but today many believe not only is it possible, but that we are on the right track to succeed. This year, we began using a new type of Global Positioning System transmitter that the condors carry which pinpoints their location every one to two minutes. This new technology has helped us better understand where condors are feeding and what they are doing throughout the day. This is critically important because most of the problems we have found that limit condor populations in the wild have much to do with where they find food and what they are feeding upon.

Together in our work with youth outdoors and hands-on, direct involvement with wild animal populations in need, we are preparing the next generation of environmental stewards and conserving native wildlife. On behalf of the board of directors and staff, we thank our donors, volunteers, and collaborators for your support.



JANET SHING, CHAIR
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Janet Shing".



KELLY SORENSON
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kelly Sorenson".

Our Mission 1

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COVER PHOTO:

Natural Science Awareness Program student enjoys the comfort of nature as he writes about the day's discoveries during journal time.

BACK PHOTO:

2010 Wings Over the World event's gracious host, Jean Weiss, releases a condor back to the wild.

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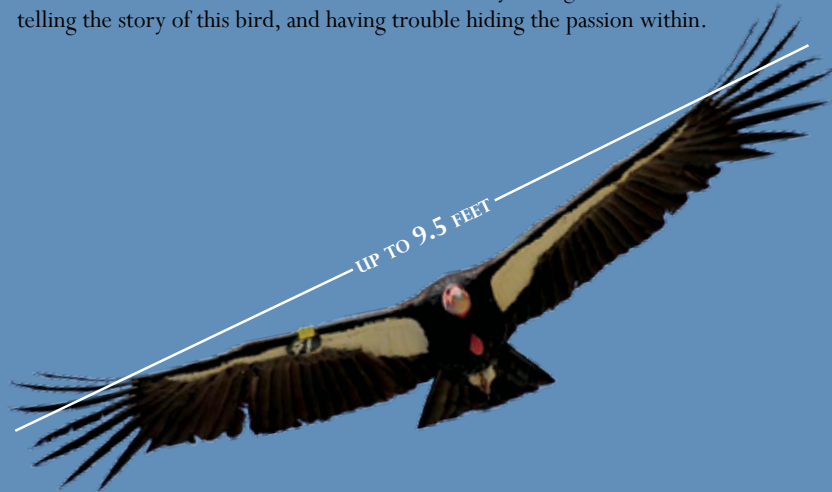
Condor 171 (left) peers in as Amy Wells, DVM (center) climbs up to the nest to perform a 30-day checkup on a condor chick in Big Sur (right).



One of the shirts on sale in our Discovery Center provides a condor close-up with the words “A face only a baby could love”. These words are not entirely true. In 15 years of our California Condor recovery program, we have developed a definite fondness for these unique creatures, an attachment fostered by daily tracking, monitoring nests, maintaining feeding stations, and administering health exams.

Some of the biggest or most unique North American birds have been lost in the last two centuries, such as the Great Auk, the Carolina Parakeet, and possibly the Ivory-billed Woodpecker. Down to just 22 individuals in 1982, and removed from the wild in 1987, the California Condor, our largest soaring land bird, was on the brink of extinction. Ventana Wildlife Society joined the recovery effort by releasing condors in central California starting in 1997. The flock has grown to 54 birds (through 2010), augmented by releases and, for the last few years, nesting of several pairs in the wild. We are encouraged by the growth, but sustainability of the condor population remains tenuous without continued intensive management and resolution of threats. We are determined not to lose the condor. We are committed to ensuring that condors will continue to soar freely over the Central California Coast.

So if you see a crowd form along a Highway 1 pullout, perhaps condor male 251 is circling overhead and reminding people of the magnificent sights that used to be, and could still be. To be sure, a Ventana Wildlife Society biologist will be in that crowd, telling the story of this bird, and having trouble hiding the passion within.



restoring california condors to central california





Our Monterey County youth have been busy. They are finding whole new worlds to explore, not from a video game console, but from a kayak, a tidepool, a whale-watching boat, a quiet redwood grove, a shady trail, or a crackling campfire. Ventana Wildlife Society's education programs help bring youth outdoors and foster a greater appreciation of our natural environment.



We do this in several ways. Natural Science Discovery Camps in the summer provide 8-12 year olds week-long experiences studying a variety of wildlife and their habitats. Hooray for Habitats, Outrageous Ocean Odyssey, and Mountains Rock are alternating themes for these innovative camps. Condor Wilderness Camps are the most innovative of all, providing teens an opportunity to track wild condors with radio telemetry, place supplemental food at a remote feeding site and assist with a current work project. During the school year, we offer Natural Science Awareness Programs, weekly classes in the spring or fall that allow students to experience the wonders of nature over the course of 10 weeks.

This year, we served just over 220 youth, 125 of which joined us free of charge from underserved communities. We continue to work closely with a network of youth organizations, including the Boys and Girls Club of Monterey County, Community Partnership for Youth, and the Police Activities League of Salinas. The Big Sur Land Trust, California Department of Parks and Recreation, the City of Seaside, and the Bureau of Land Management are among the partners providing land access for programs. Through this network of youth organizations and agencies, our youth continue their discoveries – discovery of nature and discovery of themselves as future stewards.

Volunteers... are a priceless asset to our education programs!

The Bald Eagle recovery can be considered one of the most successful endangered species recovery efforts of our time. Ventana Wildlife Society is a proud participant in those efforts through restoring a breeding population in Central California and continuing to monitor that population.

We released 70 juvenile Bald Eagles in 1986-2000, and documented our first nesting pair in 1993. This was the first nesting record of Bald Eagles in Central California in nearly 60 years. Annual monitoring since then has demonstrated the impressive growth of the breeding population. Working with a broad network of volunteers, co-founder Sal Lucido reported that 31 Bald Eagle chicks successfully fledged in 2010. This was our highest count yet, bringing the total number of successful fledges to 197 in seven Central California counties since 1993.

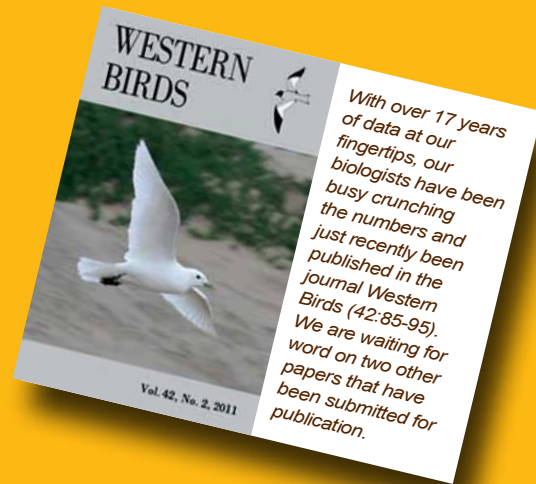


Because of widespread recovery efforts like ours, the Bald Eagle was removed from the Endangered Species List in 2007. Ventana Wildlife Society will continue working with volunteers in the coming years to monitor and support Bald Eagle nesting in central California.





In 2010, we completed our 18th year of songbird monitoring at Andrew Molera State Park along the Big Sur Coast. Using mist nets, we have captured, banded, and released tens of thousands of songbirds over the years, including more than 160 species. Through this effort, we were able to document population trends for many riparian species, results that were recently published in the journal *Western Birds*. We found that annual capture rates for two riparian birds, Warbling Vireo and Yellow Warbler, declined considerably since 1992. Trends for several other riparian species were



stable, at least until we separated data for local breeding adults and transient migrants. We found that capture rates for local Swainson's Thrush and Wilson's Warbler breeding populations increased at Andrew Molera State Park. Our dataset promises to provide additional insight on local and regional bird population trends, thereby assisting conservation management efforts.

Our banding lab continued to serve as a learning and outreach center. In 2010, we hosted 22 school, camp, or tour groups for banding demonstrations and talks. These programs reached 374 people, mostly youth. We welcomed an additional 285 park visitors who dropped by the lab for the unique opportunity to observe songbirds in the hand. Guests marveled at the bright yellow of a Western Tanager, the massive bill of a Black-headed Grosbeak, or the vigor of a tiny Bushtit. For our visitors, these experiences perhaps fostered a renewed appreciation of the precious life around them.





"When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world"

- John Muir



Two non-lead copper rifle bullets flanked by two lead rifle bullets... the copper bullets have mushroomed out and retained 98% of their original weight, while the lead bullets have lost a substantial portion to fragmentation. Even small fragments of lead can be lethal if swallowed.



We recognize and manage a variety of mortality factors for California Condors, but the greatest of these is lead poisoning. Condors can inadvertently ingest lead, particularly if the animal carcasses they feed on contain fragments of spent ammunition. Even in the years following the 2008 bill banning the use of lead ammunition within the condor range in California, fragments from lead bullets and lead shot have been found within the digestive tract of condors. We place supplemental food out for the Big Sur flock and as we'd hoped, they're finding other foraging spots on their own. Unfortunately not all new found food sources are lead free.

We trap condors twice per year (*photo on right*) to test blood lead levels and treat birds that have been exposed. Between April 1, 2010 and March 31, 2011 we tested 27 California Condors, of which 59% had been exposed to lead. We found that five suffered from acute lead poisoning. Thanks to early detection and successful treatment, we did not lose any condors to lead poisoning during this time in Big Sur.

To better understand sources of lead and other mortality factors, we are turning to technology. Our new solar-powered GPS transmitters can provide up to two location fixes per minute, allowing us to trace condor flight paths, identify feeding areas, and perhaps associate spatial activity patterns with threats. These location fixes essentially fall from the sky. The data are stored and automatically uploaded when the condor flies within range of a base station. In addition to pinpointing potential sources of lead contamination, these transmitters will help us identify locations of other threats, such as high-risk power lines.



City of Soledad



In 2010, we completed a one-year study for the City of Soledad determining bird and bat use of two sites planned for wind energy development. We used daytime observations of birds at horizontal and vertical distances, and nocturnal recordings of bat echolocation calls to evaluate the risk of collision for birds and bats present at the sites, including several species of conservation concern. An understanding of these risks will help the city better ensure effective bird protection.

Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area



Sharing the beach with a growing human population, endangered California Least Terns and threatened Western Snowy Plovers have limited space for nesting. And even protected nesting areas have dangers. At Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area, Loggerhead Shrikes and a variety of raptors have been known to depredate substantial numbers of tern and plover chicks. Ventana Wildlife Society helps protect nesting terns and plovers by trapping and relocating avian predators. In 2010, our biologist monitored shrike and raptor activity in sensitive nesting areas, targeted individuals threatening terns and plovers, and safely transported 14 predators to suitable habitat elsewhere.



Monterey Peninsula Water Management District



Ventana Wildlife Society has been studying birds on the Carmel River for 15 years. Recent surveys at nine sites along the river, from the Highway 1 Bridge to Carmel Valley Village, have helped Monterey Peninsula Water Management District determine how habitat restoration efforts along the river have affected bird populations. Continued partnerships with Monterey Peninsula Water Management District and other local stakeholders, such as Big Sur Land Trust, can contribute to bird conservation on the Carmel River through the development of a conservation plan and appropriate management activities.

Santa Lucia Conservancy



Annual monitoring of riparian areas and grasslands at Santa Lucia Preserve help identify bird species of conservation concern and evaluate how management projects might affect local populations. Based on observations in 2010, we recommended a high research and monitoring priority for Purple Martin and Tricolored Blackbird on the preserve. We also recommended inclusion of Grasshopper Sparrow as a special status species in the preserve's revised resource management plan. Our recommendations have prompted expanded research and management programs on the preserve, particularly for maintaining grasslands and enhancing Tricolored Blackbird breeding habitat.





As children, small creatures endlessly fascinate us; as adults, we can protect them so as to inspire future children - Les E. Watling



Wings Over the World



MAY 23, 2010
BIG SUR, CALIFORNIA





Wings Over the World is a condor release auction and is the only event like it in the world. Nowhere else can you bid on the opportunity to return a California Condor to the wild. This truly unique event was hosted by Jean and Tim Weiss at their coast property in Big Sur, California. They routinely see wild condors fly over the property and it is located in the heart of the birds' habitat, which is one of the reasons why this site was so ideal. The proceeds for this event are critically important to our efforts of saving condors in the wild, and we especially wish to thank Jean and Tim Weiss and the event attendees that made it a huge success. ~Thank you!



18
annual vws events

Donor Appreciation Reception

Each winter, we take an evening to recognize our many wonderful members, collaborators, supporters and volunteers. In January 2011, we honored Bob Riseborough (top) and Dr Amy Wells (below) with the Frank J Lichtanski and Volunteer of the Year Awards, respectively.



March 31, 2011 and 2010

ASSETS	2011	2010
Cash and Equivalents	\$76,383	\$80,293
Board Designated Cash Reserves	65,059	50,027
Pledge Receivable.....	125,000	-
Grants Receivable.....	16,398	76,618
Deposits & Prepaid Expenses	6,058	4,383
Property and Equipment (net).....	1,003,678	1,021,081
TOTAL ASSETS	1,292,576	1,232,402

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

Liabilities

Accounts Payable.....	18,126	8,007
Accrued Liabilities	16,981	29,675
Deposits	5,725	-
Total Liabilities	40,832	37,682

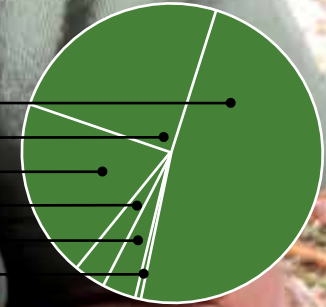
Net Assets

Unrestricted.....	506,744	562,389
Temporarily Restricted.....	39,000	62,331
Permanently Restricted.....	706,000	570,000
Total Net Assets	1,251,744	1,194,720

TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS.....\$1,292,576 \$1,232,402

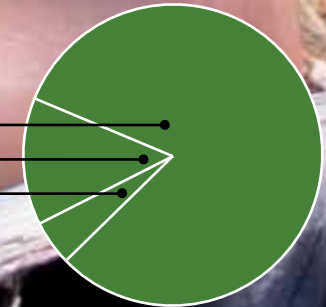
2011 Total Income

Grants, 48%	\$408,505
Contributions, 25%	\$208,244
Service Fees, 21%	\$179,048
Special Events (net), 3%	\$22,530
In-Kind Contributions, 3%	\$24,083
Other, < 1%	\$2,639
TOTAL:	\$845,049



2011 Total Expense

Program Services, 81%	\$636,116
Administrative, 15%	\$118,504
Fundraising, 4%	\$33,405
TOTAL:	\$788,025



Ventana Wildlife Society is recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)3 organization. Tax ID: 94-2795935. Complete financial reports are available upon request.

Thank You for Supporting



Ventana Wildlife Society

Members and contributors are essential to our success...

Together we support the survival of a rich diversity of wildlife species and habitats.

We are pleased to recognize and thank the following supporters who contributed during the 2011 fiscal year (April 1, 2010 - March 31, 2011).

We are grateful!

Every gift, at every level, is so important...please support our work in any way you can.

If your name is misspelled, does not appear on this donor list, is in an inappropriate location, or if you prefer to be listed anonymously, please accept our sincere apologies and let us know.

Over \$50,000

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Rena Vivien Cochlin
JoAnn Cope
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Cameron Dix
Jim Edberg
Michael & Katherine Esola
Stephen Ferry



Planted originally by her grandmother, Stella Pellegrin, Jean Weiss brought these lilies to her home in Big Sur. They blossomed just in time for the Wings Over the World event!

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 Clarence Sherwood
 Barney Van Dyk
 Marion & George Webster
 Yahzee

Collaborators

Big Sur Land Trust
 Boys & Girls Club of Monterey County
 Bureau of Land Management
 California State Parks
 City of Seaside Parks & Recreation

City of Soledad
 Community Partnership for Youth
 Department of Fish & Game
 Los Angeles Zoo
 Monterey Peninsula Water
 Management District
 National Park Service
 Oakland Zoo
 Peregrine Fund
 Salinas Police Activities League
 Santa Barbara Zoo
 Santa Lucia Conservancy
 University of California Davis
 University of California Santa Cruz
 USDA Forest Service
 US Fish & Wildlife Service
 US Geological Survey
 Zoological Society of San Diego

Legacy Society

We wish to extend much appreciation to those who have remembered Ventana Wildlife Society through bequests or by naming VWS as a beneficiary in a life insurance policy or IRA:

Barbara Baldock & Phillip N Butler
 Virdette L Brumm, PhD &
 Robertson Parkman, PhD
 Sandy Decker & Karen Mortillaro
 Howard Elliott
 Carla & David Garnham
 Jeanne Holmquist
 Sheri Howe
 Sal & Ada Lucido
 Mark Rush
 Janet Shing
 Jerry & Cheryl Stidham
 Frank & Barbara Strehlitz
~ If you would like to speak to someone about ways you can make a gift or to let us know that you have already designated VWS in your estate, use the enclosed envelope, go to our website www.ventanaws.org, or contact Kelly Sorenson at 831-455-9514.

Company Match Programs

Many companies have matching gift programs through which they will

"match" the charitable contributions made by their employees/retirees, making your gift go even further. Check with your company's Human Resources office to see if they offer gift matching. Many VWS members take advantage of this opportunity through their employers; below is a list of these companies:

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Ways You Can Help!

Adopt-A-Condor
 Become a member
 Check or money order
 Donate to Ventana Wildlife Society
 Fund a student to attend
 Natural Science
 Awareness Programs
 Online by credit card
 Planned bequest
 Research your company's
 Matched Giving Program
 Recurring gift
 Recycle this report to a friend
 Sign up for a Condor Tour
 Subscribe to VWS e-newsletter
 Tell a family member
 Visit our Discovery Center
 Volunteer



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Join Us!

The success of Ventana Wildlife Society depends on the strong support of our members and contributors. We invite you to join us today by visiting our secure website at www.ventanaws.org or call us at 831-455-9514. Members receive e-newsletters, recognition in our Annual Report, and the knowledge that together we can help ensure a healthy future for the California Condor and other wildlife species while inspiring youth.