

# Ventana Wildlife Society

*2010 Annual Report*

April 1, 2009 through March 31, 2010





## *A message from our Executive Director and Board of Directors*

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*Kelly Sorenson  
Executive Director*

We are excited to share with you our 2010 annual report and present our recent accomplishments and plans to conserve native wildlife and their habitats. Our main focus remains on imperiled species, and in particular, the recovery of the California Condor.

As we entered the year, we sought answers to several important questions. We wanted to know more about the effects of marine contaminants on condor eggs. We also wanted to know if songbird populations were increasing or decreasing, and why. We also wanted to investigate how we can make wind energy safe for birds and bats. In this report, we will share some of our discoveries and plans for the future.

Like so many non-profits in the current economic climate, we have experienced challenging times; we know many of you are having hard times as well. But, we are all in this together, and thanks to your support, we have not only managed to go on, but we continue to further our mission in ways previously thought impossible. In response to the economic downturn, we have had to cut back on personnel and other expenses. As a result, we must find new ways to collect the data needed to meet our objectives.

For example, we are excited to begin using the latest GPS technology to track condor movements, allowing us to not only work more cost effectively, but to determine with more precision where condors are ingesting lead and where the greatest collision risks occur, as well as finding the remote nests more timely. This new information will help us tremendously to protect condors in the wild and allow for their full recovery.

I hope you enjoy this year's annual report and ask that you continue to help us to conserve native wildlife and their habitats. Whether it's your time, money or expertise, we will put it to good use. Together we can accomplish a great deal.

Handwritten signature of Kelly Sorenson in black ink.

Kelly Sorenson  
Executive Director

Handwritten signature of Janet Shing in black ink.

Janet Shing  
Chair, Board of Directors





***Never doubt that a small group of thoughtfully committed citizens can change the world.***

***...Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has!***

**- Margaret Mead**

## *Our Mission:*

### ***CONSERVING 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 instrumental in the successful 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 life-long love of nature and build the capacity for informed environmental stewardship.



# Ventana Wildlife Society

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## *Monitoring the Restored Bald Eagle Population*

### *Goal:*

*Monitor and maintain Central California's healthy breeding population of Bald Eagles following the successful reintroduction of the species to the region.*

One of the great Ventana Wildlife Society legacies was to restore what was lost. Even before our California Condor program commenced, we were instrumental in restoring

wild Bald Eagle breeding populations in Central California. We released 70 Bald Eagle juveniles from 1986-2000, hoping to re-establish populations and end a nearly 60-year absence of Bald Eagle nesting in Central California. Success came in 1993, when a Bald Eagle pair nested and produced young in San Luis Obispo County.

Since that time, Ventana Wildlife Society has teamed with a broad network of volunteers, led by co-founder Sal Lucido, to monitor the impressive

growth of Central California populations. In 2009, we documented 13 nesting Bald Eagle pairs and 22 chicks; Bald Eagles in Central California have now fledged 166 chicks in the wild since that landmark year of 1993. The Bald Eagle was removed from the Endangered Species List in 2007, capping one of the most successful endangered species recovery efforts of our time. Ventana Wildlife Society will continue working with volunteers in the coming years to monitor and support Bald Eagle nesting in Central California.



## *Restoring California Condors to Central California*

### *Goal:*

*Restore a self-sustaining wild population of California Condors in Central California through a captive release program, ongoing monitoring, and support of the wild flock.*

Since 1996, Ventana Wildlife Society has been a key partner in the recovery of endangered California Condors. Once on the brink of extinction, California Condors have returned to the wild, through a successful captive breeding and release program. Ventana Wildlife Society began releasing condors in Central California in 1997, and we have closely monitored the health of the expanding population ever since. Working with National Parks Service, we have established a flock of 52 California Condors along the central coast and Pinnacles National Monument. In 2009, we recorded a post-reintroduction record of five nests in Central California; four of them produced chicks. Such impressive reproduction in 2009 is a remarkable step in the recovery of this species. Although successful reproduction in the wild is reason for optimism, survival of California Condors remains tenuous due to ongoing threats from lead (ingested along with hunter-killed carrion) and





DDT (contained in marine mammal carcasses). Our California Condor recovery program employs a team of dedicated biologists and volunteers to track the flock and provide testing and care when needed. In some cases, prompt treatment for lead poisoning has saved the lives of condors.

Our California Condor recovery program is not limited to monitoring. Ventana

Wildlife Society biologists are researching eggshell thickness and the effects of the toxic compound DDE. Condors along the central coast have become increasingly proficient at locating sea lion carcasses, which contain high levels of DDE. *Current levels of eggshell thinning prevent some condors from producing young in the wild without intervention from our monitoring team*; such a problem poses a threat to the flock becoming truly self-sustaining. We are currently studying the association of condor eggshell thinning trends and marine contaminants. We recently submitted a summary of research results to a scientific journal, and we anticipate this manuscript contributing greatly to the conservation of the California Condor.



*Central California Condor Population*

For detailed condor population information, please visit [www.ventanaws.org](http://www.ventanaws.org).





  
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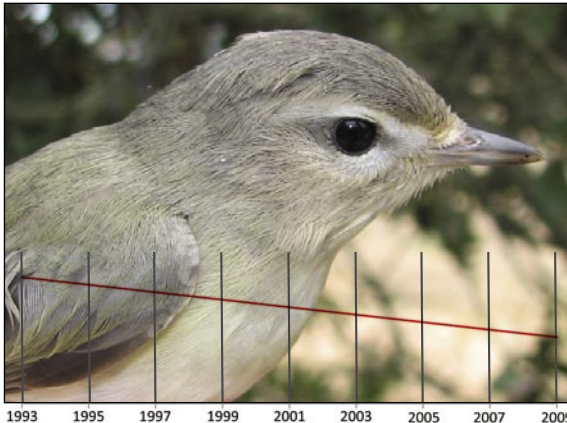


## Tracking and Monitoring Wild Bird Populations

### Goal:

Keep common birds common. Ventana Wildlife Society monitors wild populations of birds in Central California to identify declines before they become critical or irreversible.

Ventana Wildlife Society monitors wild bird populations throughout Monterey County. We have operated a bird banding lab since 1992 at Andrew Molera State Park along the Big Sur coast. We capture, band, and release hundreds of migrating and resident songbirds each year to determine population trends, identify movement patterns, and study survival. Recently, we calculated trends over a 17-year period for several riparian specialists, including Warbling Vireo, a species for which we have documented local declines.



Through monitoring, we can promptly identify factors responsible for declines and recommend appropriate management responses.

Ventana Wildlife Society's banding lab is one of the few stations that provides unrestricted public access, helping to educate the public, especially young people, about the importance of wildlife conservation.

Elsewhere, we work with a variety of partners to monitor birds. *In 2009, we continued annual point count surveys for Santa Lucia Conservancy at the Santa Lucia Preserve in Carmel Valley.* Grassland, riparian, and raptor surveys helped assess the current status of several bird species of concern. We also surveyed birds along the Carmel River to evaluate how the restoration efforts of Monterey Peninsula Water Management District have affected bird populations.

In 2008, wildfires ravaged a portion of Los Padres National Forest along the Big Sur coast, raising concern for local wildlife, including California Spotted Owl. Under a contract with the USDA Forest Service, we conducted California Spotted Owl surveys at 250 locations in the forest. By comparing detections in 2009 with results from our surveys at the same locations in 2006, we documented a decline in Spotted Owl numbers in the surveyed area and provided current distribution data to help ensure the protection of remaining owls.





## *Educating Future Generations*

### *Goal:*

*Increase public understanding and appreciation of the importance of wildlife and of the fragile ecosystems on which we all depend.*

Ventana Wildlife Society's Education and Outreach Programs focus on providing meaningful outdoor education to local youth ages 6-18. Every year, we serve 300 youth, roughly half of which come to us from underserved areas and attend programs free of charge. In 2009, 56% of the students we served were from low-income areas.

Our two major programs are the Discovery Camp in the summer and the Nature Awareness Program during the school year. The Discovery Camps provide a week-long experience studying rocks and geology, the ocean environment, or habitats. Our campers can be found tidepooling, kayaking, hiking, exploring river invertebrates, stargazing, and devouring s'mores. Natural Awareness Programs are weekly classes providing students the opportunity to experience the wonders of nature over the course



*We strive to create meaningful experiences that generate an interest in learning.*







of 10 weeks (spring and fall sessions are offered). We also offer Single-Day Adventures and Condor Wilderness Camps for teens. We strive to create meaningful experiences that generate an interest in learning.

Our programs enable youth to connect with nature, whether it is a seven year-old home school student who is journaling the tracks of a Wild Turkey or a sixteen year-old at-risk teen who is standing on the beach gazing at the waves for the first time in her life. Students build understanding and awareness of the natural world; they are encouraged to care about the environment and look for ways to make an impact. In return, nature provides opportunities, challenges, and in some cases...healing.







## *Reducing Threats to Wild Birds and Bats*

patterns, we can evaluate relative risks associated with wind energy structures. Our substantial experience tracking California Condors and mapping movement patterns allows us to identify areas of high risk for this critically endangered species. Less is known about risks to other birds and the diverse assemblage of bats at proposed sites.

In 2009, the City of Soledad contracted Ventana Wildlife Society to study bird and bat use of two sites proposed for wind energy development. We purchased Anabat ultrasonic detectors and have recorded numerous bats at night. Daytime surveys included weekly

counts of birds, particularly those flying at the potential height of rotor blades. Upon completion in 2010, our study will help the City of Soledad identify species most at risk, along with temporal and spatial factors influencing risk.

Bird collisions and electrocutions at power lines remain a significant problem for wild bird populations worldwide. Ventana Wildlife Society continues to work closely with power companies and government agencies to prevent bird deaths through research, monitoring, and consultation. Much remains to be done, and we are working to develop a broad cooperative approach to the problem.

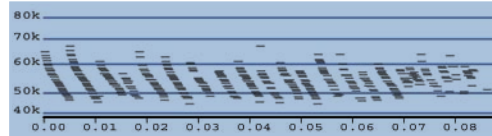
### *Goal:*

*Reduce bird fatalities associated with overhead wires and wind turbines through research, education, and collaboration with government and industry.*

Wind has become one of the fastest growing sources of renewable energy. Although wind-generated electricity is considered environmentally friendly, there is growing concern over the effects of wind energy facilities on birds and bats. By studying bird and bat movement

*...with Anabat ultrasonic detectors, we have recorded numerous bats at night.*

*Hoary Bat in the hand of a Ventana Wildlife Society biologist*





## *Protecting Least Terns and Snowy Plovers*



are managing plover and tern nesting areas at the park by monitoring predator activity, identifying individual predators posing a threat to reproductive success, and relocating those individuals.

In 2009, six Loggerhead Shrikes, five American Kestrels, two Great Horned Owls, and two Peregrine Falcons were trapped at Oceano Dunes and safely transported to suitable habitat elsewhere. Human activities have greatly reduced the amount of suitable beach nesting habitat for plovers and terns; relocating some of the predators gives the local plovers and terns a fighting chance for populations to recover.

Ventana Wildlife Society partners with The Bird Group, a non-profit organization formed from the Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group, to protect Snowy Plovers and California Least Terns in coastal California.

The Bird Group has addressed numerous issues concerning the conservation of birds of prey, most notably the recovery of Peregrine Falcons in California and neighboring states. In some cases, populations of endangered or threatened birds are at risk because of predation by birds of prey. Ventana Wildlife Society and

The Bird Group are now teaming up to not only protect the birds of prey, but the birds that are prey.

Snowy Plovers and California Least Terns nest on the beaches of Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area, a park encompassing nearly 5,000 acres of coastal sand dunes and 9 miles of coastline in San Luis Obispo County. Fenced enclosures help limit human-caused disturbance, but birds of prey, particularly falcons, harriers, and shrikes, were regularly observed hunting plovers and terns, and depredating nests. Ventana Wildlife Society and The Bird Group

*Ventana Wildlife Society  
and The Bird Group  
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*High-Tech Condors*



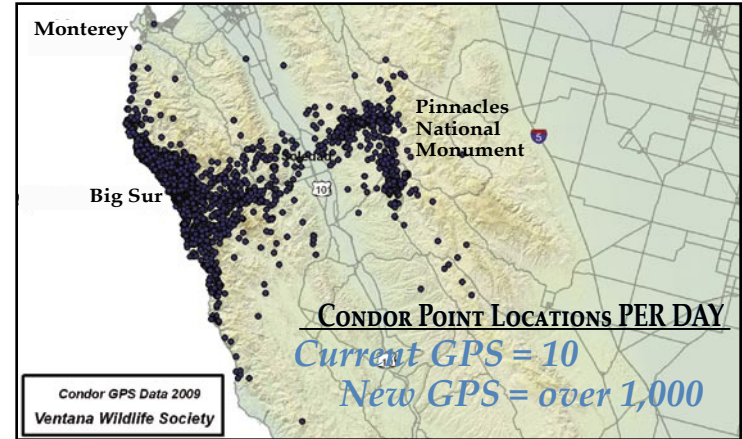


Ventana Wildlife Society has used GPS transmitters on condors since 2003. We do this to determine the most effective means of recovering this species. We were the first to use them on condors and now have a database of over 150,000 records. While that seems impressive enough, we recently discovered a new transmitter to track condor movements, literally minute to minute.

The most effective way to find hazards is to obtain accurate locations as frequently as possible. The old GPS technology yielded about 10 location points per day (once per hour). This new technology should give us over 1,000 location points per day (as frequently as every 30 seconds), which will enable us to answer critical questions; *where do these condors go and find food, and is that food source safe to eat? Are there any hazards along the way that could lead to a fatal collision in the future?* These are just a couple of the questions that we will be better positioned to answer with many more location points per hour.

We have been searching for new technology for a while and given the difficult economic times and our need to cut back on

personnel and other related costs, it is more critical now than ever. Because we have fewer people in the field we have to improve our efficiency to follow condors in the wild. The new GPS transmitters will help us to better understand the problems the condors face and find solutions for their comeback.





# 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 \$50 or more during the 2010 fiscal year (April 1, 2009 - March 31, 2010).

*We are grateful!*

Every gift, at every level, is so important...please support our conservation 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.

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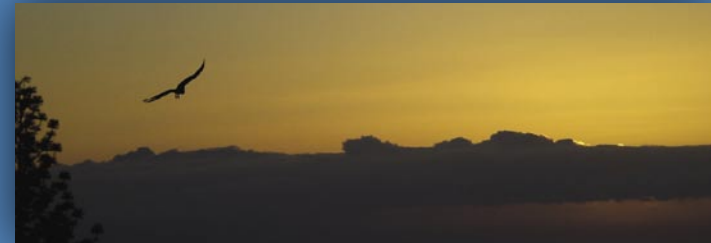
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We wish to extend much appreciation to those who have remembered Ventana Wildlife Society through bequests or by naming Ventana Wildlife Society as a beneficiary in a life insurance policy or IRA.

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 Ventana Wildlife Society in your estate, use the enclosed envelope, go to our website [www.ventanaws.org](http://www.ventanaws.org), or contact Kelly Sorenson at 831-455-9514 or [kellysorenson@ventanaws.org](mailto:kellysorenson@ventanaws.org).

## 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](http://www.ventanaws.org) or call us at 831-455-9514.

Members receive monthly 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.

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Kyle Rogachon  
Stan Russell  
Lynda & Robert Sayre  
Frank & Barbara Strehlitz  
Sunridge Farms  
Duane Titus  
Mary Ann Vasconcellos  
Christina Zimmerman  
Whole Foods of Monterey

*We regret that space limits us to listing only those who have donated \$50 and above. Every gift, at every level, is very important. Thank you to everyone who donated.*

## 2010 HONOREES:

**The Environmental Excellence Award**  
presented to  
*Monterey Peninsula Foundation*



**The Frank J Lichtanski Award**  
presented to  
*California State Parks*



**The Volunteer of the Year Award**  
presented to  
*Geoff Hamilton*



**The Sal and Ada Lucido Award**  
presented to  
*Dawn V Cope*

Dan Tibbitts, MPF Board Member  
Cl Price, District Superintendent

VWS Appreciation Awards

# Statement Of Financial Position

March 31, 2010 and 2009\*

ASSETS	2010	2009
Cash and Equivalents .....	\$80,117	\$134,452
Board designated cash reserves .....	50,027	50,002
Accounts Receivable .....	76,818	8,131
Deposits .....	4,933	4,383
Property and Equipment .....	1,021,080	999,201
<b>TOTAL ASSETS .....</b>	<b>1,232,975</b>	<b>1,196,169</b>

## LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

### Liabilities

Accounts Payable .....	29,107	25,821
Accrued Liabilities .....	8,880	13,870
Deposits .....	2,410	2,410
<b>Total Liabilities .....</b>	<b>40,397</b>	<b>42,101</b>

### Net Assets

Unrestricted .....	562,578	529,531
Temporarily Restricted .....	60,000	54,537
Permanently Restricted .....	570,000	570,000
<b>Total Net Assets .....</b>	<b>1,192,578</b>	<b>1,154,068</b>

**TOTAL LIABILITIES AND FUND BALANCES ..... \$1,232,975 \$1,196,169**

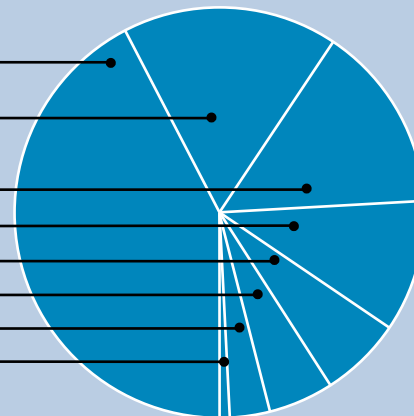
\* 2009 REVIEWED and 2010 REVIEW IN PROGRESS

Complete financial reports are available upon request.

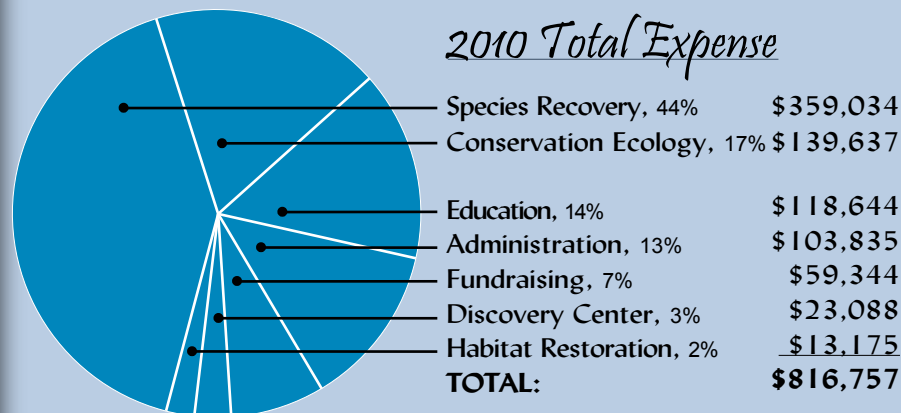
Ventana Wildlife Society is recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)3 organization. Tax ID: 94-2795935

## 2010 Total Income

Foundations, 42%	\$362,601
Government Grants & Contracts, 17%	\$144,848
Individual Gifts, 15%	\$126,356
Service Fees, 10%	\$87,353
Other Income, 7%	\$55,952
Corporations, 5%	\$43,785
In-Kind Donations, 3%	\$26,951
Sales, 1%	\$6,873
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$854,719</b>



## 2010 Total Expense



VENTANA WILDLIFE SOCIETY - 19045 Portola Drive, Ste F1 - Salinas, CA 93908  
(831) 455-9514 - fax (831) 455-2846 - www.ventanaws.org

PHOTOS BY: Mike Clark, Gavin Emmons, Geoff Hamilton, Tim Huntington, Dave Monley, Ventana Wildlife Society Staff

COVER PHOTO: California Spotted Owl BACK PHOTO: As Natural Science Discovery Campers paddle off to find assorted wildlife, they are welcomed by playful sea lions.



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Ventana Wildlife Society  
19045 Portola Dr Ste F1  
Salinas CA 93908  
[www.ventanaws.org](http://www.ventanaws.org)

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### *Ways you can help!*

- Adopt-A-Condor
- Become a member
- Check or money order
- Fund a student to attend  
Natural Science  
Awareness Programs
- Join an Eco-experience
- Online by credit card
- Planned bequest
- Research your company's  
Matched Giving Program
- Recurring gift
- Subscribe to monthly e-newsletter
- Tell a family member
- Visit our Discovery Center
- Visit and support  
the bird banding lab
- Volunteer
- Learn more about your  
giving opportunities at  
[www.ventanaws.org](http://www.ventanaws.org)  
or call 831-455-9514.