

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March 18, 2006 - 9:00am
Learning Bird Vocalizations
At Andrew Molera State Park
Led by Jessica Griffiths
For more info: 624-1202

March 30, 2006 - 7:00pm
Spring Migration Talk
At the Wild Bird Center, Del Monte Shopping Center
Speaker: Jessica Griffiths
For more info: 373-1000

April 1, 2006
Open Enrollment
Natural Science Discovery Camp
Register Online or
Call Alena Porte: 455-9514

April 8, 2006 - Call for Details
BSLT Restoration Project
Volunteer Walk
At Carmel River Lagoon
Led by Karen Ritchie
For more info: 625-5523

April 15, 2006 - 9:00am
Spring Wildflowers
At Andrew Molera State Park
Led by Karen Ritchie
For more info: 624-1202

April 17 thru 22, 2006
Peter Pyle Workshop
At Andrew Molera State Park
To register or for more info: 624-1202

April 28, 2006 - 4:00pm to
April 29, 2006 - 4:00pm
Birdiest County Birdathon
Within Monterey County
For more info: 373-1000

April 29, 2006 - 6:00am
Birdiest County Birdathon
Countdown Dinner
(and Art Show)
Outside the Wild Bird Center,
Del Monte Shopping Centre
For more info: 373-1000

April 29, 2006 - Call for Details
BSLT Restoration - Volunteer Walk
Carmel River Lagoon
For more info: 625-5523

May 13, 2006
Big Sur Bird Bash
At Henry Miller Library
For more info: 624-1202

May 20, 2006 - 9:00 am
Spring Migrants Walk
At Andrew Molera State Park
Led by Nellie Thorngate
For more info: 624-1202

May 21, 2006 - 9:00am - 12:00
Art and Nature Walk
Led by Kathryn Hannay
RSVP to 455-9514

June 11, 2006 - 9:00am
Condor Walk
At Pinnacles National Monument
RSVP to 455-9514

June 17, 2006 - 9:00am
In Search of the Rare and
Evasive... Walk
At Andrew Molera State Park
Led by Jessica Griffiths
For more info: 624-1202

July 15, 2006 - 9:00am
Butterflies and Insects Walk
At Andrew Molera State Park
Led by Jessica Griffiths
For more info: 624-1202

Ventana Wildlife Society

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ON THE Wild SIDE...

VENTANA WILDLIFE SOCIETY

WINTER 2005/2006

Monarch Madness!! ...How Many Butterflies?

by Jessica Griffiths, Wildlife Biologist

This is the fifth consecutive year that biologists from Ventana Wildlife Society have been studying overwintering Monarch Butterflies in Monterey County. This winter was an interesting one for the butterflies. Overall, there were fewer butterflies wintering here than last year; the Monterey County population peaked at just under 44,000 butterflies in mid-November (earlier than the normal December peak time) compared to a peak of almost 57,000 last winter. Most sites had

fewer butterflies than previous years, including George Washington Park in Pacific Grove, which had no butterflies at all! But counts were not lower this year at all sites. The Monarch Sanctuary in Pacific Grove had higher numbers than last year, reaching a peak of almost 15,000 butterflies in mid-December.

These fluctuations in Monarch numbers from year to year are normal for insect populations, and

Continued on Page 2



Monarchs enjoying English Ivy, a non-native invasive plant.

VWS is looking for Volunteers/Docents...

Ventana Wildlife Society has some exciting opportunities to get involved and we need your help. If you are or know anyone who would be interested in joining our volunteer/docent team or for additional information, please call Cathy Keeran at (831) 455-9514.

• **Commitment**

Minimum of 1-2 half or full days per month, depending on the specific project.

• **Projects**

Monitoring condors, educating youth, planting vegetation, and interpreting to the public...

• **Locations include**

Andrew Molera State Park, Hwy 1 in Big Sur, Salinas (River Rd/Hwy 68), Carmel River...

Matching Gift Program – Does your Company Have One?

by Audries Blake, Development Director

Increase the value of your personal gift to Ventana Wildlife Society by taking advantage of your employer's Matching Gift Program, if available. Some companies also match securities as well as cash.

Please just ask your company's matching gift officer (usually in the Human Resources or Community Relations Department) for a matching gift form, and follow your company's policy.

VWS Contact Info

Administrative Office

19045 Portola Dr Ste F1
Salinas CA 93908

Phone: (831) 455-9514
Toll Free: (877) 897-7740
Voice Mail: (831) 769-8469
Fax: (831) 455-2846

Hours of Operation

Monday - Friday
9:00am - 5:00pm

VWS Research and Education Center
Big Sur Ornithology Lab
Andrew Molera State Park
HC 67 Box 99
Monterey CA 93940

Phone: (831) 624-1202
Fax: (831) 626-8651

Hours of Operation

April - October
Tues - Sat: 7am - 2pm

November - March
Mon - Fri: 9am - 2pm
(weather dependent)

TREES OF CHOICE

By Jessica Griffiths,
Wildlife Biologist

Among the hundreds of different types of data we collect while monitoring overwintering Monarch Butterflies, one of the most important facts in understanding the species winter ecology is what species of tree they choose to cluster in. For example, at the Monarch Sanctuary in Pacific Grove there are Eucalyptus, Monterey Pine, and Monterey Cypress trees. Last winter, 90% of the Sanctuary butterflies clustered in Eucalyptus trees and the rest were in Monterey Pines. However, this winter only 43% of the butterflies at this site were in Eucalyptus, 50% were in Monterey Pines, and the rest were in Monterey Cypress.

There are many possible reasons for this shift, including the strength and

Continued on Page 2

Studying Birds... How About Butterflies?

by John Matusik, VWS Volunteer

Our first destination on Sunday morning January 29 was the Pacific Grove Monarch Butterfly Sanctuary, a 2-3 acre wood lot that is home each winter to migratory Monarch Butterflies (MOBU). A threatening sky held back long enough for our Guru Jessica Griffiths to show and tell us about this fascinating wild animal. After learning the basics, we adjourned to Juice & Java in downtown Pacific Grove for refreshments before plunging into Jessica's advanced MOBU course.

If you had asked anybody at Ventana Wildlife Society (VWS) 5 years ago about MOBU, you would have gotten silence in return. Nobody knew. Nobody had ever thought about it. Fortunately, a neighbor of VWS in

Salinas, Helen Johnson, had done a lot of thinking about it and was mad as Hell that nobody else was. So Helen literally put her money where her mouth is and hired VWS' Big Sur Ornithology Lab to do some pioneering MOBU field work.

So, what do field ornithology and MOBU research have in common? In many ways, MOBU research is just like studying birds. Both require a trained eye and adherence to scientific principles. Both involve collection of accurate data about the animals and their habitat. And, equally important, both require an unwavering dedication to wildlife preservation. Anyway, thanks to Helen Johnson, and Kelly Sorenson, and Sarah Stock, and Jason Scott, and Jessica Griffiths, and Nellie Thorngate, and Karen Ritchie, what began rather casually 5 years ago has matured into a focused and well-managed study of MOBU biology.

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COFFEE - CONSERVATION DRIVEN

by Audries Blake,
Development Director

Coffee farms that grow beans under a cover of shade trees provide habitat and food for migrating birds and other species. Founded in Berkeley in 1984, Uncommon Grounds Gourmet Coffee specializes in hands-on roasting and personalized service. Uncommon Grounds supports and encourages consumer interest in sustainable coffees and all products that affirm social and environmental responsibility.

Several years back at an Earth Day event at the Oakland Zoo, Uncommon Grounds Gourmet Coffee founder Orrel Lanter met one of the interns

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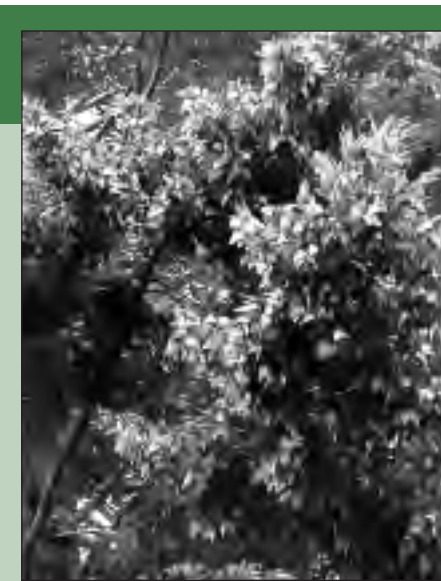
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...How Many Butterflies?

Continued from Page 1

we are hopeful that continual monitoring will reveal long-term patterns. But now as winter comes to a close, the Monarch Butterflies disperse from the sheltered groves of trees where they have spent the last few months. They mate and then depart, fanning out to search for milkweed on which to lay their eggs. Our monitoring wrapped up in early March, and we wish the butterflies well on their journey.

Staff and volunteers counting Monarch Butterflies.



Monarch clusters on Redwood.

TREES OF CHOICE

Continued from Page 1

frequency of winter storms, and the alterations made in the canopy by tree removal activity in the Sanctuary over last summer. We believe that the butterflies can cluster more densely in the conifer trees than they can in the Eucalyptus, and more dense clustering may offer better protection from the weather. By studying Monarch tree species selection in conjunction with many weather variables, we can better understand the butterflies' habitat needs and ensure that their overwintering groves provide them with the shelter that is vital to their survival.

from Ventana Wildlife Society's Big Sur Ornithology Lab. The Intern invited her to make a visit to the lab and, when she did, Orrel was inspired by the quality of the science and the dedication of the staff to create the delicious Conservation Blend and, later Conservation Organic Decaf, both of which are Fair Trade, Shade Grown, Organic, and bird-friendly.

Orrel gives VWS 10% of the proceeds of these 2 socially and environmentally responsible coffees. They can be purchased locally at Whole Foods Market in Monterey, Pebble Beach Market, and Sierra Mar Restaurant at Post Ranch. The more cafes, restaurants, markets, and individuals who become aware of the program and begin using the blend, the more money for research comes back to VWS.

Conservation Blend and Conservation Organic Decaf, as well as many other Uncommon Grounds Gourmet Coffee specialties, can be purchased at <http://www.uncommongrounds.net>. Just follow the links to the Conservation Coffee Store. Or call 800-600-5282. Give to VWS while enjoying a great cup of coffee.

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Ventana Wildlife Society would like to thank the following individuals, companies, organizations and foundations for their continued support. We could not do it without you. If your name is misspelled or does not appear on this donor list, please accept our sincere apologies and let us know so that we can correct it in the future.



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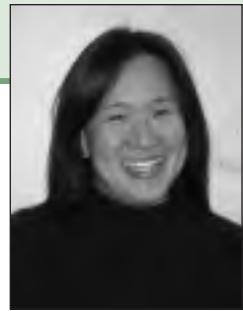
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Welcome to the Board

by Kelly Sorenson, Executive Director

Every nonprofit organization is led by a group of dedicated community members serving as its Board of Directors, and Ventana Wildlife Society (VWS) is no exception. We are proud of each member of our Board for their commitment to helping us fulfill our mission of "conserving native wildlife and their habitats". Throughout this year, we want to introduce you to Board members so you can get to know a little bit about them.

JANET SHING is a native Californian with a deep seated love for the environment. Janet works as Program Associate for the Community Foundation for Monterey County. Janet has an Environmental Studies degree from Hampshire College. She serves as the Chair of VWS' Development Committee. According to Janet, her commitment to preservation is very personal: "I have always wanted to get involved with an organization that has the same values I do" Shing explains. Fortunate for us, Janet knew about VWS and, upon learning we were recruiting new board members, found just what she needed to turn her personal commitment into conservation action.



Janet Shing



Bill Freeman

BILL FREEMAN relocated to central coastal California from the east coast only three years ago. Bill works as a Designer for Robert Talbott in Monterey and serves on the VWS Marketing Committee. Bill's childhood experiences exploring in the woods with his buddies left a deep impression on him, a time he reflects upon often. "When I heard about Ventana Wildlife Society", Freeman said, "I was intrigued and wanted to learn more." His love of nature and dedication to give back to the community are what motivated him to join the VWS Board. We are currently recruiting additional Board members who have experience in law, investments, food and entertainment, and real estate. For further information, please contact Kelly Sorenson, Executive Director, at 831.455.9514 or email kellysorenson@ventanaws.org.



One Day Creates Deep Inspiration

by Audries Blake,
Development Director

Arizona-based artist Anda Dillon's brother Don died unexpectedly a few years ago, long before Anda and Rich Dillon's close personal encounter with a Big Sur California Condor on Anda's birthday in 2004. It was a life-changing experience. Don would have loved it!

At that moment, Anda and Rich decided to support VWS' Condor Reintroduction Project, in Don's memory, by creating a new line of jewelry and donating half the proceeds to VWS. Anda and Rich have created some unique pieces of jewelry fusing Condor images into their work. One of their top sellers is a glass pendant with a Condor etched in gold in the background. "We attend art and craft fairs throughout the western United States," Rich Dillon said, "but hear from people all around the world who have seen or received one of our pendants." Anda and Rich have plans to add pieces like wine stoppers, plates, nail files, etc in the future. To learn more about their work or to find out if they will be at an arts and craft show near you, email them at radanda@excite.com.

Viewing Condors in the Winter Months:

As a Ventana Wildlife Society member, we'd love to take you on a Condor Field Trip. Please contact us to sign up.

Sudden Oak Death

Has it Affected the California Spotted Owl in Big Sur?

By Karen Ritchie,
Senior Wildlife Biologist

Recently, the USDA Forest Service awarded Ventana Wildlife Society \$50,000 to assess the impact of Sudden Oak Death (SOD) on foraging and nesting habitat of the California Spotted Owl in Big Sur. Unlike its close relatives, the Northern and Mexican Spotted Owl, the California Spotted Owl is not considered endangered or threatened at this time. This is primarily due to healthy population centers in the Sierras. In the Coast Ranges, the California Spotted Owl prefers cool, moist valleys dominated by tanoak and redwood where it feeds voraciously on dusky-footed woodrat. Abrupt and large-scale vegetation changes in the wilderness valleys of Big Sur are serious cause for concern for local Spotted Owl populations.

SOD is caused by the fungal blight *Phytophthora ramorum* ("Phy-TOFF-thor-ah Ra-MORE-um"). *P. ramorum* attacks plant phloem, the major vessels that carry nutrients from the soil to plant leaves and tissue. It causes external cankers, lesions, leaf wilt, and spots in a wide variety of trees, shrubs, and herbs. In some hosts, like tanoak, death follows rapidly after infection. You may have noticed these large die-offs when hiking



Exterior bleeding canker on a Tanoak.

through the coastal valleys of Los Padres National Forest, especially on the lower Little Sur Trail to Pico Blanco and around Partington Ridge. In other plant hosts, such as rhododendron, bay laurel, and coast redwood, *P. ramorum* resides in the leaves and twigs where it can persist for many years, continually infecting plants in the surrounding community.



Photo by Gerald & Buff Corsi @ California Academy of Sciences

California Spotted Owl

Coastal Big Sur is considered one of the areas hardest hit by SOD. Like a slowly advancing army, it marches continually inland fanning out in wet years and retreating or lying dormant during dry summers and fire. *P. ramorum* is also spread by humans hiking through infected areas or collecting bay leaves, and by carrying the microscopic fungi back home or into a new area of wilderness. Truly, we are just beginning to understand the wider ecological and economical implications of SOD for the region. Ventana Wildlife Society's research on Spotted Owls is just one part in a larger investigative effort by state, federal, and university scientists to uncover all of those impacts.

A Hopeful Condor Courtship

By Sayre Flannagan,
Wildlife Biologist

California Condor breeding season has just begun, and the Big Sur Condor crew has been closely watching the flock for any new potential pairs. Male Condor 168 and female 208 appear to be the most promising pair; they have been observed nuzzling and exhibiting other courtship behaviors. Condors must first establish a territory in which they find suitable nesting habitat before they will produce an egg, and 208 and 168 already have a canyon in mind. The next step will be the laying of the egg! We are keeping our fingers crossed that all will go well for this pair and that they will produce Monterey County's first wild chick.



Typical courtship behavior.

Avian Monitoring Critical

... in Habitat Restoration

By Nellie Thorngate,
Wildlife Biologist

In the earliest days of the Spanish occupancy, the small plot of land just behind the Carmel River Lagoon now known as Odello Fields was converted from wetlands to agricultural fields. Since the major El Nino floods of 1998, the Odello artichoke fields have been left fallow to provide a buffer against future flooding of the Carmel River. Now, those fields are being restored by the California Department of Parks and Recreation to wetland marsh and riparian forest. The purpose of this restoration project is to stabilize the entire Carmel River system, reducing the potential for flooding events along the river, as well as restoring important habitat for steelhead, the threatened red-legged frog, and many bird and mammal species.

Last year, Ventana Wildlife Society began a new avian monitoring project at the Odello restoration site. Birds are an excellent indicator of habitat health, and monitoring bird populations at this restoration site will allow us to measure the success of the restoration project, and will contribute to an increased understanding of how restoration projects affect bird communities. This year, we collected baseline data on the abundance and diversity of birds at the site, which we will use to track the impact and progress of the restoration project. As mustard and hemlock fields are replaced with riparian forests, and the banks of the newly expanded lagoon are seeded with thickets of sedge and cattails, we look forward to observing and measuring the reestablishment of a healthy riparian community.



Odello Fields - Off Hwy 1, South of Rio Rd.

MONTEREY COUNTY YOUTH CENTER APPRECIATION DAY

by Alena Porte,
Education Coordinator

Last November the Monterey County Youth Center held an Appreciation Day to honor Ventana Wildlife Society (VWS) and others who provide programs to the young people in their charge. During the 2004 -2005 season, VWS' Natural Resource Recruitment (NRR) Program introduced 32 youth to a variety of conservation-related careers. Public service announcements created by NRR participants were proudly shared during the event.

We were entertained with Christmas carols and had a chance to share stories of hope, and personal growth that participants obtain from NRR. One young

“... by giving myself respect, I have learned to give respect to others.”

woman participant told how the Youth Center programs changed her life. “Today I am a different person. Instead of depending on drugs, I write my

thoughts and feelings in my journal. Instead of depending on gangs, I now have my own inner strength to guide me in my decisions, which helps me make better choices. Instead of disrespecting people, I now have learned to think before I speak. By giving myself respect, I have learned to give respect to others.”

Ventana Wildlife Society is proud to make a difference in the lives of youth involved in the Monterey County Youth Center, and we look forward to more success stories.

Come Discover Your World!
Here comes our 15th summer camp season! If you are between the ages of 8-12 and love exploring the great outdoors, this is for you!

TIOORAY FOR HABITATS
(includes kayaking)
June 26-30 / August 14-18

MOUNTAINS ROCK
(includes hang gliding)
June 12-June 16 / July 31-August 4

OUTRAGEOUS OCEAN ODYSSEY
(includes whale watching)
July 17-21

members: \$230/week
non-members: \$275/week
scholarships available!

Natural Science Discovery Camp
www.ventanaws.org

Contact Alena Porte @ (831) 455-9514 or info@ventanaws.org

STAFF UPDATE:

On February 13, Sayre Flannagan replaced Jessica Koning as Wildlife Biologist for the Species Recovery Division. Jessica moved on to pursue graduate work. VWS is grateful for her dedicated work over the past 4 years. Good luck, Jessica and congratulations Sayre.

Check Out These Chicks!

by Sayre Flannagan,
Wildlife Biologist

Three Condor chicks are being readied for release in Big Sur this spring. The chicks were about seven months old when they arrived in December from the San Diego Wild Animal Park. Their heads were still covered in downy feathers. It is crucial that these chicks have mentors prior to their release so that they will know how to handle life in the wild. We use our wild birds as mentors for these little guys, teaching them to respect their elders. With the help of a few of our wild Condors, these chicks are learning the law of the land in Big Sur. They grow up so fast!



8-month old #376 showing off his beauty.

VWS for Youth

Reaching Out

by Jeff Lehner,
Education Instructor

In a study for the World Bank, Carl R. Bartone said, “Urban poverty and environmental conditions are intimately related to each other... basic environmental services would help in sustaining a livable environment, and livable cities.”

The Ventana Wildlife Society's Natural Resource Recruitment program (NRR) currently provides workshops for underserved teens in urban communities. We collaborate with a variety of conservation-based organizations to teach teens the importance of taking care of the environment, how to find out who is doing conservation in their community, and how local actions can have global impacts.



NRR students assisting native seed collection.

“Sharing is caring” is an industry quip that I use on occasion. Ventana Wildlife Society (VWS) shows it cares by

helping teens experience the satisfaction of community service, by helping organizations such as The Homeless Garden Project in Santa Cruz, Monterey social services, Monterey County SPCA, Wildlife Center, and by producing community-oriented Public Service Announcements on local cable channels 24, 25, 27, 28. It is our hope that the youths in VWS programs will see that in caring for their world they are also caring for themselves.

This year the NRR has added a fourth series of workshops. We've found that this program is popular with all who are involved. The Youth Center loves it. Our community partners always welcome our young men and women. And the teens themselves often can't wait for the next workshop. Salinas Mayor Anna Caballero said, “The Ventana Wildlife Society has been a great partner to Partners for Peace, offering at risk students from Salinas an opportunity to learn leadership skills, wildlife appreciation and conserva-

tion. Many of the students have never been to the beach and did not have an appreciation of the outdoors. This program is an excellent way for students to gain hands on experience and develop a true love of nature.”

COUNTING DIFFERENT SPECIES...IT'S FOR THE BIRDS

by Jessica Griffiths, Wildlife Biologist

Spring is almost here, and that means that it will soon be time for the 13th annual Birdathon! This year, we have aptly named this event the “Birdiest County Birdathon”. Ventana Wildlife Society's (VWS) annual fund-raiser for our Big Sur Ornithology Lab is as much a part of the season as are the returning spring migrants and blooming spring flowers.

Every spring VWS teams up with Monterey Peninsula Audubon Society (MPAS) and the Wild Bird Center to raise money for bird research and conservation in Monterey County. As the name implies, the “Birdiest County Birdathon” is a marathon 24 hours of birding. On Saturday April 29, teams of birders will fan out across Monterey County, trying to identify as many bird species as they can in a single day. At the end of the day, everyone will meet up for the official species countdown dinner, emceed by one of Monterey's best-known birders, Don Roberson. At the countdown dinner there is a raffle drawing and silent auction with exciting prizes donated by local merchants and generous individuals. For more information on how to participate, visit the Birdathon website at <http://www.ventanaws.org/bat.htm> or call us toll free at (877) 897-7740.

How many butterflies are in this cluster?

CLUSTER = a distinct grouping of butterflies that is easy to separate visually from other butterfly groups within the same tree.

Counting butterflies in a cluster is just like counting jelly beans in a jar...first you count a small section of the cluster that you can see, then multiply that # by how many sections you think it would take to fill up the entire cluster.

Calling All Youth!

We want YOUR awesome artwork, writings, and questions regarding wildlife conservation to be in the VWS Kids section of the next issue of On the WILD Side!

Space is limited. Written entries should be no more than 75 words. Please include your name, age, and contact information. If you would like to email your entry, you can send it to alenaporte@ventanaws.org or mail it to Ventana Wildlife Society 19045 Portola Drive, Suite F-1, Salinas CA 93908.

If your work is chosen for the VWS Kids section, you will receive a California Condor pin and extra copies of your work in print to share with family and friends!

The deadline is 04/15/06 for submissions to our next newsletter issue.