
**Bloom, P.H., "Report on Arroyo Toad Surveys on Landmark Village, Newhall
Land and Farming Company Property, Los Angeles County, California"
(November 15, 2007)**

**REPORT ON ARROYO TOAD SURVEYS ON LANDMARK VILLAGE,
NEWHALL LAND AND FARMING COMPANY PROPERTY,
LOS ANGELES COUNTY, CALIFORNIA**

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INTRODUCTION

Focused surveys for the arroyo toad (*Bufo californicus*) were conducted on portions of Newhall Land and Farming Company property by Bloom Biological, Inc. from April 19 through July 15, 2007. Surveys were conducted according to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) survey protocol for this species. The survey area consisted of approximately 8 miles of the Santa Clara River adjacent to the proposed Landmark Village project area in Valencia, Los Angeles County, California. The survey area encompassed all habitats within the river channel and up to 700 meters from the river in some areas.

PROJECT LOCATION

Newhall Land's projects west of Interstate 5 (including Newhall Ranch) generally parallel the Santa Clara River from approximately ¼ mile east of the I-5 freeway west to near the Ventura County line, and includes areas within the floodplain as well as adjacent coastal sage scrub, grassland, and agricultural areas (Figure 1). The main project area, which occurs adjacent to the Santa Clara River on both the north and south sides, consists mainly of agricultural fields. The survey area encompassed stream margins and riparian habitat along portions of the river and tributaries that contained moving water and tributaries with appropriate habitat but were dry in 2007.

This survey area was a subunit of a larger survey area consisting of a 25-mile reach of the Santa Clara River and its major tributaries in and around Valencia, Los Angeles County, from ¼ mile downstream of the Las Brisas Crossing in Ventura County upstream to the future location of the Golden Valley Bridge (east of the Los Angeles Aqueduct). The larger study area was divided into five survey areas based on arroyo toad protocol survey distance limits.

Habitat within the survey area consists of a broad riverine flood plain up to ¼ mile wide with continuous year-round flow on this reach, and includes riparian scrub and woodlands of varying densities and maturity. Upland terraces consist of sandy to gravelly soils with varying densities of vegetation. Dominant vegetation includes several species of willows (*Salix* spp.), cottonwoods (*Populus fremontii*), mulefat (*Bacharris salicifolia*), watercress (*Rorippa* spp.), arrow weed (*Pluchea sericea*), and patches of non-native giant reed (*Arundo donax*) and tamarisk (*Tamarix* spp.).

SURVEY METHODS

Six presence/absence protocol surveys were conducted for Arroyo Toads between 19 April and 15 July 2007 (Table 1). Daytime surveys were conducted by walking slowly along river margins and riparian habitat looking for eggs, larvae, and metamorphs. Nighttime surveys were conducted by walking slowly along riverbanks searching for adults and juveniles, and by stopping periodically to listen for calling males. All surveys were conducted in temperatures at or above 55 degrees Fahrenheit. None of the tributaries had sufficient moving water to warrant protocol surveys, but we surveyed them anyway. All surveys followed the most recent U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) field survey protocol for this species (USFWS 2001), and were conducted by Peter H. Bloom and Chris Niemela.

Table 1. Arroyo Toad biological survey summary for Landmark Village project area, Newhall Ranch, CA.

Date	Survey #	Area surveyed	Surveyors	ARTO Detected?
21-Apr-07	1	Castaic Crk / tributaries	C. Niemela	No
28-Apr-07	1	Wolcott to County Line	C. Niemela	No
29-Apr-07	1	5 Fwy to Wolcott	C. Niemela	No
30-Apr-07	1	Bridgeport to 5 Fwy	C. Niemela	No
1-May-07	2	Castaic Crk / tributaries	C. Niemela	No
12-May-07	2	Wolcott to County Line	C. Niemela	No
13-May-07	2	5 Fwy to Wolcott	C. Niemela	No
20-May-07	2	Bridgeport to 5 Fwy	C. Niemela	No
21-May-07	3	Castaic Crk / tributaries	C. Niemela	No
23-May-07	3	Wolcott to County Line	C. Niemela	No
24-May-07	3	5 Fwy to Wolcott	C. Niemela	No
28-May-07	3	Bridgeport to 5 Fwy	C. Niemela	No
30-May-07	4	Wolcott to County Line	C. Niemela, P. Bloom	No
31-May-07	4	5 Fwy to Wolcott	C. Niemela, P. Bloom	No
1-Jun-07	4	Castaic Crk / tributaries	C. Niemela, P. Bloom	No
10-Jun-07	4	Bridgeport to 5 Fwy	C. Niemela, P. Bloom	No
12-Jun-07	5	Wolcott to County Line	C. Niemela, P. Bloom	No

13-Jun-07	5	5 Fwy to Wolcott	C. Niemela, P. Bloom	No
14-Jun-07	5	Castaic Crk / tributaries	C. Niemela, P. Bloom	No
27-Jun-07	5	Bridgeport to 5 Fwy	C. Niemela, P. Bloom	No
13-Jul-07	6	Wolcott to County Line	C. Niemela	No
14-Jul-07	6	5 Fwy to Wolcott	C. Niemela	No
15-Jul-07	6	Bridgeport to 5 Fwy	C. Niemela	No
15-Jul-07	6	Castaic Crk / tributaries	C. Niemela	No

RESULTS

No arroyo toad adults, juveniles, eggs, or larvae were detected within the reach of the Santa Clara River that runs adjacent to Newhall's projects west of Interstate 5. Based upon the negative results of previous recent studies and this study, which was completed under good weather conditions, we believe the arroyo toad has been extirpated from this reach of river. However, good breeding and upland habitat does occur along portions of the Santa Clara River from the eastern end of the project area near the I-5 freeway to the westernmost end of the project area near the Ventura County line. Fewer than 15 western toads (*Bufo boreas*) were detected along the entire stretch of survey area. The majority of western toads were found in and around the ponds created by river crossings, and around wet agricultural fields. Hundreds of tree frogs (*Pseudacris regilla*) occurred along the entire reach of river, including wet areas within all tributaries, however reproduction was low. One bullfrog was observed. Although known to be present, no African clawed frogs were detected along this survey reach.

CONCLUSION

No arroyo toads were detected during 2007 surveys along the Santa Clara River adjacent to Newhall Land's projects west of I-5 (including Newhall Ranch). Habitat along this reach of the River appears to be of good quality as it pertains to all life stages of the arroyo toad. All segments of this reach of the river support good water levels (although often too high), sandy banks and terraces, as well as appropriate vegetation density. Based upon cursory observations, pacific tree frogs, even though abundant, reproduced in relatively small numbers, and low numbers of western toads were localized to only the best ponded habitat. Aquatic invertebrates including odonatids (dragonflies and damselflies), other arthropods, and crayfish were rarely seen. One adult bullfrog and no larvae were observed.

LITERATURE CITED

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2001. Survey protocol for the arroyo toad, Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office. <http://ventura.fws.gov/surveyprot/arroyotoad.htm>.

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