
**Bloom Biological, Inc., "Report on White-Tailed Kites on Portions of Newhall
Land and Farming Company Property (including Newhall Ranch); Los
Angeles and Ventura Counties, California" (January 22, 2009)**

**REPORT ON WHITE-TAILED KITES
ON PORTIONS OF NEWHALL LAND AND FARMING COMPANY
PROPERTY, (INCLUDING NEWHALL RANCH)
LOS ANGELES AND VENTURA COUNTIES, CALIFORNIA**

Prepared for:

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INTRODUCTION

Bloom Biological, Inc. conducted extensive field surveys of White-tailed Kites on portions of The Newhall Land and Farming Company property, from November 12, 2007 through April 23, 2008 and part of June 2008. This report summarizes the findings of the survey efforts.

The survey area consisted of land along the Santa Clara River, west of Interstate 5 to Las Brisas Bridge (a distance of 10 miles) as well as all lands within the Newhall Ranch boundary, on both sides of State Highway 126 ("SR-126"), including lower Salt Creek, Potrero Canyon, and the upland habitat ("survey area" or "subject property").

METHODOLOGY

White-tailed kite surveys were conducted from November 2007 through April 2008. Surveys were conducted during daylight hours by walking and/or driving systematically along dirt roads, footpaths, streambeds, and canyon bottoms throughout the survey area. Kites were also indirectly surveyed for while conducting winter bird surveys and raptor nest surveys. If a kite was located, it was watched for several consecutive hours if possible. Time, location, and behavior were noted each time the bird moved to a new location. Locations were marked on a map and/or GPS locations were taken. Nest searches were conducted for all kite locations. All surveys were conducted by Chris A. Niemela, Peter H. Bloom, and Karly Moore.

RESULTS

A total of at least 68 days were spent in the field on Newhall property, surveying for kites either directly or indirectly while conducting wintering bird and raptor nest surveys. At least 2 individual White-tailed Kites were observed periodically at two different locations along the Santa Clara River. One individual occurred just upstream from Las Brisas Bridge and was observed foraging over agricultural and fallow fields on both sides of SR-126. The other individual was seen less frequently just west of the Los Angeles County/Ventura County line, and foraged mainly within the river channel (Figure 1).

One pair of white-tailed kites was observed nesting in a Coast Live Oak on the south side of the Santa Clara River near the rear Newhall Ranch entrance gate by the Magic Mountain parking lot (Figure 2). The pair foraged regularly over the fallow alfalfa field next to the Newhall rear gate, as well as over the fallow agricultural fields on the plateaus overlooking this area. On April 23, the female was incubating eggs. On June 15, there were 2-3 nestlings in the nest, about 7 days old. On June 29, the nest was empty. It is unclear why the nest failed. It is possible that the chicks died due to extremely hot temperatures and were then scavenged, or they were taken from the nest by a predator. The adult pair was not seen again in the area during periodic checks over subsequent months.

The locations of all White-tailed Kites observations are depicted in Figure 1. White-tailed kite nest location and related foraging locations are shown in Figure 2. The dots on the Figures represent locations where the individuals were observed and are not necessarily an indication of the number of individuals occurring on the subject property.





SUMMARY

White-tailed Kites occurred on Newhall Ranch property less frequently than last year. In February 2007, a small roost of about eight individuals was observed near the Castaic Creek confluence. In addition, at least 10 pairs were observed early in the breeding season in 2007, although only three pairs ultimately nested in the survey area, along the Santa Clara River. However, from November 2007 to April 2008, only 3 individuals were observed in the survey area, and no roosts were located. Two of these individuals were seen irregularly at the same two locations along the Santa Clara River; one at the Las Brisas Bridge (Ventura County) and one just west of the Ventura County line. The third individual was only seen on one occasion. The kites observed were foraging within the river channel as well as in the lowland agricultural fields and fallow patches adjacent to the Santa Clara River.

One pair of kites nested in a Coast Live Oak on the south side of the Santa Clara River near the rear Newhall Ranch entrance gate by the Magic Mountain parking lot. The nest ultimately failed when the nestlings were less than three weeks old. The cause of failure is unknown. The pair foraged regularly over the fallow alfalfa field next to the Newhall rear gate, as well as over the fallow agricultural fields on the plateaus overlooking this area. The adult pair was not seen again in the area during periodical checks over subsequent months.

On Newhall Ranch property, White-tailed Kites occurred only in the lowlands, foraging mainly over the Santa Clara River, fallow agricultural fields, and open coastal sage scrub. White-tailed Kite population numbers across the southern California region are at a low compared to 10 years ago. Nesting habitat quality along the Santa Clara River appears to be good, despite the low number of nesting kites this year.