Forde Biological Consultants, "Least Bell's Vireo and Southwestern Willow Flycatcher Presence-Absence Survey; Castaic Creek below Castaic Lagoon to halfway between Lake Hughes Road and Tapia Canyon Road, Castaic, Los Angeles County, California" (August 14, 2006)

2006
Bird

Least Bell's Vireo and Southwestern Willow Flycatcher Presence-Absence Survey

Castaic Creek below Castaic Lagoon to halfway between Lake Hughes Road and Tapia Canyon Road, Castaic, Los Angeles County, California

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Recovery Permit # TE-062907-2

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This report is a true and accurate statement regarding the results of a least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*) and southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*) presence-absence survey conducted at Castaic Creek below Castaic Lagoon at Lake Hughes Road, south to halfway between Lake Hughes Road and Tapia Canyon Road, Castaic, Los Angeles County.

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Signature	Date

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Introduction

Forde Biological Consultants (FBC) conducted presence-absence surveys for least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*) and southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*) along a portion of Castaic Creek from below Castaic Lagoon at Lake Hughes Road, south to a storm water channel approximately halfway between Lake Hughes Road and Tapia Canyon Road in Los Angeles County. FBC also conducted surveys at a fresh water marsh approximately 150 feet from the creek.

Exhibit A includes a topographic map depicting the location of the creek and the extent of the survey area. Exhibit B includes photographs, which depict habitat and current conditions along the length of the creek, within the survey area.

Vegetation

Tamarisk (*Tamarix* sp.) dominates the margins of the freshwater marsh. Cottonwood (*Populus fremontii*), elderberry (*Sambucus mexicana*), and willow (*Salix* sp.), are limited to a few scattered individuals. Rushes (*Juncus* sp., *Scirpus* sp.) are also present. Cattail (*Typha* sp.), cottonwood, mulefat (*Baccharis salicifolia*), tamarisk, and willow are present immediately below Castaic Lagoon and form a large patch of habitat suitable for southwestern willow flycatcher and least Bell's vireo. Stands of tamarisk and cottonwood dominate margins downstream; however, the stands are fragmented and limited in extent.

Methodology

FBC notified Chris Delith of the Ventura US Fish and Wildlife Service on May 10, 2006 of our intent to conduct presence-absence surveys for least Bell's vireo and southwestern willow flycatcher and received permission to proceed on May 11, 2006. FBC conducted the surveys in accordance with the *Least Bells Vireo Survey Guidelines* (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2001) and the *Southwestern Willow Flycatcher Survey Protocol* (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2000). The *Least Bells Vireo Survey Guidelines* require at least eight surveys between April 10 and July 31, at least 10 days apart, between sunrise and 11:00 am.

The *Southwestern Willow Flycatcher Survey Protocol* (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2000) requires at least five surveys during three survey periods. At least one survey is required during Survey Period 1 (May 15 – May 31), one during Survey Period 2 (June 1 – June 21), and three during Survey Period 3 (June 22 – July 17), at least five days apart, beginning one hour before sunrise until 10:00 am. Presence-absence surveys for southwestern willow flycatcher must be conducted under the authority of a recovery permit issued under Section 10 (a) (1) (A) of the Endangered Species Act. Andrew McGinn Forde conducted the presence-absence surveys under recovery permit TE-062907-2.

FBC conduct surveys for both species on, May 15, May 25, June 4, June 14, June 24, July 5, July 15, and July 25, 2006. Ron Francis assisted with surveys on May 15 and June 14 and Dave Crawford on June 24 and July 25, 2006. FBC arrived at the site just before dawn and left at approximately 11:00 am. Castaic Creek was flowing during the first four visits; therefore, FBC conducted surveys by walking along the edges of the creek and entering habitat. The creek had low to no flow during the last four surveys; therefore, FBC conducted the surveys by walking within the creek and entering habitat. FBC used an MP3 and Sony digital speaker to broadcast flycatcher calls. FBC did not broadcast least Bell's vireo calls. FBC used Bosch and Lomb binocular that can focus on objects less than five feet away. Weather conditions during the surveys fell within acceptable levels. No increment weather occurred during the surveys. Table 1 summarizes weather conditions during each survey date.

Table 1: Weather Conditions

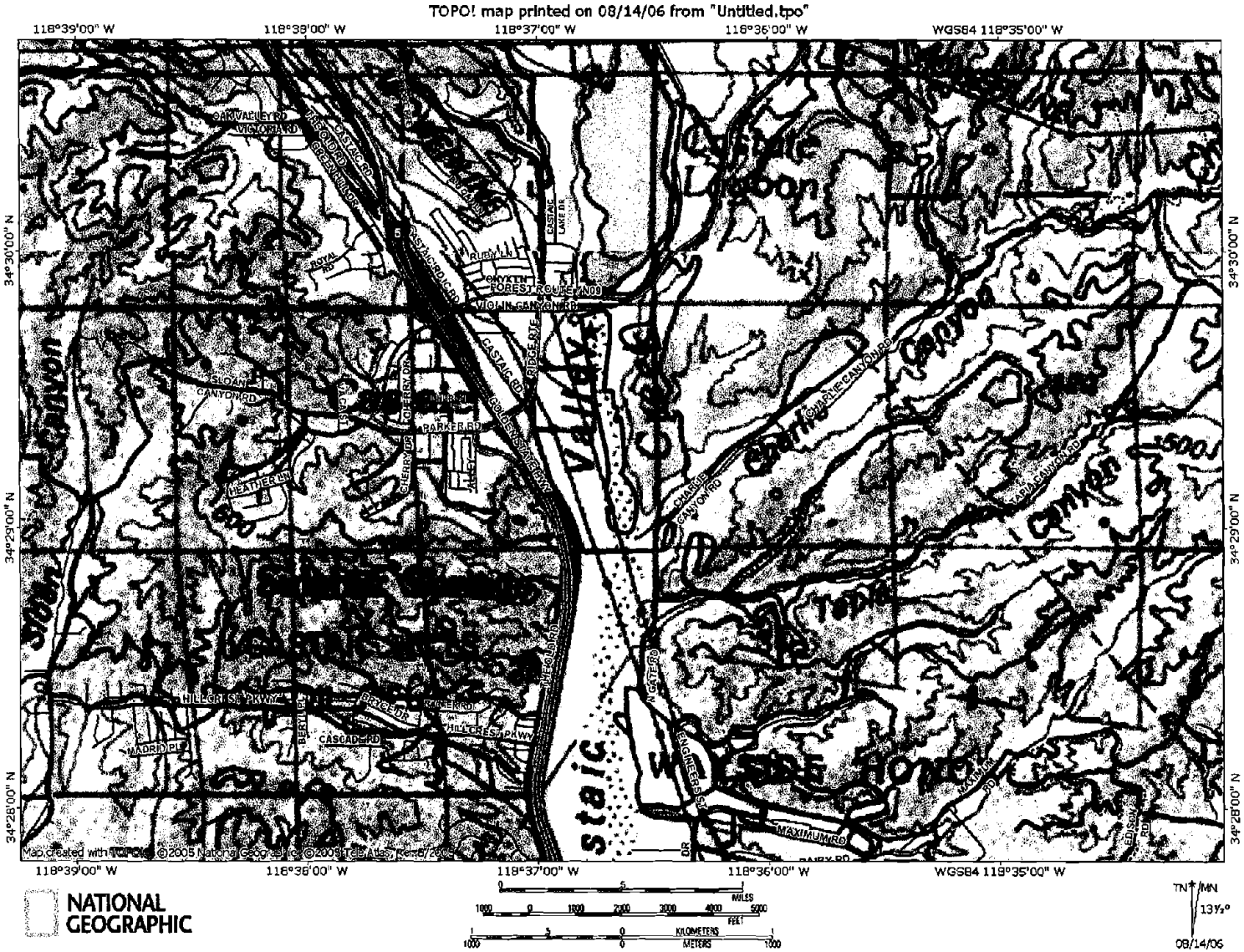
Date	Temperature @ 6:00 am	Temperature @ 11:00 am	Conditions	Wind
May 15, 2006	54°F	74°F	Clear	< 5 MPH
May 25, 2006	62°F	79°F	Clear	< 5 MPH
June 4, 2006	70°F	92°F	Clear	< 8 MPH
June 14, 2006	60°F	82°F	Clear	< 5 MPH

June 24, 2006	69	75	Clear	< 5 MPH
July 5, 2006	68	86	Clear	< 5 MPH
July 15, 2006	80	100	Clear	< 5 MPH
July 25, 2006	77	100	Clear	< 5 MPH

Results

FBC heard the calls of a southwestern willow flycatcher during Survey Period 1 on May 15 and one during Survey Period 2 on June 14 within Castaic Creek. Upon detection, FBC retreated to a concealed area to observe behavior. After observing each individual for approximately 20 minutes, FBC continued surveying downstream, and then returned to the area of detection to conduct further observations. The individuals did not display any behavior indicating that they were nesting or that they were preparing to nest. FBC did not observe leg bands on the individuals. FBC did not detect any individuals during Survey Period 3 or at anytime during the surveys conducted at the adjacent freshwater marsh. Exhibit C includes the "Willow Flycatcher Survey and Detection Form." FBC did not detect least Bell's vireo during the surveys. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service require surveyors to report detections of yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*). FBC did not detect any yellow-billed cuckoo during the surveys.

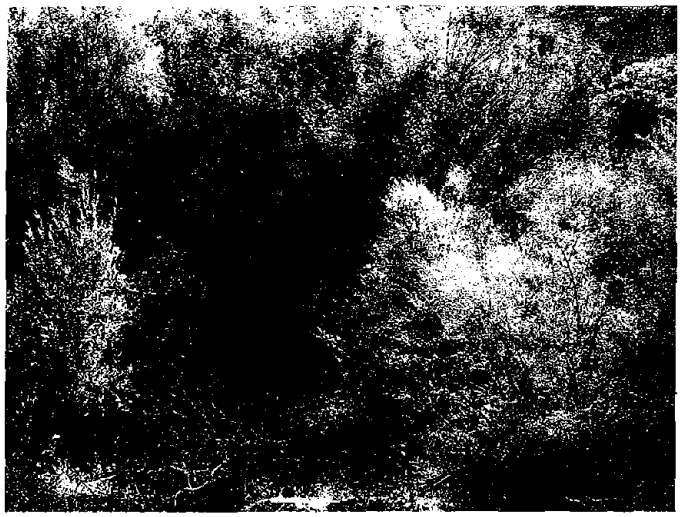
Exhibit A



Survey Area

★ Locations of Southwestern Willow Flycatchers

Exhibit B



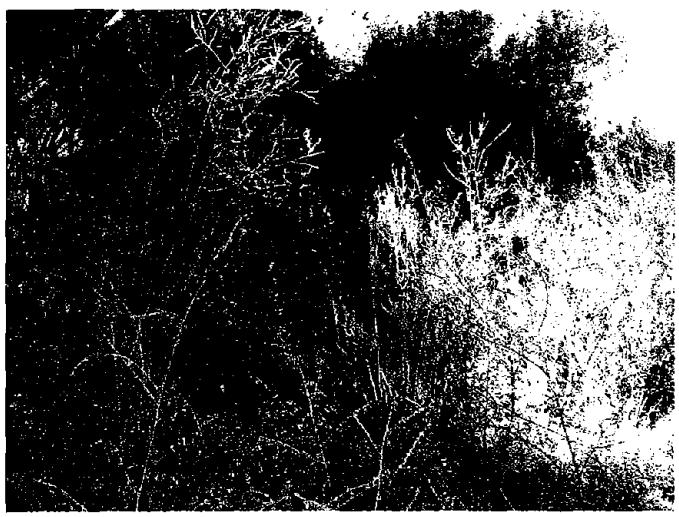


Exhibit C