
Guthrie, D.A., "Bird Surveys along the Santa Clara River, 1993; Castaic Creek Downstream to just below Newhall Ranch" (August 4, 1993; 1993B)

BIRD SURVEYS ALONG THE SANTA CLARA RIVER, 1993

CASTAIC CREEK DOWNSTREAM TO JUST BELOW NEWHALL RANCH

GBHe
GAEw
GElHe
BNHe

UIPEO

LoSh

CoHa

GoEa

WTKi

UeFl

YEWn

YBCh

SuTa

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August 4, 1993

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Castaic Creek downstream to just below Newhall Ranch**

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Nature and Scope of Surveys

During the spring and early summer of 1993 a survey was conducted of the section of the Santa Clara River between its confluence with Castaic Creek and a point just below the bridge over the Santa Clara River at Newhall Farm. The total length of the section surveyed was 7.5 miles. For convenience in surveying, this section was divided into two portions at the Los Angeles - Ventura County line.

Surveys were conducted according to procedures set out in U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service guidelines for Least Bell's Vireo surveys (Appendix 1). All surveys were conducted on foot by observers well acquainted with both visual and auditory patterns of southern California birds. All surveys occurred between 6 and 10 a.m. and the north and south sides of the river were walked in alternating surveys. All birds sighted were counted, but special emphasis was placed on finding brown-headed cowbirds and least Bell's vireos as well as other Species of Special Concern. Personnel for all surveys were Daniel A. Guthrie, Judith A. Sugden, Kenyon Corey and Richard F. Clements.

Observations

Bird observations for the two sections of river studied are presented in tables 1 and 2. This section of the Santa Clara River has not been regularly surveyed and, therefore, there are no previous surveys with which to compare this data. However, based on previous surveys of adjacent sections of the river immediately upstream from this section, a few generalizations can be made.

The Santa Clara River experienced heavy flooding during the early spring of 1993. This flooding destroyed much of the wet riparian growth along the river and this growth had not recovered by the census period. Bird numbers along the river appear comparable to numbers in similar habitat upstream, with one exception. Numbers of swallows are large due to a nesting colony under the bridge crossing at Newhall Ranch and also due to a nesting colony on cliffs just downstream from the confluence of the Santa Clara River with Castaic Creek.

Species of Special Concern

Least Bell's Vireo

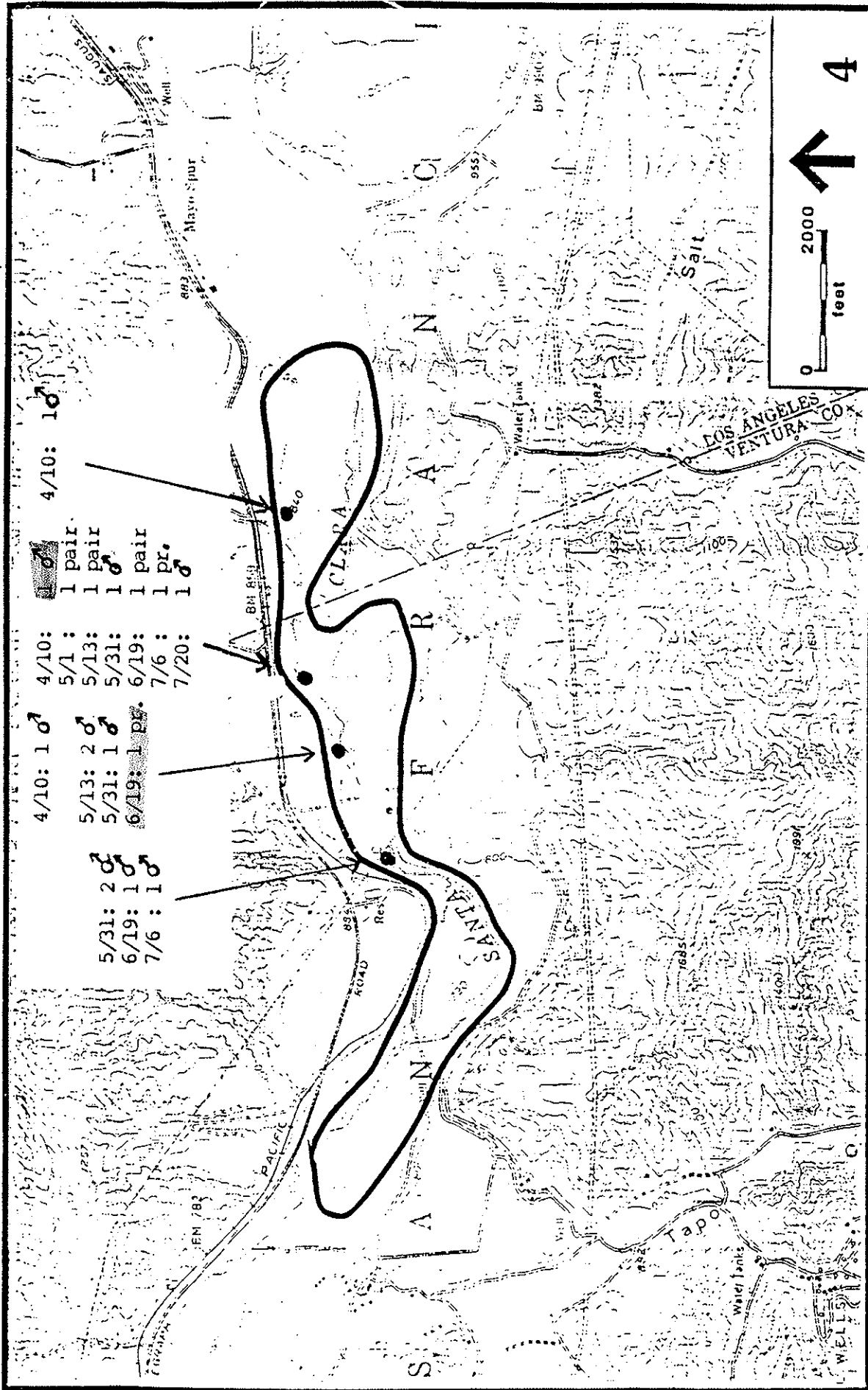
Singing least Bell's vireo were heard and observed near the Los Angeles - Ventura County line. A colony of vireos was found in this location in past years. Figure 1, taken from a RECON report on vireo populations in southern California for 1986, shows the location and dates of all vireo sightings. To avoid disturbance of vireos, the section where vireos were present was surveyed from the top of the bank north of vireo habitat. In accordance with Fish and Wildlife regulations, no tape recordings were played. Therefore, not all birds were observed during every census. However, on several occasions non-singing birds assumed to be females were observed near male birds.

All vireos were sighted along the northern edge of the wet riparian zone along the Santa Clara River. Vegetation consisted of salt bush, *Baccharis* and willow. The area was grazed by cattle during the census and, according to personnel of Newhall Land and Farming, cattle have regularly grazed in this area in previous years. Comments on the four specific localities, going from east to west, is as follows.

1. Located in Los Angeles County, a single singing male was observed at this site on April 10. The bird was in a dense salt bush at the base of the bluff along the north side of the river. Despite continued surveys of this spot the bird was never relocated on subsequent surveys and it is, therefore, doubtful that this bird bred.
2. Located just west of the Los Angeles-Ventura County line, vireos were observed at this site most frequently, with a pair of birds observed at least four times. It is very likely that this pair nested.
3. Located slightly further west, singing males were heard and observed at this site, with two males present on May 13. A non-singing bird was present June 19. Although this date seems late for pair formation, this locality may also have been a nesting site.
4. Only signing male birds were observed at this westernmost locality. It is not clear that nesting occurred at this site.

In summary, probably two pair and possibly three pair nested in the vicinity of the Los Angeles - Ventura County line along the Santa Clara River in 1993. The number of singing males observed in this area, 4 on one day, is not much different than the 5 observed in this area in 1986, indicating that this colony, although small, has continued relatively unchanged through the years.

Brown-headed Cowbirds were regularly observed along all sections of the Santa Clara River, as indicated by census numbers in tables 1 and 2. There appeared to be no greater concentration of cowbirds in the vicinity of least Bell's vireos than along other sections of the river. Cowbirds appeared to regularly patrol the riparian vegetation zone along the river and were often seen flying up and down the river during censuses.



NESTING PAIRS
 # TERR. MALES
 # TRANSIENTS/MIGRANTS

Figure 1. Sightings of Least Bell's Vireo, 1993

Loggerhead Shrike

The loggerhead shrike is a Candidate Species under the Federal Endangered Species act. Shrikes moved into the Santa Clara River riparian zone in last July. Presumably these were birds that had nested in nearby coastal sage areas but sought water and green vegetation during the drier late summer.

Cooper's Hawk

One and possibly two pairs of Cooper's Hawk were present along the river during the census period. Cooper's Hawk is listed as a Species of Concern by the State of California.

Golden Eagle

The golden eagle is listed as a species of Special Concern by the State of California. A single eagle was observed soaring over the Santa Clara River during our surveys. Eagles are sparingly present in the Santa Suzanna mountains and Los Padres National Forest.

Black-shouldered Kite

This species is considered a Special Animal by the State of California. One and possibly two pairs of kites nested along the censused section of the Santa Clara River.

Vermillion Flycatcher

This species is considered a species of Special Concern by the State of California. A single individual was observed along the Santa Clara River during the census period. Vermillion Flycatchers nest sparingly in riparian areas in southern California. The individual observed was an immature and possibly a post-breeding wanderer.

Yellow Warbler

This species is considered a Species of Special Concern by the State of California. Up to 20 pair of Yellow Warblers nested in the wet riparian vegetation along the surveyed section of the Santa Clara River.

Yellow-breasted Chat

This species is listed as a Species of Special Concern by the State of California. Approximately 15 pair of chats nested along the surveyed section of the Santa Clara River, mostly within Ventura County.

Summer Tanager

The summer tanager is listed as a Species of Special Concern by the State of California. A single tanager was observed on May 1st. Tanagers nest in riparian woodlands, but given the date, this individual might have been a migrant rather than a summer resident.

Table 1. Bird Observations along the Santa Clara River System, 1993: Santa Clara River from Castaic Creek confluence to Ventura County Line.

Species	date:	4/10	4/22	5/1	5/13	6/2	6/19	7/ 5	7/18	Status
Great Blue Heron		1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	W,M
Great Egret		-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	W
Green-backed Heron		-	3	-	3	1	2	-	1	R
Black-cr. Night Heron		-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	M
Mallard		-	9	2	6	9	-	4	3	R
Turkey Vulture		-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	S
Black-shouldered Kite		-	2	1	2	2	1	-	1	R
Cooper's Hawk		-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	R
Red-shouldered Hawk		2	2	1	2	1	4	1	2	R
Red-tailed Hawk		2	6	1	4	3	4	2	3	R
American Kestrel		2	2	1	1	5	1	-	1	R
California Quail		50	115	39	35	17	24	6	20	R
Killdeer		13	11	8	14	12	22	6	9	R
Spotted Sandpiper		-	-	1	1	1	6	-	4	S
Domestic Pigeon		-	5	-	3	3	-	5	-	R
Mourning Dove		4	1	4	6	3	2	8	40	R
Greater Roadrunner		-	1	1	-	-	-	1	1	R
Barn Owl		-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	R
Great Horned Owl		1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	R
White-throated Swift		-	4	10	-	-	-	-	5	R
Black-ch. Hummingbird		2	3	1	-	8	1	-	-	S
Anna's Hummingbird		9	5	10	5	12	1	2	7	R
Costa's Hummingbird		-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	S
Acorn Woodpecker		-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	R
Nuttall's Woodpecker		11	6	3	6	10	11	12	3	R
Downy Woodpecker		-	2	1	-	3	3	2	3	R
Hairy Woodpecker		2	2	1	-	2	-	1	1	R
Northern Flicker		-	3	1	2	4	-	-	12	R
Western Wood Pewee		-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	M
Willow Flycatcher		-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	M,S
Black Phoebe		-	8	2	4	5	6	2	11	R
Ash-thr. Flycatcher		13	14	11	11	7	9	10	12	S
Western Kingbird		-	-	4	1	-	6	-	-	S
Tree Swallow		1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	M
Violet-green Swallow		-	30	4	12	2	7	1	-	S
N. Rough-w. Swallow		3	58	6	13	5	9	4	2	S
Cliff Swallow		-	160	100	50	138	129	30	10	S
Scrub Jay		22	22	16	9	11	13	19	22	R
American Crow		22	-	6	18	10	32	50	10	R
Common Raven		9	60	13	13	21	12	2	11	R
California Towhee		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
California Towhee		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bewick's Wren		51	15	25	29	21	18	6	10	R
House Wren		16	6	17	10	11	2	-	-	R
American Robin		2	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	R
California Towhee		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Wren-tit		4	2	2	-	-	2	4	1	R
California Thrasher		1	-	6	-	1	-	3	2	R

Table 1 (cont.). Bird Observations along the Santa Clara River System, 1993:
Santa Clara River from Castaic Creek confluence to Ventura County Line.

Species	date:	4/10	4/22	5/1	5/13	6/2	6/19	7/5	7/18	Status
American Pipit		65	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	M,W
Loggerhead Shrike		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	R
European Starling		38	10	32	19	9	38	-	3	R
Bell's Vireo		1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	S ✓
Warbling Vireo		1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	M
Orange-crowned Warbler		-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	M
Yellow Warbler		7	2	6	8	2	3	1	-	S
Yellow-rumped Warbler		22	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	W
Common Yellowthroat		6	1	3	2	3	2	4	3	R
Wilson's Warbler		-	10	1	2	-	-	-	-	M
Yellow-breasted Chat		-	1	2	2	2	1	2	1	S
Black-headed Grosbeak		22	12	15	15	7	13	4	1	S
Blue Grosbeak		1	3	-	-	1	2	4	4	S
Lazuli Bunting		-	-	-	-	1	3	-	14	S
Rufous-sided Towhee		10	9	6	2	12	2	5	2	R
California Towhee		8	6	2	4	18	7	10	8	R
Savannah Sparrow		-	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	W,M
Lark Sparrow		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	R
Song Sparrow		37	15	19	19	25	9	6	30*	R
White-crowned Sparrow		8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	W
Red-winged Blackbird		50	6	70	3	-	-	-	2	S
Brewer's Blackbird		-	-	13	1	-	-	-	-	R
Brown-headed Cowbird		12	10	7	14	15	10	14	16	S ✓
Hooded Oriole		-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	S
Northern Oriole		10	5	2	3	2	10	2	4	S
Purple Finch		2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	W
House Finch		13	5	4	6	4	22	4	6	R
Lesser Goldfinch		10	5	6	8	-	6	4	5	R
Lawrence's Goldfinch		-	-	4	2	-	-	-	2	R
American Goldfinch		8	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	M
Total Species:		46	51	52	48	47	42	40	49	
Total Individuals:		596	715	510	382	477	482	261	345	

Total Species on all visits: 79; 45 Resident, 20 Summer and 14 Migrant and Winter.

Status: M - Migrant; R - Resident; S - Summer Only; W - Winter Only

Censuses on 4/10, 5/1, 6/2, 7/5 primarily along north side of Santa Clara River,
Censuses on 4/22, 5/13, 5/19, 7/18 primarily along south side of Santa Clara River.

Distance covered per census; 4.5 miles.

* One observed feeding a Brown-headed Cowbird young.

Table 2. Bird Observations along the Santa Clara River System, 1993: Santa Clara River from Ventura County Line to Western Limit of Newhall Property.

Species	date:4/10	4/22	5/1	5/13	5/31	6/19	7/5	7/20	Status
Great Blue Heron	-	1	-	-	1	-	1	1	M
Great Egret	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	3	M
Snowy Egret	-	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	M
Green-backed Heron	-	1	-	-	-	-	2	2	R
Mallard	4	6	3	3	2	-	6	6	R ✓
Turkey Vulture	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	S
Black-sh. Kite	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	R
Cooper's Hawk	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	R
Red-shouldered Hawk	1	1	-	2	2	2	3	3	R
Red-tailed Hawk	3	1	-	1	3	1	5	2	R
Golden Eagle	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	R
American Kestrel	1	2	1	1	4	-	-	2	R
California Quail	21	16	11	26	30	11	11	16	R ✓
Killdeer	2	13	5	11	17	4	15	7	R
Spotted Sandpiper	-	3	6	10	8	-	10	1	S
Domestic Pigeon	-	-	-	-	-	7	7	10	R ✓
Mourning Dove	-	2	13	13	15	15	27	6	R
Spotted Dove	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	R
Greater Roadrunner	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	R
White-throated Swift	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	R
Black-ch. Hummingbird	9	6	7	-	8	7	8	6	S
Anna's Hummingbird	10	12	6	5	12	8	22	18	R
Costa's Hummingbird	-	-	5	4	4	3	-	-	S
Allen's Hummingbird	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	S
Belted Kingfisher	-	1	-	-	-	1	2	-	M
Nutt. Woodpecker	12	8	6	4	12	9	10	4	R
Downy Woodpecker	2	8	4	6	5	7	2	7	R
Hairy Woodpecker	2	3	2	1	6	2	1	1	R
Northern Flicker	-	-	1	1	1	-	1	2	R
Western Wood Pewee	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	M
Pac.-s. Flycatcher	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	M
Black Phoebe	1	4	4	4	16	9	3	12	R
Ash-thr. Flycatcher	8	17	8	10	18	10	13	8	S
Vermill. Flycatcher	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	S
Western Kingbird	-	-	1	6	3	1	-	3	S
N. Rough-w. Swallow	-	9	14	2	5	50	48	12	S
Cliff Swallow	150	150	150	210	410	350	150	152	S
Scrub Jay	13	13	8	3	12	14	12	4	R
American Crow	2	8	2	7	47	14	65	19	R
Common Raven	2	8	9	10	5	2	4	18	R
Black Phoebe	10	6	1	1	11	11	6	1	R
Bewick's Wren	28	38	20	32	59	18	20	12	R
House Wren	6	13	12	13	20	3	1	1	R
Western Gnatcatcher	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	S
Western Bluebird	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	S
American Robin	-	-	-	-	2	4	3	1	R
Wren-tit	1	1	1	1	4	4	7	6	R

Table 2 (cont.). Bird Observations along the Santa Clara River System, 1993:
Santa Clara River from Ventura County Line to Western Limit of Newhall Property.

Species	date:4/10	4/22	5/1	5/13	5/31	6/19	7/6	7/20	Status
California Thrasher	3	-	-	4	8	10	2	1	R
American Pipit	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	M
Cedar Waxwing	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	W,M
Phainopepla	-	3	2	5	2	21	18	1	R
Loggerhead Shrike	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	R
European Starling	5	3	6	-	27	10	8	20	R
Bell's Vireo	2	-	2	4	4	5	3	1	S
Warbling Vireo	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	M
Orange-cr. warbler	2	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	M
Yellow Warbler	-	5	7	12	2	4	2	-	S
Yellow-r. Warbler	15	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	W
MacGilliv. Warbler	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	M
Common Yellowthroat	7	13	3	1	16	5	20	21	R
Wilson's Warbler	2	1	3	-	-	-	-	-	M
Yellow-br. Chat	5	5	9	6	16	9	8	4	S
Summer Tanager	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	S
Black-n. Grosbeak	12	13	20	15	19	20	16	12	S
Blue Grosbeak	1	1	3	2	6	2	4	9	S
Lazuli Bunting	-	-	-	-	7	-	-	5	S
Rufous-s. Towhee	13	20	14	12	21	17	7	5	R
California Towhee	21	5	24	9	18	27	7	4	R
Lark Sparrow	-	2	-	-	1	-	5	1	R
Song Sparrow	18	51	25	35	53	56	34	22	R
Red-w. Blackbird	1	-	4	5	10	-	2	-	S
Western Meadowlark	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	R
Brewer's Blackbird	-	-	-	1	2	1	-	6	R
Brown-h. Cowbird	16	18	26	8	33	15	18	11	S
Hooded Oriole	-	4	2	2	7	1	2	4	S
Northern Oriole	3	3	6	8	3	4	5	4	S
Purple Finch	4	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	W
House Finch	6	-	2	5	9	5	8	10	R
Pine Siskin	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	W
Lesser Goldfinch	16	13	7	7	29	24	29	11	R
American Goldfinch	-	10	2	-	-	-	1	4	M
House Sparrow	-	-	-	-	5	5	-	2	R
Total Species:	45	53	49	49	54	52	56	56	
Total Individuals:	475	571	496	551	1102	867	698	557	

Total Species on all visits: 84; 44 Resident, 24 Summer, and 16 Migrant and Winter

Status: M - Migrant; R - Resident; S - Summer Only; W - Winter Only

Censuses on 4/10, 5/1, 5/31 and 7/6 were mostly along north side of river.
Censuses on 4/22, 5/13, 6/19 and 7/20 were mostly along south side of river.

Distance covered on each census; 3 miles.

Appendix 1. Fish and Wildlife Rules for Least Bell's Vireo Censuses.

LEAST BELL'S VIREO SURVEY GUIDELINES

1. All riparian areas should be surveyed once a week from April 1 to July 31. These dates encompass the period during which most vireo nesting activity occurs. If additional information on vireo habitat utilization is needed, these surveys should be extended to August 31. Information typically collected after July 31 will reflect a broader extent of the riparian habitat and other adjacent habitat types that the vireo utilizes during the latter-phase of the breeding season, especially when the young become independent of the adults.
2. Surveys must be conducted by qualified biologist(s) familiar with song and plumage characteristics of the vireo.
3. Surveys shall be conducted between dawn and 11:00 a.m. Surveys shall avoid periods of excessive heat, wind, and rain.
4. All vireo detections (e.g., vocalization points, areas used for foraging, etc.) should be used to define individual home range. These data need to be mapped on a large-scale aerial photograph.
5. Data on vireo breeding status (e.g., number and location of paired or unpaired territorial males, nest building efforts, feeding of nestlings, location of vireo nests, etc.) should be noted during each survey.
6. All sightings of cowbirds and their numbers in vireo territories should be noted during each survey.
7. No attempts should be made to locate or examine vireo nests unless authorized by permits issued by California Department of Fish and Game and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
8. A final report should be prepared which describes survey dates, methods, locations, and information identified in items 4, 5, and 6 above.

If you have any questions regarding these survey guidelines, please contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at (714) 643-4270.