
**Guthrie, D.A., "Bird Surveys along the Santa Clara River, 1999; Ventura
County Line Downstream to just below Las Brisas Crossing"
(August 26, 1999; 1999C)**

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BIRD SURVEYS ALONG THE SANTA CLARA RIVER, 1999
VENTURA COUNTY LINE DOWNSTREAM TO
JUST BELOW LAS BRISAS CROSSING

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Ventura County Line downstream to just below Las Brisas Crossing

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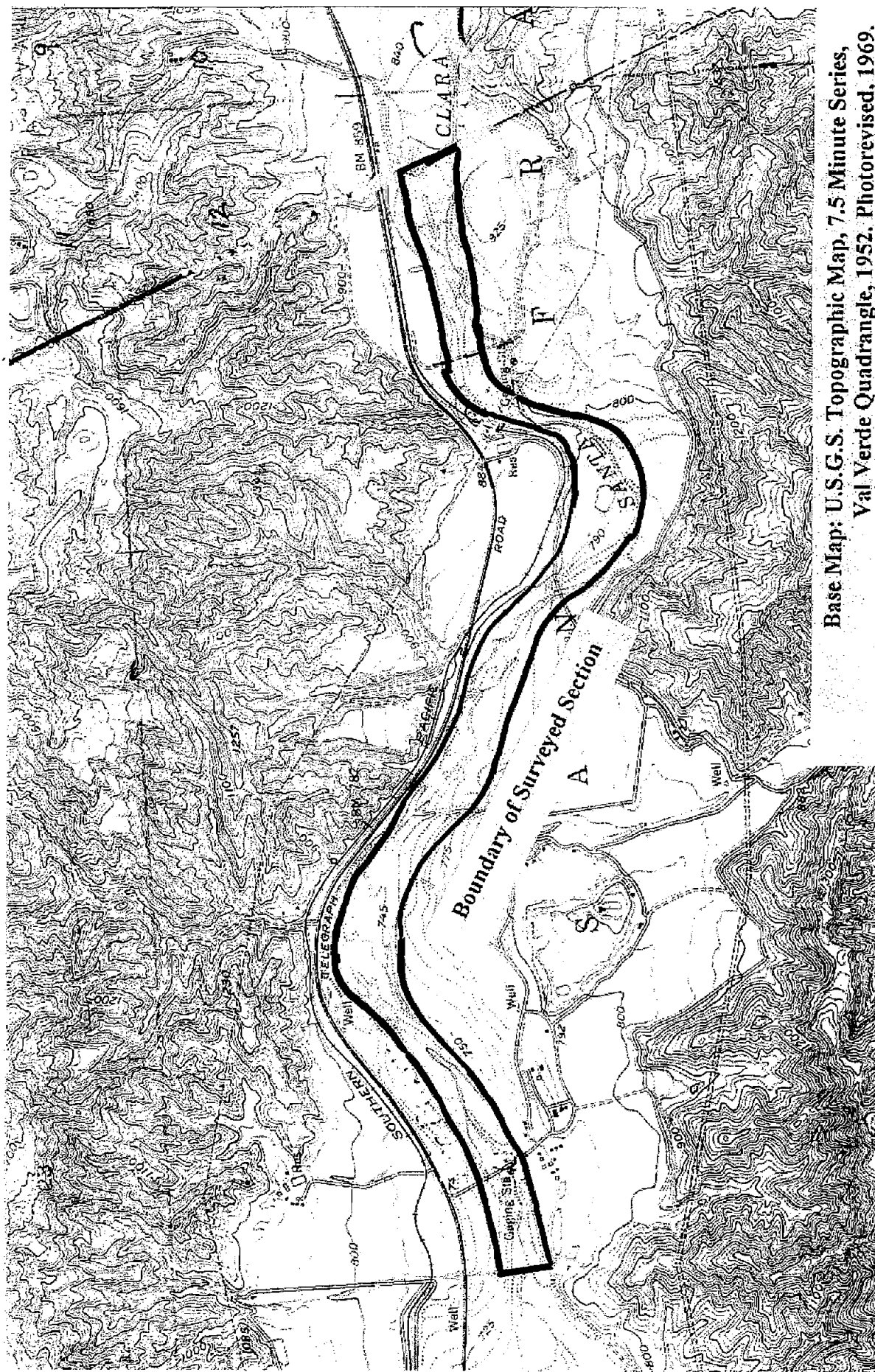
Nature and Scope of Surveys

During the spring and early summer of 1999 a survey was conducted along the section of the Santa Clara River between its confluence with Castaic Creek and a point 1/4 mile below the Las Brisas bridge over the Santa Clara River. 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. The Los Angeles County survey was incorporated into the report on the Proposed Riverwood Project. The Ventura County portion is included in this report and is shown in Figure 1.

The riparian area of the Santa Clara river reported on here was surveyed eight times, in accordance to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Protocol for Least Bell's Vireo. Three of the surveys were conducted within the time frames recommended by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Protocol for Southwestern Willow Flycatcher. In order to follow Least Bell's Vireo protocol on kilometers covered per day, the area was divided into two sections, each surveyed separately. However, observations from these two surveys are combined in data presentation (Table 1).

Each survey was conducted on foot by observers well acquainted with both visual and auditory and behavioral characteristics of southern California birds. Surveys occurred approximately every other week between early April and late July (there was some variation in timing to avoid periods of poor weather) and occurred between 5:30 and 10 a.m. All birds sighted were counted, but special emphasis was placed on finding focus species, Species of Special Concern, and Brown-headed Cowbirds. If focus species (Least Bell's Vireo, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher), were not visually observed, tapes of their calls were played in an attempt to elicit a response. Personnel for all surveys were Daniel A. Guthrie and Judith A. Sugden, both working under Federal Fish and Wildlife Service Permit number TE810394-1, issued under section 10(a)(1)(A) of the Endangered Species Act.

Figure 1. Section of the Santa Clara River Surveyed for this report.



Base Map: U.S.G.S. Topographic Map, 7.5 Minute Series,
Val Verde Quadrangle, 1952. Photorevised, 1969.

Habitat Condition and Bird Observations

The heavy El Nino rains of the winter of 1997-1998 resulted in the spread of sediments over a wide section of river channel and the elimination of most wet riparian vegetation. During 1999 there was little flooding with the result that the wet riparian vegetation that began growing in the Spring of 1998 was not damaged but continued to increase in size. However, some retrenchment of the stream channel into the sediments deposited in 1998 left marginal riparian vegetation high and dry. The overall result was a narrowing of the wet riparian zone.

During July cattle were present in the riparian area from the Ventura County line to the pipeline crossing approximately 3/4 of a mile down stream. Agricultural activities occurred throughout the survey period on fields along both sides of the riparian zone of the Santa Clara River. Dirt roads crossing the river, which were damaged by spring rains, were reestablished in late April and catch dams for irrigation were reestablished in June.

Bird observations are presented in table 1. Different species breed at different times of the year. In general, species are most easily observed when they are actively defending territories by song during the establishment of breeding pairs. Once pairs are established and nesting begins song often decreases and the numbers of birds observed, therefore, also decreases. After young leave the nest, numbers observed may increase. Thus, for most resident species, numbers of adult birds are most accurately censused in April and May, when territorial activity is at a maximum. However, for some species such as Yellow Warbler, this is the season of migration and numbers observed may include both local breeding species as well as migrants passing through the area. A few species such as Anna's Hummingbird that nest early in the season may be underestimated. Numbers of breeding birds observed may decrease slightly in June and early July when birds are less active during nesting, and increase in late June and July when young birds leave the nest.

Comments on Threatened and Endangered Species

Yellow-billed Cuckoo

The Yellow-billed Cuckoo is listed as a State Endangered Species. Despite playing taped calls of this species during June and July surveys, no individuals of this species were observed in 1999. There have been a small number of observations of cuckoos along the Santa Clara River during migration in past years, but no records from this section of the river.

Southwestern Willow Flycatcher

This subspecies is listed under the Federal Endangered Species Act. Willow Flycatchers were once widespread in wet riparian woodland in southern California but now only a few individuals exist. The main California breeding populations of this species are along the Kern River and north of Santa Barbara.

Following the Protocol outlined by Sogge (Technical Report NPS/NAUCPRS/NRTR-97/12) three surveys were conducted specifically for Southwestern Willow Flycatcher (May 26, June 11, and June 2). All surveys occurred between 5:30 and 10:00 am. and used taped calls to elicit a response if flycatchers were not first observed. An additional survey on July 8 also followed this protocol.

A single Southwestern Willow Flycatcher was observed during the June 11th census. The location for this sighting is shown in Figure 2. The bird did not sing prior to playing a tape of Southwestern Willow Flycatcher call. In response to the tape the bird gave the "whit" call, but did not sing. This bird could not be found on subsequent visits to the site. It is not clear whether this bird was a Southwestern Willow Flycatcher or a member of a more northerly subspecies passing through on migration. The report forms required by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Protocol for this species are attached to this report.

California Least Bell's Vireo

Surveys of the wet riparian areas along the Santa Clara River followed U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Guidelines for Least Bell's Vireo. Eight surveys were conducted between April 10 and July 31 (see Table 1 for dates). All surveys occurred between 5:30 and 10:00 am. and taped vireo calls were played if no vireos were heard or seen. Once vireos were found, no attempt was made to determine nesting success or presence of leg bands on birds as other researchers were also surveying vireos and determining nesting success along this section of the river (Zev Labinger and Jim Greaves, monitoring Restoration Phase of the ARCO/Four Corners Oil Spill).

Vireos were heard and seen in three areas, as shown in Figure 3. In Area 1 two vireos were singing on May 11th. Although this location was surveyed both before and after this sighting as it is a place where vireos have been found in previous years, no other sightings were made in this area. Cattle were grazing in this area after May 11th, and the area was drier than in previous years due to channel cutting of the Santa Clara River. Also, the vegetation in this area is more mature than in previous years and may no longer be prime habitat for vireos. These factors may have contributed to vireos leaving this area. A single vireo was heard singing just east of this locality in Los Angeles County on June 24th and July 23rd and may have been one of these birds.

Two pairs of vireos nested in Area 2. Wet riparian vegetation in this area was damaged by the 1997-8 floods but now has developed into a dense willow and *Baccharis* thicket. Birds were first observed at this locality on May 11th and at least one bird was still present on July 23rd,

Figure 2. Southwestern Willow Flycatcher Sightings during 1999.

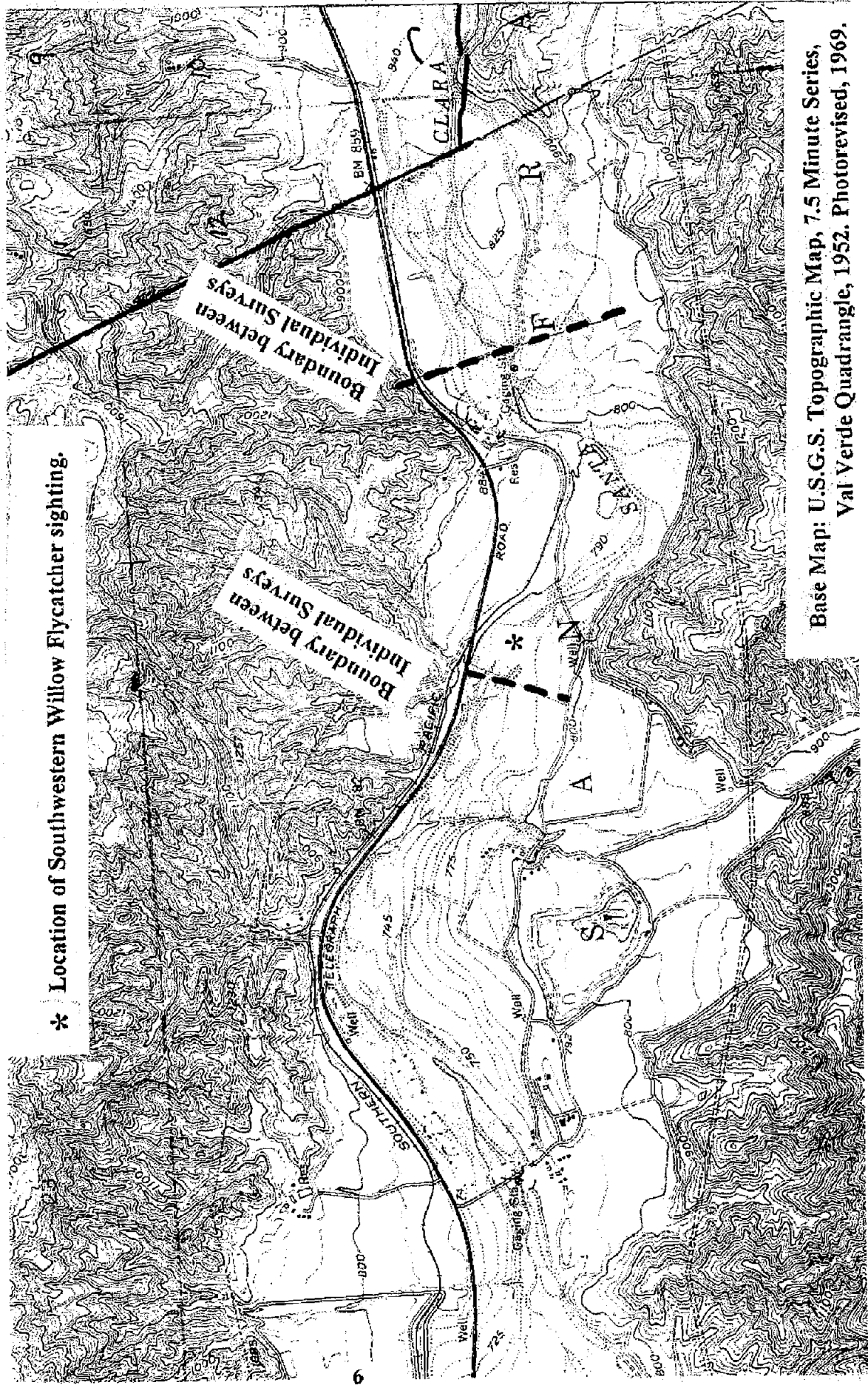
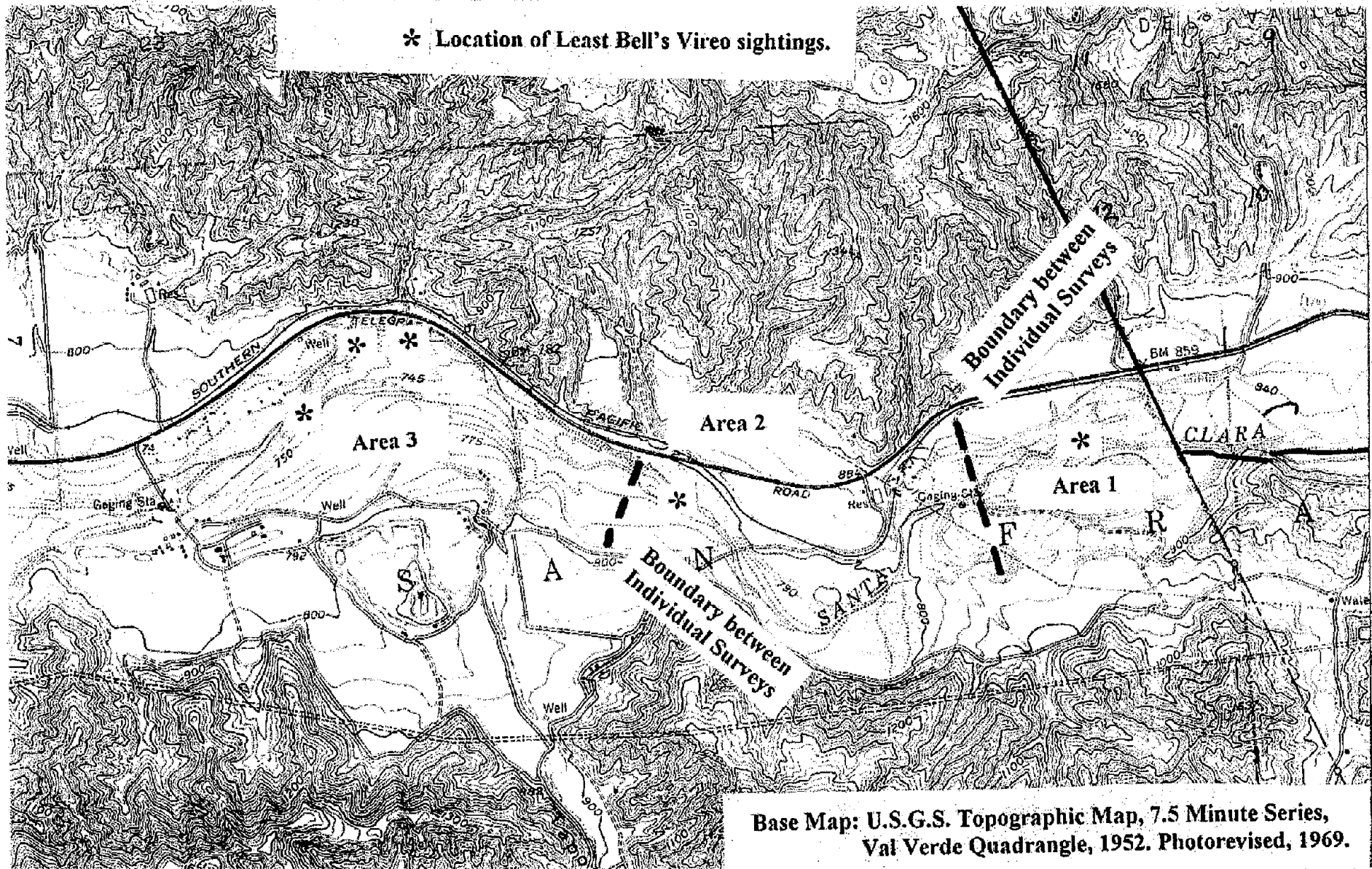


Figure 3. Least Bell's Vireo Sightings during 1999.



indicating a probable second nesting by one pair of birds. No nesting was observed in this area in previous years.

In Area 3 at least three and probably four pairs of vireos nested in 1999. Two pair were established by April 27, and three to four pair were present from May 11th through the end of the survey period (July 23). On June 11 several "extra" birds were observed. It is thought that these represent fledged young from a first nesting and that observations after this date represent a second nesting attempt. Least Bell's Vireos also nested in this area in 1998.

Comments on Sensitive Species

Great Blue Heron

Great Blue Herons are listed on the California Natural Diversity Data Base as a species that warrants monitoring. Individuals of this species was observed sparingly along the river after the breeding season and along other sections of the river during winter and migration. No nesting was observed.

Great Egret

The Great egret is listed on the California Natural Diversity Data Base as a species that warrants monitoring. A few individuals were observed along the river during migration and after the breeding season.

White-tailed Kite

This species, formerly the Black-shouldered Kite, is considered a Species of Special Concern by the State of California. One pair of kites nested in the dry riparian woodland on the south side of the river in 1999.

Cooper's Hawk

Cooper's Hawk is considered a Species of Special Concern by the State of California. Cooper's Hawks were observed rarely along the main river in 1999.

Loggerhead Shrike

This is a California Species of Special Concern. Shrikes are resident in the coastal sage scrub

areas adjacent to the Santa Clara River System. A single individual observed in the riparian zone on July Th was probably a post-breeding wanderer.

Yellow Warbler

The Yellow Warbler is considered a Species of Special Concern by the State of California. Yellow Warblers prefer wet riparian habitat but are also found in large cottonwoods in drier riparian areas. Singing yellow warblers were observed throughout the surveys along the Santa Clara River. The higher numbers observed in May probably represent breeding individuals augmented by migrants. The lower numbers observed in June are probably more indicative of local breeders.

Yellow-breasted Chat

The Yellow-breasted Chat is considered a Species of Special Concern by the State of California. The nearly dozen chats calling from territories along this section of riparian woodland are about the same number as observed here in previous years.

Comments on Brown Headed Cowbird

Cowbirds were regularly observed in all sections of the study area. At the beginning of the surveys in March, large numbers of cowbirds were present in a mixed flock of blackbirds feeding in a cattle feed area north of Route 126 in nearby Los Angeles County. By April cattle feeding had ceased and the cowbirds had dispersed. Numbers remained high along the river until late July, by which time nearly all nesting was completed.

**Table 1. Bird Observations along the Santa Clara River System,
1999; Santa Clara River from Ventura County Line to
Western Limit of Las Brisas Ranch.**

Species	date:4/15	4/27	5/11	5/26	6/11	6/24	7/8	7/23	status
Do.-cr. Cormorant	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	M
Great Blue Heron	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	M
Great Egret	2	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	M
Snowy Egret	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	M
Green Heron	-	-	1	1	1	2	1	1	R*
Bl.cr. Night Heron	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	W,M
Mallard	-	2	-	2	3	3	1	-	R*
Turkey Vulture	-	2	2	1	1	-	-	-	R*
White-tailed Kite	-	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	R*
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	W
Cooper's Hawk	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	R*
Red-sh. Hawk	2	1	-	2	-	1	3	2	R*
Red-tailed Hawk	1	2	1	-	3	1	-	1	R*
American Kestrel	2	-	1	-	-	1	-	1	R*
California Quail	18	47	23	28	40	47	52	50	R*
Sora	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	M
Killdeer	1	13	8	11	16	15	4	4	R*
Spotted Sandpiper	-	3	-	-	3	2	1	1	S*
Domestic Pigeon	4	9	3	6	-	2	1	-	R*
Mourning Dove	9	42	11	22	27	22	33	8	R*
Common Ground Dove	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	R*
Greater Roadrunner	-	-	1	-	3	-	-	1	R*
White-th. Swift	-	-	-	-	-	11	-	-	R*
Vaux Swift	24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	R*
Bl.-ch. Humm-bird	2	2	-	-	1	1	1	3	S*
Anna's Humm-bird	16	16	17	13	12	7	9	17	R*
Costa's Humm-bird	-	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	S*
Nutt. Woodpecker	4	6	6	10	13	9	11	5	R*
Downy Woodpecker	2	4	9	3	9	5	5	1	R*
Hairy Woodpecker	5	-	3	1	-	-	-	-	R*
Northern Flicker	2	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	R*
Western Wood Pewee	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	M
Pac.-sl.Flycatcher	-	-	1	-	1	1	1	-	M
Willow Flycatcher	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	M
Black Phoebe	6	4	10	10	9	7	15	14	R*
Ash-thr.Flycatcher	1	12	17	15	8	11	8	19	S*
Cassin's Kingbird	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	R*
Western Kingbird	-	8	-	-	-	-	2	2	S*
Violet-gr.Swallow	-	-	-	-	2	4	-	-	S*
N. Ro.-w. Swallow	4	2	2	24	24	14	5	24	S*
Cliff Swallow	160	150	120	200	350	105	136	150	S*
Barn Swallow	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	1	S*
Scrub Jay	7	18	16	18	11	11	12	5	R*
American Crow	2	3	6	15	8	4	7	2	R*
Common Raven	10	14	4	7	4	4	16	3	R*
Plain Titmouse	10	7	3	5	-	8	3	7	R*
Bushtit	30	8	25	34	21	20	26	19	R*

Table 1 (cont.). Bird Observations along the Santa Clara River System, 1999; Santa Clara River from Ventura County Line to Western Limit of Las Brisas Ranch.

<u>Species</u>	<u>date:4/15</u>	<u>4/27</u>	<u>5/11</u>	<u>5/26</u>	<u>6/11</u>	<u>6/24</u>	<u>7/8</u>	<u>7/23</u>	<u>status</u>
Bewick's Wren	24	46	36	40	29	13	28	14	R*
House Wren	18	25	15	16	6	8	2	1	R*
Western Bluebird	6	4	4	4	2	7	5	3	R*
American Robin	-	4	-	2	2	2	2	-	R*
N. Mockingbird	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	R*
Wrentit	6	23	21	6	13	16	18	19	R*
Calif. Thrasher	2	4	3	6	8	2	9	5	R*
American Pipit	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	W,M
Cedar Waxwing	-	12	20	-	-	-	-	-	W,M
Phainopepla	-	1	-	8	18	14	15	12	S*
Loggerhead Shrike	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	R*
European Starling	2	7	11	25	8	9	-	-	R*
Bell's Vireo	-	3	9	5	12	2	4	4	S*
Warbling Vireo	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	M
Orange-cr.Warbler	-	-	3	1	-	-	-	-	M
Yellow Warbler	1	9	18	10	5	7	1	-	S*
Yellow-r.Warbler	10	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	W,M
Com.Yellowthroat	23	40	40	46	52	70	74	30	R*
Wilson's Warbler	-	3	12	2	-	-	-	-	M
Yellow-br. Chat	-	2	5	9	7	5	9	1	S*
Western Tanager	-	-	8	-	-	-	-	-	M
Bl.-head.Grosbeak	3	19	34	23	32	14	7	6	S*
Blue Grosbeak	2	5	7	4	4	4	7	7	S*
Lazuli Bunting	-	3	6	-	1	-	-	-	S*
Spotted Towhee	13	23	16	26	17	15	16	12	R*
Calif. Towhee	24	37	30	75	42	54	27	35	R*
Lark Sparrow	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	S*
Song Sparrow	78	120	90	114	102	57	75	54	R*
White-cr.Sparrow	46	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	W,M
Dark-eyed Junco	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	M
Red-w. Blackbird	48	-	41	17	-	1	-	-	S*
Brewer's Blkbird	-	4	2	-	8	-	-	-	R*
Brown-h. Cowbird	6	27	23	40	25	13	22	2	S*
Hooded Oriole	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	S*
Bullock's Oriole	5	17	16	10	3	8	5	1	S*
House Finch	39	22	10	13	43	19	22	48	R*
Lesser Goldfinch	40	45	92	41	55	60	88	81	R*
Amer. Goldfinch	-	-	-	1	-	3	33	8	W,R*
Total Species:	48	56	56	51	50	50	49	46	

Total Species on all visits: 85

Total Potential Breeding species: 66 (marked with *)

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

Willow Flycatcher Survey and Detection Form (rev. 4/97)

Site Name SANTA CLARA RIVER - LAS BRISAS Was site surveyed in previous year? Yes ☒ No ☐
 If yes, what site name was used? _____

County VENTURA State CA USGS Quad Name VAL VERDE

Is copy of USGS map marked with survey area and WIFL sightings attached (as required)? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Coordinates T 4 N R 18 W Lat Long / Township-Range / UTM (circle one)
 Elevation 790 (feet) meters (circle one)

**** Fill in additional site information on back of this page ****

Survey # Observer(s)	Date (m/d/y) Survey time	Number of WIFLs Found	Estimated Number of Pairs	Estimated Number of Territories	Nests(s) Found? Y or N	Cowbirds Detected? Y or N	Comments about this survey (e.g., evidence of pairs or breeding, number of nests, nest contents, potential threats, cowbird abundance, presence of livestock, etc.)
1 <u>J.</u> <u>SUGDEN</u>	date <u>5/26</u> start <u>5:30</u> stop <u>10:00</u> total hrs <u>4.5</u>	0	0	0	N	Y	
2 <u>//</u>	date <u>6/11</u> start <u>5:30</u> stop <u>10:00</u> total hrs <u>4.5</u>	1	0	0	N	Y	
3 <u>//</u>	date <u>6/24</u> start <u>5:30</u> stop <u>10:00</u> total hrs <u>4.5</u>	0	0	0	N	Y	
<u>D.</u> <u>GUTHRIE</u>	date <u>7/8</u> start <u>5:30</u> stop <u>10:00</u> total hrs <u>4.5</u>	0	0	0	N	Y	
_____ _____ _____ total hrs _____	date _____ start _____ stop _____ total hrs _____						
Overall Summary Total survey hrs <u>1</u>							Were any WIFLs color-banded? Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> If yes, report color combination(s) in the comments section on back of form

Name of Reporting Individual DANIEL A GUTHRIE Date Report Completed JULY 30/99

Submit the original of this form. Retain a copy for your records.

Fill in the following information completely. Submit original form. Retain copy for your records.

Name of Reporting Individual DAN GUTHRIE Phone # 909 607 2836

Affiliation CLAREMONT MCKENNA COLLEGE Email DGUTHRIE@JSD.CLAREMONT.EDU

Site Name SANTA CLARA R. - LAS BRISAS

Did you verify that this site name is consistent with that used in previous years? Yes ☒ (No) (circle one)

Management Authority for Survey Area (circle one): Federal Municipal/County State Tribal Private

Name of Management Entity or Owner (e.g., Tonto National Forest) NEWNALL LAND AND CATTLE

Length of area surveyed: 3 MILES (specify units, e.g., miles = mi, kilometers = km, meters = m)

Did you survey the same general area during each visit to this site this year? ☒ Yes / No If no, summarize in comments below.
If site was surveyed last year, did you survey the same general area this year? Yes / No If no, summarize in comments below.

Vegetation Characteristics: Overall, are the species in tree/shrub layer at this site comprised predominantly of (check one):

- ☐ Native broadleaf plants (entirely or almost entirely) ☒ Mixed native and exotic plants (mostly native)
☐ Mixed native and exotic plants (mostly exotic) ☐ Exotic/introduced plants (entirely or almost entirely)

Identify the 2-3 predominant tree/shrub species: BACCHARIS, ARUNDO, WILLOW,

Average height of canopy: 25 FT. (specify units)

Was surface water or saturated soil present at or adjacent to site? ☒ YES ☐ NO (circle one)

Distance from the site to surface water or saturated soil: 20 FT. (specify units)

Did hydrological conditions change significantly among visits (did the site flood or dry out)? Yes ☒ (No) (circle one)

If yes, describe in comments section below.

Remember to attach a xerox copy of a USGS quad/topographical map (REQUIRED) of the survey area, noting the survey site and location of WIFL detections. You may also include a sketch or aerial photograph showing details of site location, patch shape, survey route in relation to patch, and location of any willow flycatchers or willow flycatcher nests detected. Such sketches or photographs are welcomed, but DO NOT substitute for the required USGS quad map.

Comments (attach additional sheets if necessary):

