
Guthrie, D.A., "Bird Surveys along the Santa Clara River; Los Angeles/Ventura County Line Downstream to Just Below Las Brisas Crossing" (August 2, 2000; 2000G)

Original in Matt Carpenter's
Office

MAY 18 2001 2000

BIRD SURVEYS ALONG THE SANTA CLARA RIVER, 2000
LOS ANGELES/VENTURA COUNTY LINE DOWNSTREAM TO
JUST BELOW LAS BRISAS CROSSING

Prepared for:

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Los Angeles/Ventura County Line downstream to just below Las Brisas Crossing

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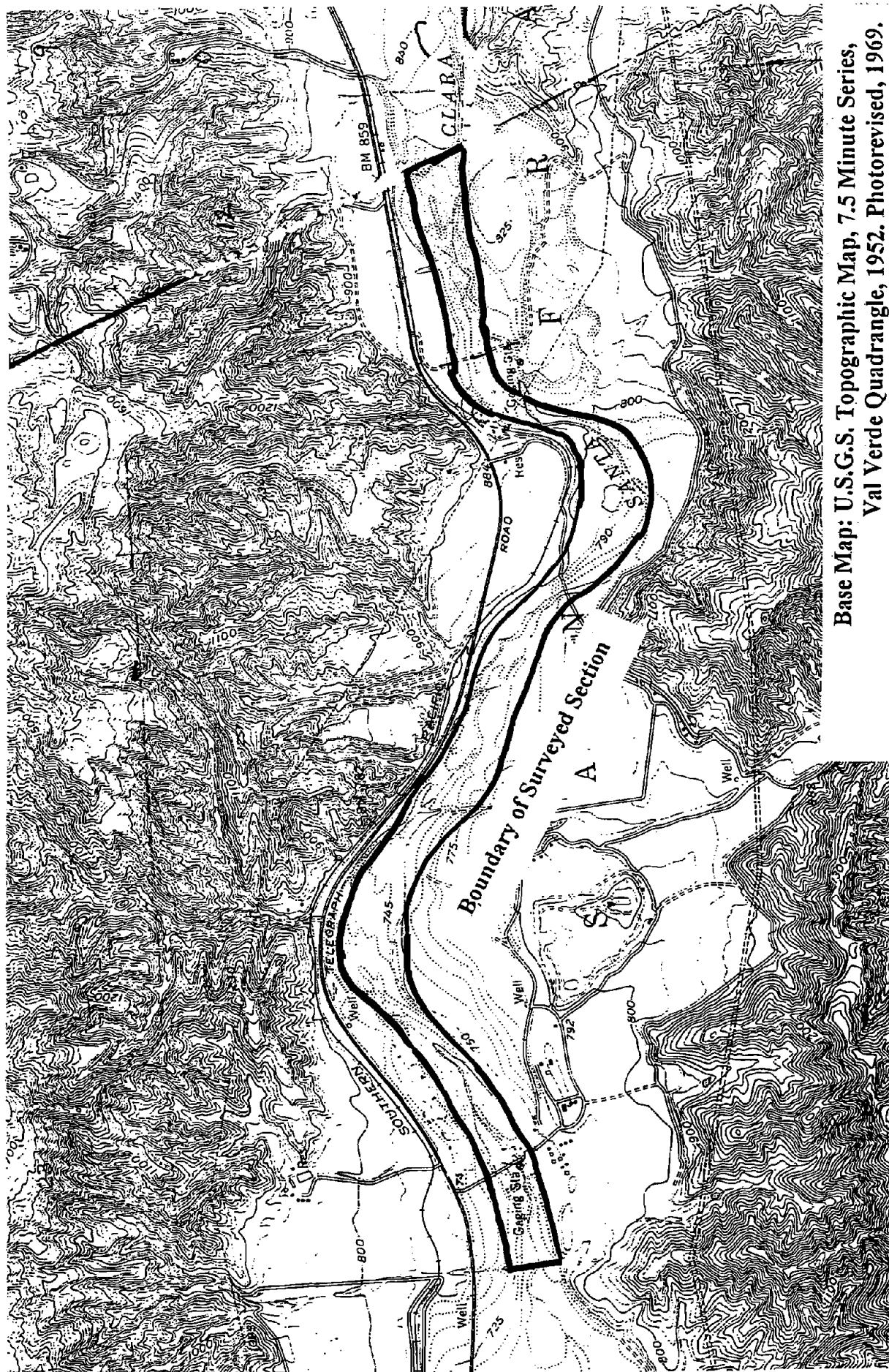
Nature and Scope of Surveys

During the spring and early summer of 2000 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 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 (yellow-billed cuckoo, 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 winter of 1999-2000 was fairly mild with little flooding. Consequently riparian vegetation was mostly undamaged by spring rains and continued to grow during the spring and summer of 2000. During June cattle were present in the riparian area from the Ventura County line to the first crossing approximately 1/4 mile west of the county line. In late July, cattle moved to the area downstream, extending to the pipeline crossing approximately 3/4 of a mile down stream from the county line. 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.

Observations of all birds are shown in Table 1. The numbers shown are of birds seen and heard, with heard individuals forming the majority of the observations. Numbers vary between censuses for several reasons. Bird activity varies with season. 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 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. A few species such as Anna's hummingbird that nest early in the season may be underestimated. Numbers of nesting species observed may be higher than normal in May due to migratory birds passing through the area, then 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.

Southwestern Willow Flycatchers were observed during the censuses of May 15th and 25th. The location for these sightings are shown in Figure 2. The birds were not singing as actively as expected of birds defending occupied territories did could not be refound on subsequent surveys. These birds, therefore, are considered to be migrants passing through the area. 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).

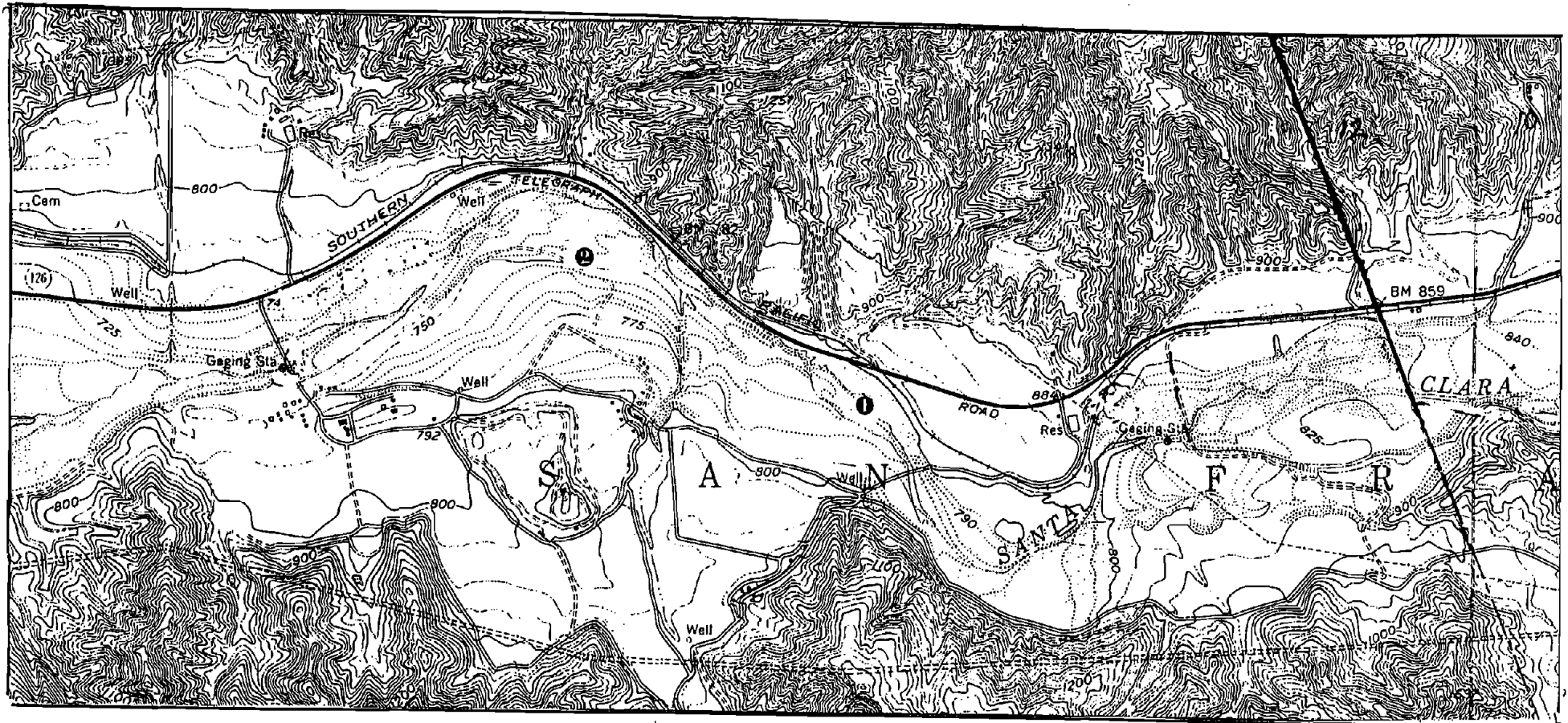
Vireos were heard and seen in three areas, as shown in Figure 3. The westernmost observation, just below Las Brisas Bridge (Locality 1, Figure 3), is in an area where vireos have not been present in recent years. The other localities near the bend in the Santa Clara River above Las Brisas (Loc. 2-5, Figure 3) have had small numbers of nesting vireos in past years. Numbers of vireos along this section of the river are constant from year to year, with four pair present both in 1999 and 2000. An area just west of the county line where vireos were present in previous years is now, due to movement of the Santa Clara River, drier than in earlier years. This may have contributed to vireos leaving this area.

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

Figure 2. Survey Area in Ventura County, California., with observations of Willow Flycatcher during 2000.



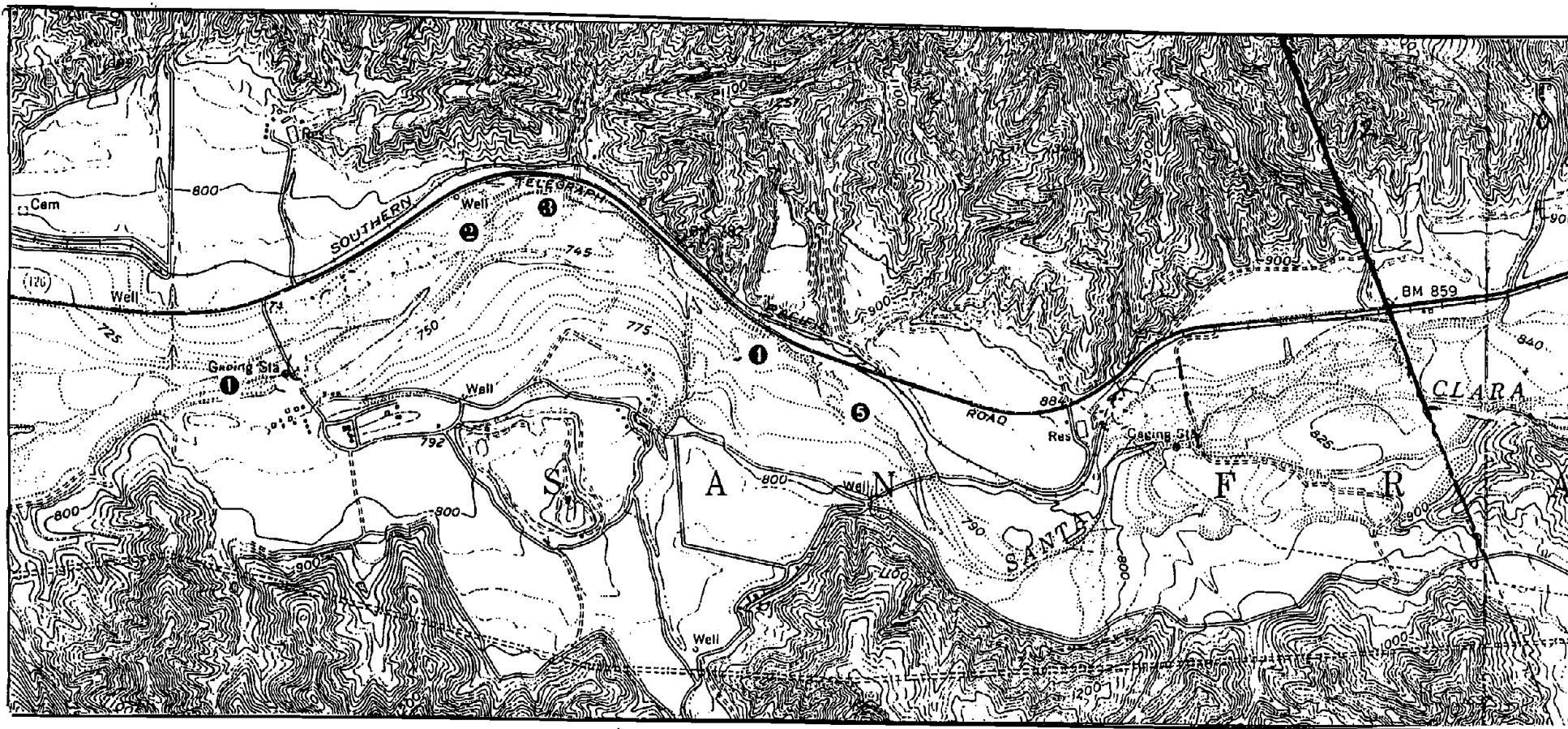
❶ - Location of Willow Flycatcher sighting.

❶ - May 15, 2000

❷ - May 25, 2000

Base Map: U.S.G.S. 7.5 minute topographic map for
Val Verde, California, 1952, photorevised 1969.

Figure 3. Survey Area in Ventura County, California., with observations of Least Bell's Vireo during 2000.



① - Location of Least Bell's Vireo sighting.

Base Map: U.S.G.S. 7.5 minute topographic map for Val Verde, California, 1952, photorevised 1969.

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 Management Concern by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. One pair of kites nested in the dry riparian woodland near the Ventura County line in 2000.

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 June 19th was probably a wanderer from nearby coastal-sage habitat.

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 on May 15th 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.

Lawrence's Goldfinch

This species is a highest priority species on the Audubon Birds to Watch list for 1996 and is a Bird of Management Concern for the Fish and Wildlife Service. Although a species of the coastal sage, small flocks of this species visited the riparian zone of the Santa Clara River during the summer.

Comments on Brown Headed Cowbird

Cowbirds were regularly observed in all sections of the study area and seemed to be attracted by tapes of least Bell's vireo calls. Numbers remained high along the river until late July, by which time nearly all nesting was completed.

Summary

No yellow billed-cuckoos were observed during 2000. Two willow flycatchers were observed but could not be relocated on subsequent visits. Because of this behavior and the time of observations, both birds are considered to represent migrants passing through the area to breeding grounds further north. Four and possibly five pairs of least Bell's vireos were observed along this section of the Santa Clara River during 2000, about the same number as found in previous years. Most were in traditional locations for this species.

Among species of concern, the riparian species; yellow warbler and yellow-breasted chat occurred in small numbers in riparian woodlands along the river. White-tailed kite and Cooper's hawk were also observed in small numbers and are known to nest in woodlands along the river. Two other species, great blue heron and great egret, were observed feeding in small numbers on the river, but did not nest in the area. Finally, two coastal sage species, the loggerhead shrike and Lawrence's goldfinch, were observed on the river as visitors from nearby coastal sage habitat.

Table 1. Bird Observations along the Santa Clara River 2000;
Santa Clara River from the Los Angeles/Ventura County Line
to Western Limit of Las Brisas Ranch.

Species	date:	4/19	5/1	5/15	5/25	6/19	7/2	7/16	7/27	Status
Great Blue Heron	-	1	1	-	3	3	1	2		W,M
Great Egret	1	1	-	-	3	-	-	1		W,M
Snowy Egret	-	4	1	-	3	-	-	-		W,M
Green Heron	-	1	2	-	1	-	2	7		R*
Bl.-cr.Night Heron	-	-	1	-	7	4	-	-		R*?
Mallard	2	-	2	-	-	-	-	1		R*
White-tailed Kite	-	-	1	1	-	2	-	-		R*
Cooper's Hawk	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-		R*
Red-shouldered Hawk	2	1	-	3	1	1	4	-		R*
Red-tailed Hawk	-	1	1	-	1	1	-	1		R*
California Quail	60	22	28	36	38	77	22	15		R*
Killdeer	2	6	8	1	8	6	5	8		R*
Spotted Sandpiper	-	4	-	-	2	2	4	2		S*
Domestic Pigeon	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-		R*
Mourning Dove	33	21	13	35	36	71	26	24		R*
Common Ground Dove	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-		R*
Greater Roadrunner	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-		R*
White-thr. Swift	-	-	4	-	5	-	-	-		R*
Vaux Swift	16	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		R*
Bl.-ch.Hummingbird	2	1	-	-	3	1	2	3		S*
Anna's Hummingbird	14	2	9	5	8	10	24	13		R*
Costa's Hummingbird	-	-	-	2	2	3	5	6		S*
Selasphorus sp.	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	1		M
Nuttal. Woodpecker	12	8	9	4	11	11	16	12		R*
Downy Woodpecker	12	2	2	3	13	5	10	4		R*
Hairy Woodpecker	2	-	1	1	2	2	1	1		R*
Northern Flicker	-	1	2	-	1	-	-	-		R*
Pac.-sl. Flycatcher	1	1	1	-	4	1	1	1		S*
Willow Flycatcher	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-		S*
Black Phoebe	7	4	4	2	10	14	17	19		R*
Ash-thr.Flycatcher	12	9	14	9	10	24	7	12		S*
Western Kingbird	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1		S*
Violet-gr.Swallow	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-		S*
N.Rough-w. Swallow	6	4	10	6	2	2	8	1		S*
Cliff Swallow	200	150	250	200	300	100	50	41		S*
Barn Swallow	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-		S*
Scrub Jay	7	5	11	10	20	12	3	8		R*
American Crow	4	1	3	6	20	22	43	2		R*
Common Raven	6	7	7	9	12	7	74	10		R*
Oak Titmouse	11	5	9	5	3	13	17	22		R*
Bushtit	22	17	47	39	8	63	66	21		R*
White-br. Nuthatch	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-		R*
Bewick's Wren	54	47	33	23	17	13	13	13		R*
House Wren	27	5	39	8	1	-	-	-		R*
Western Bluebird	8	-	5	4	1	4	7	11		R*

Table 1 (cont.). Bird Observations along the Santa Clara River
2000; Santa Clara River from Ventura County Line to
Western Limit of Las Brisas Ranch.

Species	date:	4/19	5/1	5/15	5/25	6/19	7/2	7/16	7/27	Status
American Robin		2	1	1	2	5	3	3	1	R*
N. Mockingbird		-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	R*
Wrentit		22	11	18	22	14	24	23	11	R*
Calif. Thrasher		8	2	7	5	4	6	4	1	R*
Phainopepla		1	1	2	5	2	3	9	11	S*
Loggerhead Shrike		-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	R*
European Starling		18	10	20	19	14	6	-	7	R*
Bell's Vireo		4	6	8	1	7	5	3	4	S*
Warbling Vireo		1	1	2	-	-	1	-	-	M
Orange-cr. Warbler		6	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	M
Yellow Warbler		5	4	12	4	3	2	-	1	S*
Yellow-r. Warbler		7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	W, M
Bl-th. Grey Warbler		1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	M
Com. Yellowthroat		42	18	46	23	54	60	30	53	R*
Wilson's Warbler		-	8	6	-	-	-	-	-	M
Yellow-br. Chat		-	4	9	7	17	10	4	2	S*
Western Tanager		-	6	2	-	-	-	-	-	M
Black-h. Grosbeak		15	28	13	14	21	19	17	10	S*
Blue Grosbeak		-	2	1	-	9	6	11	15	S*
Lazuli Bunting		-	7	-	-	11	2	3	64	S*
Spotted Towhee		36	25	32	41	42	41	33	9	R*
California Towhee		45	48	52	35	39	31	22	20	R*
Lark Sparrow		-	1	-	-	-	4	2	-	S*
Song Sparrow		84	70	78	45	87	104	87	77	R*
White-cr. Sparrow		2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	W, M
Red-w. Blackbird		-	4	4	-	2	-	-	32	S*
Western Meadowlark		-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	R*
Brewer's Blkbird		2	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	R*
Brown-h. Cowbird		39	19	52	9	35	26	14	8	S*
Hooded Oriole		2	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	S*
Bullock's Oriole		7	3	7	6	10	7	9	6	S*
House Finch		32	15	20	29	30	51	46	31	R*
Lesser Goldfinch		18	34	28	44	59	78	126	63	R*
Lawr. Goldfinch		-	-	-	6	-	-	5	4	R*
American Goldfinch		8	9	8	-	8	5	11	13	W, R*
Total Species:		51	55	55	44	57	52	47	50	

Total Species on all visits: 80

Total Potential Breeding species: 69 (marked with *)

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

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

Site Name NEW NALL LAND
SANTA CLARA RIVER-VENT CO. Was site surveyed in previous year? ☒ Yes ☐ No
 If yes, what site name was used? SAME
 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 R 17 W T 4 N Lat Long / Township-Range / UTM (circle one)
 Elevation 750 (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	Nest(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>D. GUTHRIE</u> <u>J. SUGDEN</u>	date <u>MAY 15</u> start <u>6-9</u> stop total hrs <u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>CALLING - BUT SPORADICALLY</u>
2 <u>D. GUTHRIE</u> <u>J. SUGDEN</u>	date <u>MAY 25</u> start <u>6-9</u> stop total hrs <u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>CALLING - BUT SPORADICALLY</u>
3 <u>D. GUTHRIE</u> <u>J. SUGDEN</u>	date <u>JUNE 19</u> start <u>6-9 AM</u> stop total hrs <u>3</u>						
	date start stop total hrs						
	date start stop total hrs						
Overall Summary Total survey hrs <u>9</u>							Were any WIFLs color-banded? Yes No If yes, report color combination(s) in the comments section on back of form

Name of Reporting Individual DAN GUTHRIE Date Report Completed AUG 2, 2000

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 CLARKMONT MCKENNA COLLEGE

Email OGUTHRIE@USD.CALIFORNIA.EDU

Site Name GANTH CANAL RIVER- VENTURA CO.

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) NEWMAN LAND AND CATTLE CO.

Length of area surveyed: ~ 3 MI (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: TAMARISK, WILLOW COTTONWOOD
Average height of canopy: 15 FEET (specify units)

Was surface water or saturated soil present at or adjacent to site? (specify unit) YES (circle one) NO (circle one)
Distance from the site to surface water or saturated soil (specify unit)

Did hydrological conditions change significantly among visits (did the site flood or dry out)? Yes (circle one) No (circle one)
If yes, describe in comments section below.

Remember to attach a Xerox copy of a USGS quadratological map (REQUIRED) of the survey area, noting the survey site and location of WTL 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): SEE ATTACHED REPORT.