Guthrie, D.A., "Bird Surveys along the Santa Clara River, 2001; Mouth of Castaic Creek Downstream to just below Las Brisas Crossing" (September 14, 2001; 2001B)

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# BIRD SURVEYS ALONG THE SANTA CLARA RIVER, 2001

Original in Matt Carpenter's

# MOUTH OF CASTIAC CREEK DOWNSTREAM TO

JUST BELOW LAS BRISAS CROSSING

Prepared for:

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September 14, 2001

# CORRECTED VERSION

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# Bird Surveys along the Santa Clara River, 2001 Mouth of Castaic Creek Downstream to just below Las Brisas Crossing

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#### Nature and Scope of Surveys

During the spring and early summer of 2001 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.

Each area was surveyed eight times, in accordance to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Protocol for Least Bell's Vireo. Five 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, each portion (one in Los Angeles and one in Ventura County) was divided into two sections, each surveyed separately. However, observations from these two surveys are combined in data presentation (Tables 1-2).

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 6:00 and 10:00 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 and permitted for both least Bell's vireo and southwestern willow flycatcher.

#### Habitat Condition and Bird Observations

Although there was little flooding during the winter of 2000-2001, floods in early spring removed much of the wet riparian vegetation along the river. Dirt roads crossing the river, which were damaged by spring rains, were reestablished in late May and catch dams for irrigation were reestablished in June.

Observations of all birds are shown in Tables 1-2. 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, when this species might be present, no individuals of this species were observed in 2001

#### Southwestern Willow Flycatcher

This subspecies is listed as Federally Endangered under the Federal Endangered Species Act. Willow flycatchers were once widespread in wet riparian woodland in southern California but now only a few individuals remain. Following the Revised Protocol (Fish And Wildlife Service, July 2000) five surveys were conducted specifically for southwestern willow flycatcher. (note that two surveys were conducted in period 2 and two in period 3, rather than 3 in period 3. However, the second period 2 survey was very late in the period.) All surveys occurred between 6:00 and 10:00 am. and used taped calls to elicit a response if flycatchers were not first observed.

A single southwestern willow flycatcher was observed during the census of June 9.<sup>th</sup>

The location for this sighting is shown in Figure 1. The bird was not singing as would be expected of a bird defending a territory. Although the location of this sighting was carefully surveyed on subsequent censuses the bird could not be relocated. This bird, therefore, is considered to be a migrant 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. As the Fish and Wildlife Service requests reports of negative findings a copy of the Fish and Wildlife Service report form for southwestern willow flycatcher census for the Los Angeles County section of this survey is also attached.

#### 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 and 2 for dates). All surveys occurred between 6:00 and 10:00 am. and taped vireo calls were played if no vireos were heard or seen. In order to avoid disturbing vireos, no special efforts were made to determine nesting success or presence of leg bands once birds were observed.

Four pair of least Bell's vireos were regularly heard and seen in three areas in the Ventura County section of this survey during 2001, as shown in Figure 2 (nos. 1-4). All are in areas where vireos were found in previous years. There were thought to be five pairs of vireos present along this section of the river in 2000.

Two least Bell's vireos were regularly observed in the Los Angeles County section of this survey, as shown on Figure 3 (nos. 1,2). Both are in an area where a singing vireo was observed in 2000 but did not nest. At least one of these sightings (2 in figure 3) was of a nesting pair. The other sighting (1 in figure 3) seemed to be an unpaired male.

No bands were observed on any of the vireos mentioned here.

#### **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.

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### **Great Egret**

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

### 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.

## Yellow-breasted Chat

The Yellow-breasted Chat is considered a Species of Special Concern by the State of California. The numbers of 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 early spring and summer.

# **Comments on Brown Headed Cowbird**

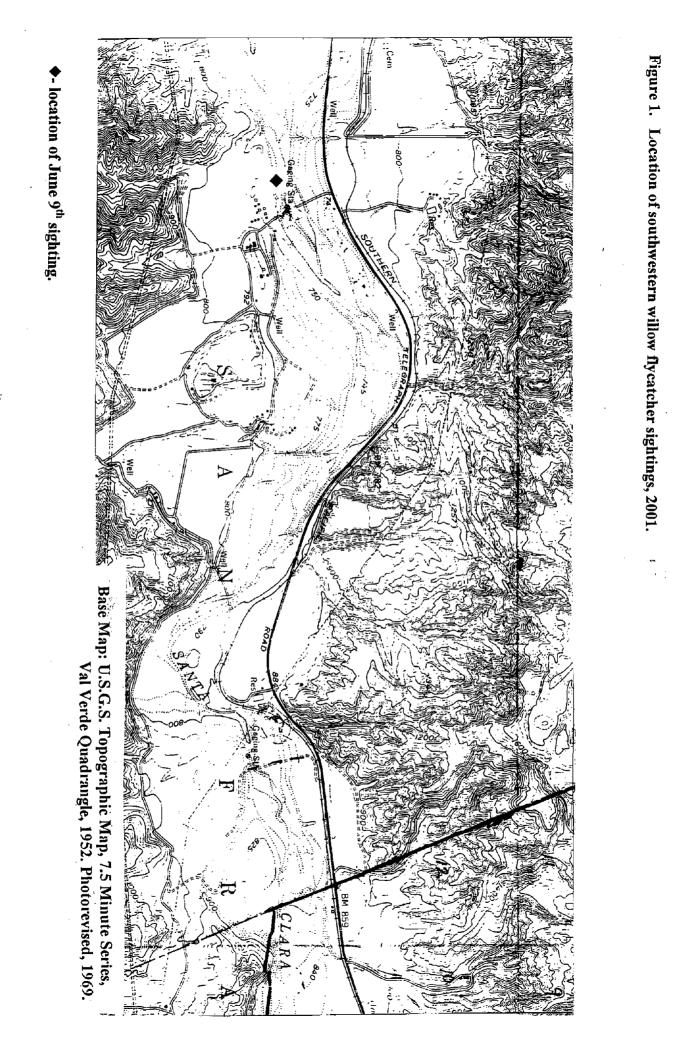
Cowbirds were regularly observed in all sections of the study area and seemed to be attracted by tapes of least Bell's vireo calls. Numbers remained high along the river until late July, by which time nearly all nesting was completed.

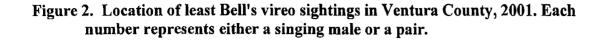
# Summary

No yellow billed-cuckoos were observed during 2001. A single willow flycatchers was observed but could not be relocated on subsequent visits. Because of this behavior and the time of observation, this bird is considered to represent a migrant passing through the area to

breeding grounds further north. Five and possibly six pairs of least Bell's vireos were observed along this section of the Santa Clara River during 2001, about the same number as found in previous years. While those in Ventura County were at locations where this species previously nested, the sites in Los Angeles County are new.

Among species of concern, the riparian species; yellow warbler and yellow-breasted chat occurred in small numbers in riparian 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, a coastal sage species, Lawrence's goldfinch, was observed along the river in small numbers as a visitor from nearby coastal sage habitat.





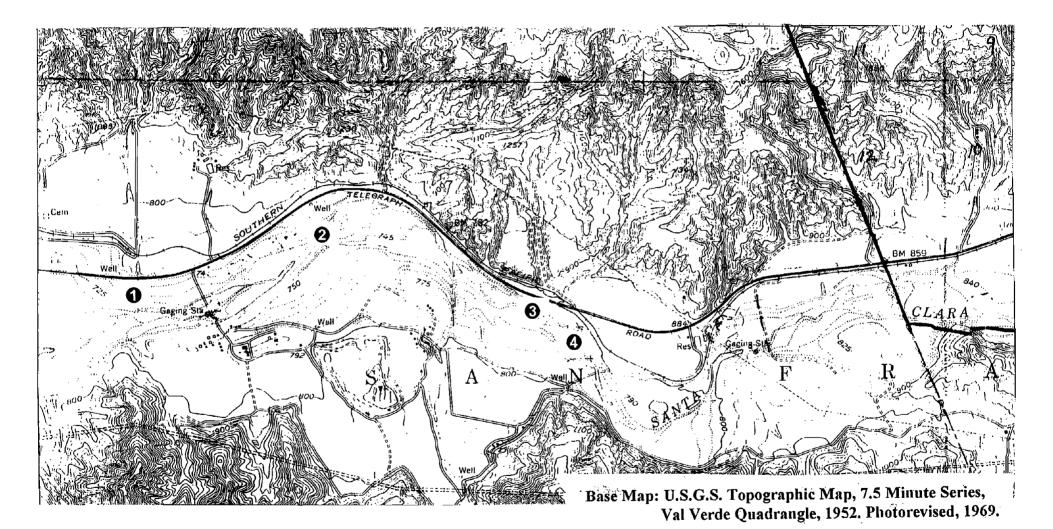
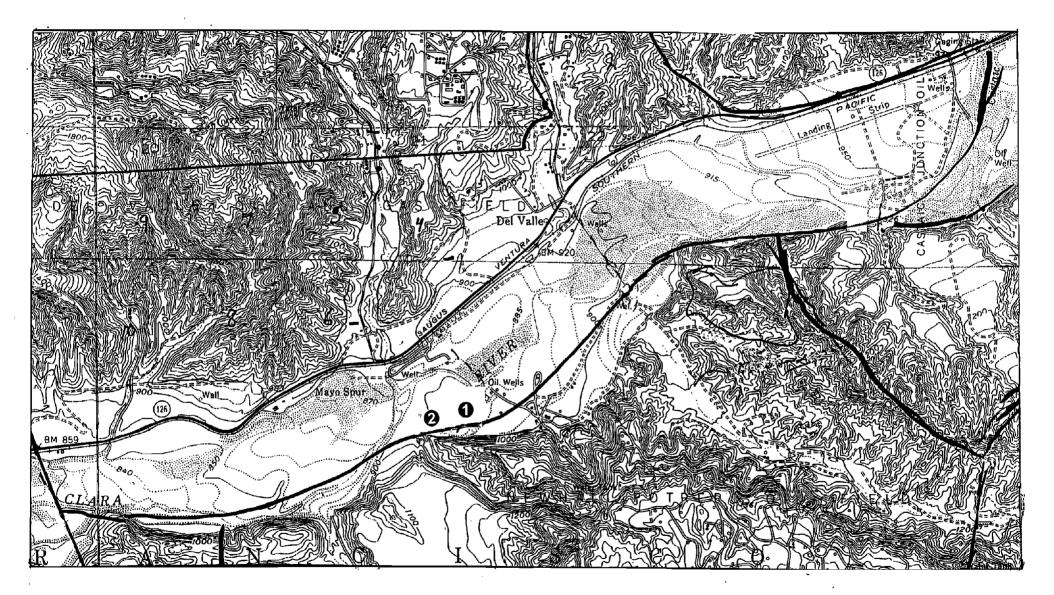


Figure 3. Location of least Bell's vireo sightings in Los Angeles County, 2001. Each number represents either a singing male or a pair.



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

## Table 1. BIRDS OF THE SANTA CLARA RIVER BASIN, 2001: Santa Clara River from Mouth of Castiac Creek to the Los Angeles/Ventura County Line.

**Endangered Species and Species of Concern Shaded** 

Bewick's Wren

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# Table 1 (cont.).BIRDS OF THE SANTA CLARA RIVER BASIN,2001: Santa Clara River from Mouth of Castiac Creek to the Los Angeles/Ventura County Line.

		Dates of Surveys									
SPECIES	STATUS	14-Apr	24-Apr	8-May	18-May	11-Jun	21-Jun	3-Jul	<u>1</u> 4-Jul		
House Wren	r	40	20	22	34	83	30	6	0		
Western Bluebird	r	14	2	2	13	15	12	8	11		
Swainson's s Thrush	S	0	0	1	0	0	0	Ō	0		
American Robin	r	2	0	0	4	Ő	Ō	1	Ō		
Wrentit	r	6	10	3	3	4	12	16	10		
California Thrasher	r	2	0	4	1	6	2	10	2		
European Starling	r	59	25	32	39	13	23	26	4		
American Pipit	w,m	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Phainopepla	r	5	0	1	3	10	3	0	2		
Orange-crowned Warbler	w,m	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Yellow Warbler - 85 - 85	ersin si s	0	er en ser de la companya de la comp	2	6. S	12	- S. 6	$\sim 21$	$2^{+2}$		
Yellow-rumped Warbler	w,m	21	2	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Common Yellowthroat	r	6	11	32	12	46	52	19	1		
Yellowebleasted/Char.		0.2	55	- 7					2		
Western Tanager	m	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0		
Spotted Towhee	- <b>r</b>	12	14	23	12	41	30	58	13		
California Towhee	r	11	8	23	4	45	24	95	18		
Lark Sparrow	r	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Savannah Sparrow	w,m	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Song Sparrow	r	46	82	79	92	85	84	40	21		
White-crowned Sparrow	w,m	18	3	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Black-headed Grosbeak	s	12	17	11	11	17	11	22	5		
Biue Grosbeak	s	0	2	5	8	0	3	9	11		
Lazuli Bunting	s	0	6	6	0	3	10	0	1		
Red-winged Blackbird	s	69	48	11	37	16	29	0	2		
Yellow-headed Blackbird	m	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Brewer's Blackbird	r	30	24	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Brown-headed Cowbird	s	14	13	11	5	3	27	19	20		
Hooded Oriole	S	0	0	2	0	6	4	8	0		
Bullock's Oriole	S	19	0	17	11	23	26	15	3		
House Finch	. <b>r</b>	41	24	29	8	24	26	57	11		
Pine Siskin	w,m	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Lesser Goldfinch	г	52	40	30	12	32	40	13	24		
Lawience's Coldfinen	Б.:	10	0.		$\hat{O} = \hat{O}$			0-	4.2		
American Goldfinch	w,m,r	6	31	16	0	2	4	0	0		

Endangered Species and Species of Concern Shaded

Status: m, migrant; r, resident; s, summer only; w, winter

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# Table 2. BIRDS OF THE SANTA CLARA RIVER BASIN,2001: Santa Clara River from Los Angeles/ Ventura County Line downstream to 1/4 mile below Newhall Ranch Crossing

Endangered Species and Species of Concern Shaded

# Table 2 (cont.). BIRDS OF THE SANTA CLARA RIVER BASIN,2001: Santa Clara River from Los Angeles/Ventura County Line downstream to 1/4 mile below Newhall Ranch Crossing

Dates of Surveys									
SPECIES	STATUS	15-Арг	27-Apr	10-May	19-May	9-Jun	20-Jun	4-Jul	15-Jul
House Wren	r	15	28	21	6	. 9	14	0	0
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	w	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Western Bluebird	r	8	6	6	0	1	2	0	5
American Robin	r	1	2	3	3	0	3	0	2
Wrentit	r	10	17	12	21	8	8	36	15
Northern Mockingbird	r	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
California Thrasher	r	2	4	4	3	8	5	. 8	6
European Starling	r	4	7	11	7	7	1	7	5
Phainopepla	r	0	0	· 0	0	0	7	3	5
Orange-crowned Warbler	w,m	9	6	0	0	0	0	0	0
Yellow Warblet 1996 200	s.m.	0	$\tilde{c} \sim \tilde{c}$	n siester 12 -	6.	3	5.	G.	0
Yellow-rumped Warbler	w,m	54	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Common Yellowthroat	r	25	50	37	49	43	59	50	54
Yellowebreasted Chau	and Street Street	ž	. 4	- 7	7		8	- 19 () -	0
Spotted Towhee	r	29	31	27	17	30	15	36	15
California Towhee	r	52	33	39	23	61	57	46	13
Lark Sparrow	r	0	0	0	0	0	2	. 1	0
Song Sparrow	r	109	92	104	88	65	102	84	62
Black-headed Grosbeak	S	12	24	26	11	24	13	27	16
Blue Grosbeak	S	0	2	1	0	3	0	5	5
Lazuli Bunting	S	0	1	3	0	0	0	14	36
Red-winged Blackbird	S	12	14	1	22	0	10	0	4
Brown-headed Cowbird	S	10	16	12	12	16	14	5	6
Hooded Oriole	S	0	0	2	0	0	3	14	0
Bullock's Oriole	5	16	5	6	5	7	7	14	1
House Finch	r	22	46	41	20	28	21	17	21
Lesser Goldfinch	٢	83	42	51	35	57	59	140	57
Lawrence's Goldfinicity and a	l ser	(i) (i)	0	0	0	0	60. 19		2
American Goldfinch	<b>w,</b> m,r	12	9	7	3	0	9	5	14
House Sparrow	r	0	3	0	5	0	0	0	2

# Endangered Species and Species of Concern Shaded

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Status: m, migrant; r, resident; s, summer only; w, winter

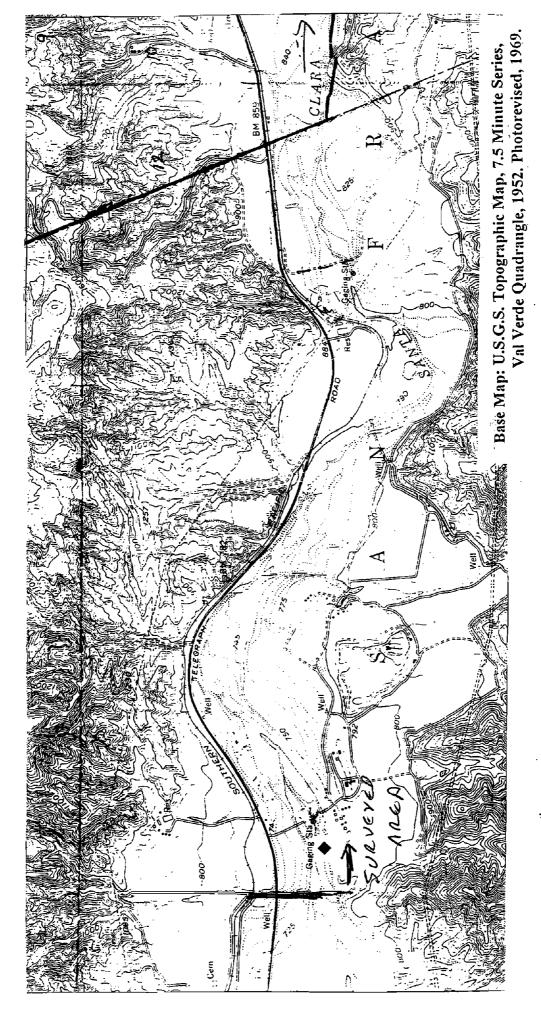
Willow Flycatcher Survey and Detection Form (rev. 4/98)

County 005 AN GELES / VENTURA State CA USGS Quad Name VAL VERT Is copy of USGS map marked with survey area and WIFL sightings attached (as required Site Coordinates: Start: NEUTM Stop: NEUTM Zo Elevation 7 2 5 - 950 [feet] meters (circle one)	nd)? Ø Yes □ No
Site Coordinates: Start: N EUTM Stop: N EUTM Zo	ne
** Fill in additional site information on back of this page **	Lomments about this survey
Survey #         Date (m/d/y)         Number of WIFLs         Estimated Number         Estimated         Nest(s)         Cowbirds         Presence of           Observer(s)         Survey time         Found         of Pairs         Number         Number of         Found?         Detected?         Livestock,           Observer(s)         Survey time         Found         of Pairs         Territories         Y or N         Y or N         Y or N	(e.g., evidence of pairs or breeding, number of nests, nest contents or number of fledges seen; potential threats)
DGVTHRIE Date 5-18,19	
<u>J. SUGOEN</u> stop 10:00	
total hrs Jx 5	
Date 6 -9-11	
Start 6:30   0 0 N Y N	
T. SUCDEN         Stop 10:00           total hrs         20.5	
Date 6 - 2 - 2 - 2 - 2 - 2 - 2 - 2 - 2 - 2 -	
Start 6:30	
$ \begin{array}{ c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c$	
total hr 4.5 LA cor-	
Date	
J.SUGIGN STATE 6:30 D D D D N Y Y	
stop 10:00 0 0 0 0	
total hrs 2.5	
Date 7-14 15	
O GUTINILE start 6:30 0 0 0 N Y Y	
<u>5.5060EN</u> stop 10:00 LA	
total <u>1.</u> <u>9.5</u>	
Overall Site Summary Adults Pairs Territories Nests Were any WIFLs color-banded?	? Yes 🐚
(Total only resident WIFLs)     If yes, report color combination       47.5     I       Total survey hrs	(s) in the comments section on

Name of Reporting Individual DANIEL A GUINRIC Date Report Completed 7/31/01

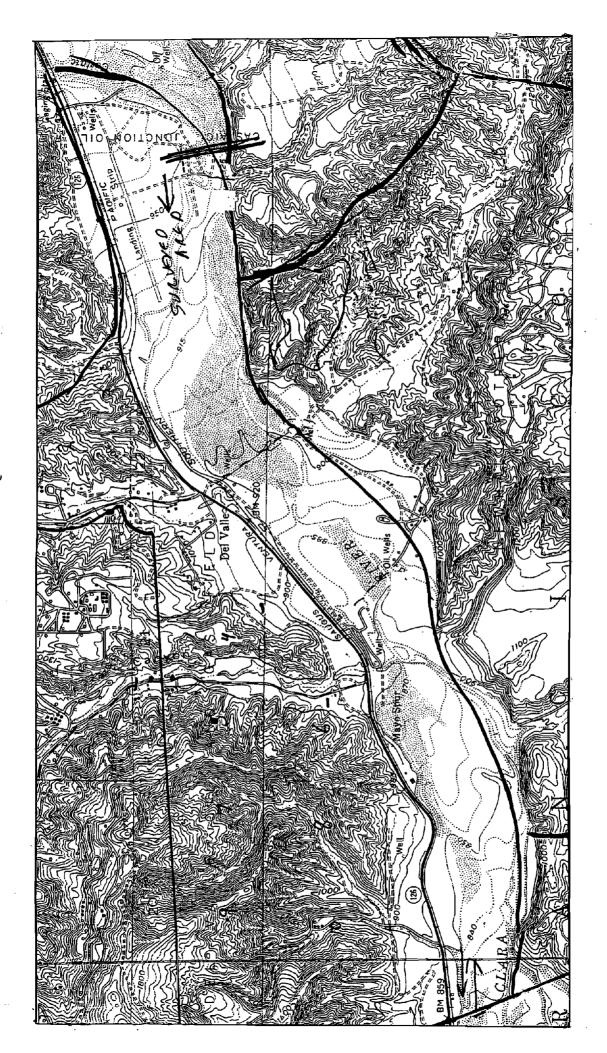
Submit the original of this form. Retain a copy for your records.

Fill in the following information completely. Submit of	original form. Retain copy for your records.
Name of Reporting Individual DAN GUINNIC	Phone # 909 607 2836
Affiliation CCANEMONT COUVEGES	Email OGVINALE & VSO. CLAREMONT.
Site Name SANTA CLARA P: CASTALS NEWNALL RAVEL Did you verify that this site name is consistent with that used in previou	
Management Authority for Survey Area (circle one): Federal	Municipal/County State Tribal Private
Name of Management Entity or Owner (e.g., Tonto National Forest)	IEWNALL LAND AND CATTLE.
ength of area surveyed: 7.5 Mi (specify units, e.g., miles = mi, l	kilometers = km, meters = m)
Did you survey the same general area during each visit to this site this ye	ear? Yes/ No If no, summarize in comments below.
f site was surveyed last year, did you survey the same general area this	year? Yes/No If no, summarize in comments below.
egetation Characteristics: Overall, are the species in tree/shrub layer at	this site comprised predominantly of (check one):
<ul> <li>Native broadleaf plants (entirely or almost entirely, includes high-elevation willow)</li> </ul>	Mixed native and exotic plants (mostly native)
	Exotic/introduced plants (entirely or almost entirely)
lentify the 2-3 predominant tree/shrub species: Willow COT	TONVOOD TAMARISK
verage height of canopy: <u>40 FT</u> (spec	ify units)
Vas surface water or saturated soil present at or adjacent to site? (Espistance from the site to surface water or saturated soil: <u>1-20 FT</u> ) id hydrological conditions change significantly among visits (did the site yes, describe in comments section below. emember to attach a xerox copy of a USGS quad/topographical map (Recation of WIFL detections. You may also include a sketch or aerial pharvey route in relation to patch, and location of any willow flycatchers on totographs are welcomed, but DO NOT substitute for the required USC	(specify units) (te flood or dry out)? Yes (No) (circle one) (EQUIRED) of the survey area, noting the survey site and notograph showing details of site location, patch shape, or willow flycatcher nests detected. Such sketches or
omments (attach additional sheets if necessary):	·
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◆- location of June 9<sup>th</sup> sighting.

Figure 1. Location of southwestern willow flycatcher sightings, 2001.



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