
**Guthrie, D.A., "Bird Observations for Spring 2004 in the Proposed
Homestead and Chiquito Areas, near Valencia, California"
(August 24, 2004; 2004A)**

2004
Bird

**BIRD OBSERVATIONS IN THE PROPOSED HOMESTEAD AND CHIQUITO
AREAS, NEAR VALENCIA, CALIFORNIA, 2004**

Prepared for:

Mark Subbotin
Valencia Corporation
23823 Valencia Blvd.
Valencia, Ca. 91355

Prepared by:

Daniel A. Guthrie
W.M. Keck Science Center
925 N. Mills Ave
Claremont, Ca. 91711
(909) 607-2836
dguthrie@jsd.claremont.

REVISED

August 24, 2004

**Bird Observations in the Proposed Homestead, Chiquito and River Village
Project Areas near Valencia, California, 2004**

Prepared by: Daniel A. Guthrie
W.M. Keck Science Center
925 N. Mills Ave
Claremont Ca. 91711
(909) 607-2836

Nature and Scope of Surveys

During the spring of 2004 surveys were conducted within the boundaries of the proposed Homestead, Chiquito and River Village Project areas (Figure 1). Surveys were focused on determining presence or absence of California gnatcatcher, and followed U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Guidelines for this species. Surveys followed the protocol for non-NCCP areas, involving 6 surveys of each area, occurring between March 15 and June 30 (see Table 1 for exact dates). Each survey involved two observers and lasted up to 4 hours (6:30 to 10:30 a.m.), with each observer covering an area less than 80 acres of suitable habitat.

Each survey was conducted on foot by observers well acquainted with both visual and auditory characteristics of southern California birds. Tapes of calls of California gnatcatcher were played periodically along survey routes in an attempt to elicit a response. Survey routes were designed to visit all areas within the Proposed Project Area. However, routes for regular coverage were selected through preliminary surveys and were designed to cover all areas of appropriate habitat for the focus species. Personnel for all surveys were David Crawford, Guy Bruyea and Scott Cameron, working under Federal Fish and Wildlife Service Permit numbers TE-821229-4 (Crawford), TE-837439-4 (Bruyea) and TE-808242 (Cameron), issued under section 10(a)(1)(A) of the Endangered Species Act.

On each survey, numbers of all species observed were noted and, in addition to the gnatcatcher, special attention was placed on locating species considered rare and endangered or of Special Concern, and on determining numbers of raptorial birds. Table 1 presents all observations during these surveys.

Habitat Condition and Bird Observations.

Much of the Homestead Project Area (Figure 1) was burned in 2003 with the result that the area was covered primarily with grasses. However, some sections of sage scrub habitat remained unburned along the sides of San Martinez Grande Canyon Rd. The River Village Project area consists almost entirely of agricultural fields under cultivation and were not surveyed. The Chiquito Project Area was unburned and covered with sage scrub vegetation. Surveys were focused on the sections of sage scrub vegetation with a slope of less than 40% in the Chiquito Project area and along San Martinez Grande Canyon Rd.

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. Some censuses were not complete but, rather, were focused on particular places or areas. Also, 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. Many species that nest in the area also migrate through the area to more northern portions of their ranges. Thus, numbers of nesting species observed in May, which include migratory birds passing through the area, do not give an accurate count of actual resident birds.

Comments on Threatened and Endangered Species

California Gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila californica*)

The California Gnatcatcher was listed as a Threatened species under the Federal Endangered Species Act in 1993. Preferred habitat includes various sage scrub communities, often dominated by California sage (*Artemisia californica*) and buckwheat (*Eriogonum sp.*) California gnatcatchers generally avoid nesting in areas with a slope of greater than 40%. Although the area surveyed here is outside the Designated Critical Habitat for the California gnatcatcher, it is near to areas designated as critical habitat on the south side of route 126. (Federal Register, 2003)

Survey routes were selected to cover prime habitat for California Gnatcatcher, namely, stands of dense Sage Scrub in canyon bottoms and on north facing hillsides with slopes of less than 40%. No California gnatcatchers were heard or observed during our surveys.

Comments on Sensitive Species

Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*)

This is a California Species of Special Concern. A single shrike was observed on April 6th.

Southern California Rufous-crowned Sparrow (*Aimophila ruficeps canescens*)

This species is considered a California Special Concern species by the Department of Fish and Game and a Species of Concern by the Fish and Wildlife Service. Rufous-crowned sparrows are a fairly common resident and breeding species in sage scrub habitat and were observed as uncommon residents in the study area.

Summary

California gnatcatchers were not observed on the site. Birds of the site are those typical of dry sage scrub habitat and two of the observed species, loggerhead shrike and Southern California rufous-crowned sparrow, are considered Species of Concern.

References

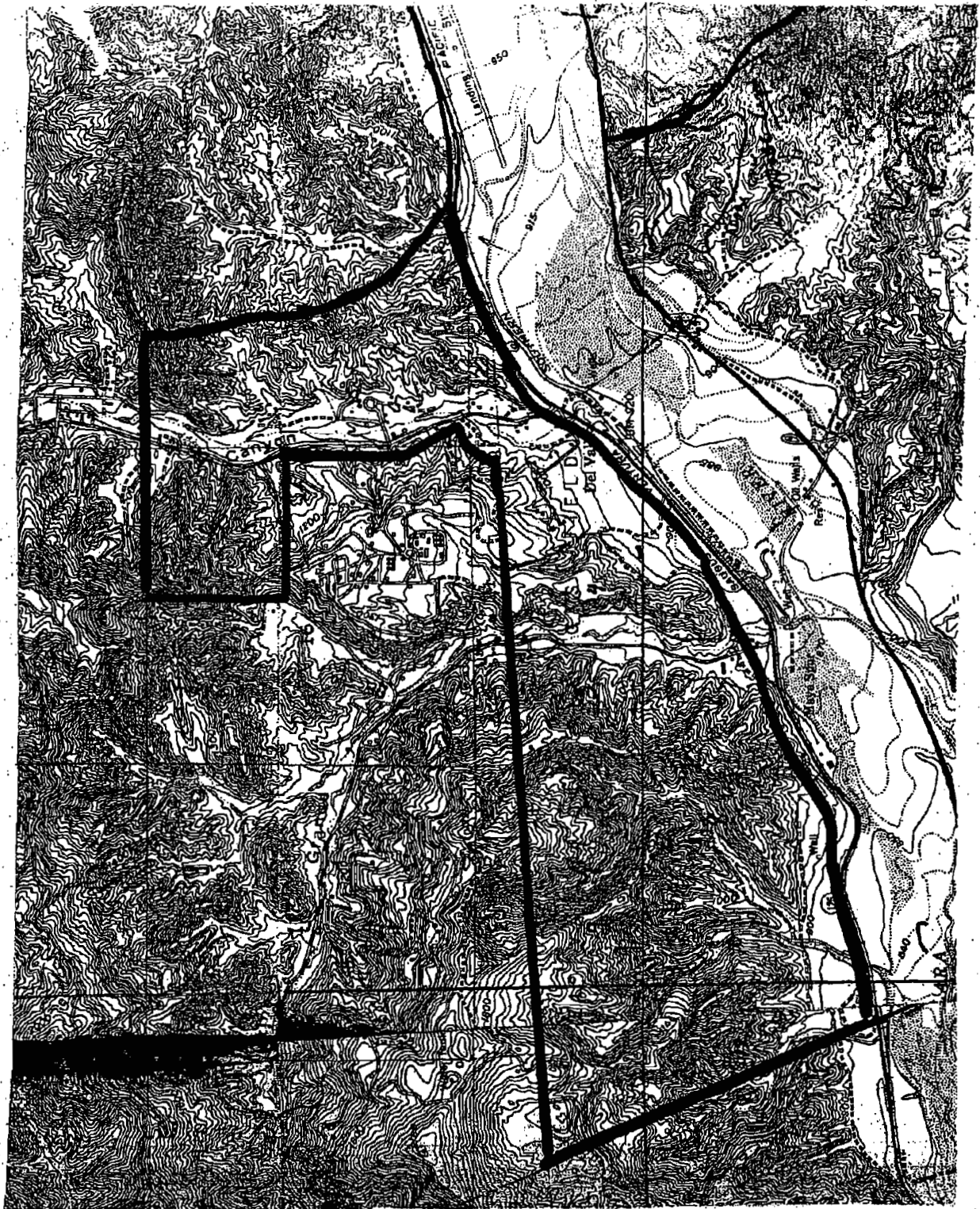
Federal Register, 2003. Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Designation of Critical Habitat for the Coastal California Gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila californica californica*) and Determination of Distinct Vertebrate Population for the California Gnatcatcher *Poliophtila californica*). Vol 68, no 79 April 24, 2003, p. 20228.

Table 1. Bird Observations on the Homestead and Chiquito Areas, 2004:

Endangered Species and Species of Concern Shaded							
SPECIES	STATUS	Dates of Surveys					
		3/23	4/6	4/20	5/11	5/25	6/2
Turkey Vulture	s	2	4	3	1	0	2
Red-tailed Hawk	r	2	2	2	1	1	1
California Quail	r	30+	30+	17	30+	17	30+
Western Gull	m	8	15	2	10	4	18
Rock Dove	r	0	8	4	0	4	5
Mourning Dove	r	11	6	3	3	3	5
Greater Roadrunner	r	1	1	0	1	0	0
Anna's Hummingbird	r	4	4	3	2	3	5
Costa's Hummingbird	s	0	0	1	0	0	0
Acorn Woodpecker	r	1	0	0	0	0	0
Black Phoebe	r	1	0	0	0	0	0
Say's Phoebe	r	0	1	0	0	0	0
Western Kingbird	s	6	5	3	4	3	0
Long-headed Snake		0	0	0	0	0	0
Western Scrub Jay	r	21	7	7	7	7	8
American Crow	r	9	5	4	5	4	4
Common Raven	r	3	4	2	4	2	1
N. Rough-winged Swallow	s	0	2	0	3	0	9
Cliff Swallow	s	0	0	3	0	3	4
Bushtit	r	12	9	4	9	4	6
Bewick's Wren	r	12	9	8	9	8	11
Wrentit	r	17	4	6	4	6	9
Northern Mockingbird	r	5	6	1	6	3	4
California Thrasher	r	8	2	6	1	2	2
European Starling	r	0	6	0	0	0	2
Yellow-rumped Warbler	w,m	0	3	0	0	0	0
Common Yellowthroat	r	1	0	0	0	0	0
Spotted Towhee	r	30+	11	9	10	9	14
California Towhee	r	30+	23	16	23	16	22
White-crowned Sparrow		0	0	0	0	0	0
Chipping Sparrow	w,m	1	0	0	0	0	0
Lark Sparrow	r	17	0	0	0	0	0
Savannah Sparrow	r	3	2	0	2	0	0
Fox Sparrow	w,m	2	0	0	0	0	0
Song Sparrow	r	2	0	0	0	0	0
White-crowned Sparrow	w,m	26	17	2	6	2	0
Black-headed Grosbeak	s	0	0	1	1	0	0
Western Meadowlark	r	1	2	0	2	0	1
Brewer's Blackbird	r	0	3	0	3	0	0
House Finch	r	4	4	8	4	8	12
Lesser Goldfinch	r	0	2	3	2	3	6

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

Figure 1. Boundaries of Homestead and Chiquito Projects.



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