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January 26, 2008 3738-124

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Attn: Recovery Permit Coordinator Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office 2493 Portola Road, Suite B Ventura, California 93003

Subject: Focused California Gnatcatcher Survey, Mission Village Project, Los

Angeles County, California

Dear Recovery Permit Coordinator:

This report documents the results of nine protocol-level presence/absence surveys for the coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*; gnatcatcher) that were conducted for the approximately 1,252-acre Mission Village project area by Dudek in fall/winter 2007. The surveys were conducted in all areas of suitable habitat (i.e., coastal scrub and alliances and associations with less than 50% slopes). Approximately 535.5 acres of coastal scrub alliances and associations present on site were surveyed.

The coastal California gnatcatcher is a federally-listed threatened species and a California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) species of special concern. It is closely associated with coastal sage scrub habitat and typically occurs below 950 feet in elevation and on slopes less than 40%, but gnatcatchers have been observed at elevations greater than 2,000 feet above mean sea level (amsl). The species is threatened primarily by loss, degradation, and fragmentation of coastal sage scrub habitat and is also impacted by brown-headed cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) nest parasitism.

LOCATION AND EXISTING CONDITIONS

The approximately 1,252-acre Mission Village site is part of the approximately 11,999-acre Newhall Ranch Specific Plan. The Mission Village site is located on the Val Verde 7.5-minute U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) quadrangle map (*Figures 1* and 2), and is in northwestern Los Angeles County, approximately 30 miles northwest of downtown Los Angeles and immediately west of Six Flags Amusement Park. The Mission Village site is located within the Santa Clara River basin. The Santa Clara River flows through northernmost portions of the project site from

east to west. The overall geography of the site consists of large, moderately steep hills and canyons with several smaller ridgelines and canyons descending off the peak ridgelines of each hill. Portions of the site are currently used for agricultural purposes and are subject to cattle grazing. The project site is largely undeveloped except for roads and pads associated with past oil well drilling operations. Topography across the site is relatively steep, with elevations ranging from 940 feet to 1,500 feet amsl.

VEGETATION COMMUNITIES

A total of 26 plant communities (and alliances and associations) or land cover types (agriculture and developed areas) were identified and characterized as occurring on the project site during the field investigations. Acreages for each vegetation community occurring on the Mission Village site are shown in *Table 1*. Vegetation communities suitable for California gnatcatcher are described following *Table 1*. The vegetation communities correspond to the *Vegetation Classification and Mapping Program, List of California Terrestrial Natural Communities Recognized by the California Natural Diversity Database* (CDFG 2003), where applicable. Where vegetation communities do not fit a defined vegetation community classification, they are defined by their dominant plant species.

TABLE 1 Vegetation Communities and Land Cover Types

Vegetation Community/Land Cover Type	Acreage
Agriculture	46.04
Big sagebrush scrub	12.78
California annual grassland	43.03
California sagebrush scrub	480.25
California sagebrush scrub-Artemisia californica	10.80
California sagebrush scrub-black sage	8.78
California sagebrush scrub–California buckwheat	58.51
California sagebrush scrub-purple sage	130.42
California sagebrush scrub/undifferentiated chaparral	13.87
Chamise chaparral	1.77
Coast live oak woodland	27.93
Developed	1.10
Disturbed land	175.08
Eriodictyon scrub	0.16
Giant reed grassland	5.55
Herbaceous wetlands	3.29
Hoaryleaf ceanothus chaparral	0.16
Mexican elderberry scrub	5.75
Mulefat scrub	0.41
River wash	103.10
Southern cottonwood–willow riparian forest	91.25



TABLE 1 (Cont.) Vegetation Communities and Land Cover Types

Vegetation Community/Land Cover Type	Acreage
Southern willow scrub	2.15
Tamarisk scrub	1.05
Undifferentiated chaparral	23.44
Valley oak woodland	2.13
Valley oak/grassland	3.32
Total	1,252.12

Vegetation communities that provide potential habitat for the California gnatcatcher (California sagebrush scrub–*Artemisia californica* dominated, California sagebrush scrub–black sage, California sagebrush scrub–California buckwheat, California sagebrush scrub/undifferentiated, and California sagebrush scrub–purple sage) are described below. There is a total of approximately 535.5 acres of these vegetation types within the project area that are on slopes less than 50%. In accordance with the agreements between Newhall and the USFWS, only those areas with less than 50% slopes were surveyed. *Figure 3A* illustrates all suitable habitat areas for gnatcatcher on site.

There are 480.25 acres of California sagebrush scrub on the project site. Dominant native species found in this plant community include California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum* var. *foliolosum*) and California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*). Other common plants include various sages (*Salvia leucophylla*, *S. mellifera*, *S. apiana*), California broom (*Lotus scoparius*), California aster (*Lessingia filaginifolia* var. *filaginifolia*), California encelia (*Encelia californica*), giant wild-rye (*Leymus condensatus*), and chaparral mallow (*Malacothamnus fasciculatus*). The understory generally is sparse and contains native grasses, including foothill needlegrass (*Nassella lepida*), and native herbs such as wishbone bush (*Mirabilis californica*) and morning-glory (*Calystegia macrostegia*).

Other coastal scrub alliances and associations were mapped on site. Each one is dominated by a particular species that characterizes the association. In some cases, the dominant plant species could be the only species present. These associations are listed below.

•	California sagebrush scrub-Artemisia californica	10.80 acres
•	California sagebrush scrub-black sage	8.78 acres
•	California sagebrush scrub-California buckwheat	58.51 acres
•	California sagebrush scrub-purple sage	130.42 acres
•	California sagebrush scrub/undifferentiated chaparral (equal dominance of California sagebrush scrub and chaparral scrub species)	13.87 acres
	species)	



METHODS

The focused survey for the coastal California gnatcatcher was conducted on the project site between July 10, 2007, and January 10, 2008. The first four survey visits were conducted by biologist Jim Jennings (JJ; TE832515-3) and Compliance Biology Inc. biologists Ron Francis, Jr. (RF; TE085880-0) and Dave Crawford (DC; TE821229-5). Dudek biologists Jeff D. Priest (JDP; TE840619-3), Brock A. Ortega (BAO; TE813545-5), Tricia L. Wotipka (TLW; authorized under TE840619), Kam J. Muri (KJM; TE051250-2), and Paul M. Lemons (PML; TE051248-2) conducted the last five survey visits. The survey was conducted following the currently accepted protocol of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Coastal California Gnatcatcher (Polioptila californica californica) Presence/Absence Survey Protocol (July 28, 1997). The survey included nine visits at no less than 14-day intervals. Survey routes were arranged to ensure complete coverage of the suitable habitat on site (Figures 3B–3H). Each biologist used binoculars suitable for birding to aid in detecting and identifying bird species. The weather conditions were within protocol limits, as shown in *Table 2* below. A tape of recorded vocalizations was used frequently in order to elicit a response from the species. The tape was played approximately every 50 to 100 feet; if a gnatcatcher had been detected, the playing of the tape would have ceased to avoid harassment.

TABLE 2
Survey Details and Conditions

Survey Area	Date	Biologist's Initials	Time	Survey Conditions (skies, wind, temperature)
	7/10/2007	IJ	Between 0600 and 1200	Specific conditions not recorded; however, weather conditions were suitable per survey protocol.
	7/24/2007	JJ	Between 0600 and 1200	Specific conditions not recorded; however, weather conditions were suitable per survey protocol.
	8/7/2007	IJ	Between 0600 and 1200	Specific conditions not recorded; however, weather conditions were suitable per survey protocol.
1	8/21/2007	IJ	Between 0600 and 1200	Specific conditions not recorded; however, weather conditions were suitable per survey protocol.
'	9/4/2007	JDP	0645–1005	78°–92° Fahrenheit (F); 0% cloud cover (cc), 0–3 mile per hour (mph) winds
	9/18/2007	TLW	0815–1120	67°F-74°F, 0% cc, 0-1 mph winds
	10/2/2007	TLW	0645-0855	54°F-67°F, 0% cc, 0-1 mph winds
	10/16/2007	JDP	0645–1025	54°F–66°F, 50%–25% cc, 0–2 mph winds
	10/31/2007	JDP	0830–1130	53°F-74°F, 0% cc, 0-1 mph winds
2	7/11/2007	IJ	Between 0600 and 1200	Specific conditions not recorded; however, weather conditions were suitable per survey protocol.
	7/25/2007	IJ	Between 0600 and 1200	Specific conditions not recorded; however, weather conditions were suitable per survey protocol.



TABLE 2 (Cont.) Survey Details and Conditions

Survey Area	Date	Biologist's Initials	Time	Survey Conditions (skies, wind, temperature)
	8/8/2007	JJ	Between 0600 and 1200	Specific conditions not recorded; however, weather conditions were suitable per survey protocol.
	8/22/2007	JJ	Between 0600 and 1200	Specific conditions not recorded; however, weather conditions were suitable per survey protocol.
	9/5/2007	PML	0540–1030	67°F-87°F, 0% cc, 0-4 mph winds
	10/3/2007	KJM	0715–1130	68°F-84°F, 0% cc, 3-7 mph winds
	10/17/2007	TLW	0700–1050	57°F-69°F, 100%-35% cc, 0-1 mph winds
	11/2/2007	BAO	0700–1005	48°F-65°F, 10%-0% cc, 0-1 mph winds
	11/16/2007	KJM	0700–1015	55°F-73°F, 80%-20% cc, 0-3 mph winds
	7/12/2007	IJ	Between 0600 and 1200	Specific conditions not recorded; however, weather conditions were suitable per survey protocol.
	7/26/2007	JJ	Between 0600 and 1200	Specific conditions not recorded; however, weather conditions were suitable per survey protocol.
	8/9/2007	JJ	Between 0600 and 1200	Specific conditions not recorded; however, weather conditions were suitable per survey protocol.
3	8/23/2007	IJ	Between 0600 and 1200	Specific conditions not recorded; however, weather conditions were suitable per survey protocol.
	9/6/2007	PML	0540–1100	65°F-86°F, 40%-0% cc, 0-6 mph winds
	9/20/2007	TLW	0715–1135	54°F-71°F, 50% cc, 0-1 mph winds
	10/4/2007	TLW	0650–1050	57°F-75°F, 0% cc, 0-1 mph winds
	10/18/2007	TLW	0715–1115	61°F-76°F, 0% cc, 1-2 mph winds
	11/7/2007	TLW	0730–1105	54°F-75°F, 100%-25% cc, 0-1 mph winds
	7/13/2007	IJ	Between 0600 and 1200	Specific conditions not recorded; however, weather conditions were suitable per survey protocol.
	7/27/2007	JJ	Between 0600 and 1200	Specific conditions not recorded; however, weather conditions were suitable per survey protocol.
	8/10/2007	JJ	Between 0600 and 1200	Specific conditions not recorded; however, weather conditions were suitable per survey protocol.
4	8/24/2007	JJ	Between 0600 and 1200	Specific conditions not recorded; however, weather conditions were suitable per survey protocol.
	10/5/2007	PML	0700–1100	53°F-72°F, 0% cc, 0-5 mph winds, 10+ mph gusts
	10/19/2007	PML	0645–1130	58°F-73°F, 0% cc, 0-3 mph winds
	11/2/2007	JDP	0645–1130	48°F-68°F, 5%-0% cc, 0-3 mph winds
	12/27/2007	JDP	0800–1030	47°F-48°F, 20%-10% cc, 0-3 mph winds
	1/10/2008	PML	0800–1100	53°F-64°F, 50%-20% cc, 0-5 mph winds, 8+ mph gusts
5	7/10/2007	DC	Between 0600 and 1100	Specific conditions not recorded; however, weather conditions were suitable per survey protocol.
	7/24/2007	DC	Between 0600 and 1100	Specific conditions not recorded; however, weather conditions were suitable per survey protocol.



TABLE 2 (Cont.) Survey Details and Conditions

Commence		Dialogista		
Survey Area	Date	Biologist's Initials	Time	Survey Conditions (skies, wind, temperature)
	8/7/2007	DC	Between 0600 and 1100	Specific conditions not recorded; however, weather conditions were suitable per survey protocol.
	8/21/2007	DC	Between 0600 and 1100	Specific conditions not recorded; however, weather conditions were suitable per survey protocol.
	9/4/2007	PML	0630–1115	77°F-96°F, 0% cc, 0-4 mph winds
	9/18/2007	PML	0630–1130	54°F-75°F, 0%-5% cc, 0-5 mph winds
	10/2/2007	JDP	0640–1015	54°F-72°F, 0% cc, 0-1 mph winds
	10/17/2007	PML	0725–1100	58°F-68°F, 100%-5% cc, 0-2 mph winds
	11/8/2007	TLW	0735–1035	50°F-64°F, 100% cc, 0-1 mph winds
	7/10/2007	RF	Between 0600 and 1100	Specific conditions not recorded; however, weather conditions were suitable per survey protocol.
	7/24/2007	RF	Between 0600 and 1100	Specific conditions not recorded; however, weather conditions were suitable per survey protocol.
	8/7/2007	RF	Between 0600 and 1100	Specific conditions not recorded; however, weather conditions were suitable per survey protocol.
6	8/21/2007	RF	Between 0600 and 1100	Specific conditions not recorded; however, weather conditions were suitable per survey protocol.
	9/4/2007	KJM	0715–1125	76°F–95°F, 0% cc, 0–4 mph winds
	9/18/2007	KJM	0715–1100	62°F-71°F, 0% cc, 0-6 mph winds
	10/2/2007	KJM	0745–1115	54°F-78°F, 0% cc, 1-4 mph winds
	10/17/2007	JDP	0700–1155	57°F-69°F, 100%-10% cc, 0-2 mph winds
	11/16/2007	PML	0700–1100	55°F-76°F, 70%-40% cc, 0-2 mph winds
	7/11/2007	RF	Between 0600 and 1100	Specific conditions not recorded; however, weather conditions were suitable per survey protocol.
	7/25/2007	RF	Between 0600 and 1100	Specific conditions not recorded; however, weather conditions were suitable per survey protocol.
	8/8/2007	RF	Between 0600 and 1100	Specific conditions not recorded; however, weather conditions were suitable per survey protocol.
7	8/22/2007	RF	Between 0600 and 1100	Specific conditions not recorded; however, weather conditions were suitable per survey protocol.
	9/5/2007	KJM	0615–1130	64°F-94°F, 0% cc, 1-6 mph winds
	9/20/2007	JDP	0715–1200	54°F-71°F, 50% cc, 0-1 mph winds
	10/4/2007	JDP	0650–1148	57°F-75°F, 0% cc, 0-3 mph winds
	10/18/2007	PML	0650–1145	63°F-72°F, 0% cc, 1–4 mph winds, 5–10 mph gusts
	12/24/2007	PML	0740–1110	53°F-64°F, 0% cc, 0-6 mph winds, 6-10 mph gusts



RESULTS

No coastal California gnatcatchers were detected on site.

Eighty-six wildlife species were observed during the surveys, comprising two species of reptile, 70 bird species, 10 mammal species, and four species of butterfly. A full list of wildlife species observed during the survey is provided in *Appendix A*. Please feel free to contact me at 760.479.4238 with questions or if you require additional information.

I certify that the information in this survey report and attached exhibits fully and accurately represents my work.

Sincerely,

Paul M. Lemons Wildlife Biologist

Att: Figures 1–3H Appendix A

TT -

Cc: Mark Subbotin, Newhall Land

Matt Carpenter, Newhall Land Glenn Adamick. Newhall Land

Brock Ortega, Dudek Kam Muri, Dudek Tricia Wotipka, Dudek Jeff Priest, Dudek Sherri Miller, Dudek

REFERENCES

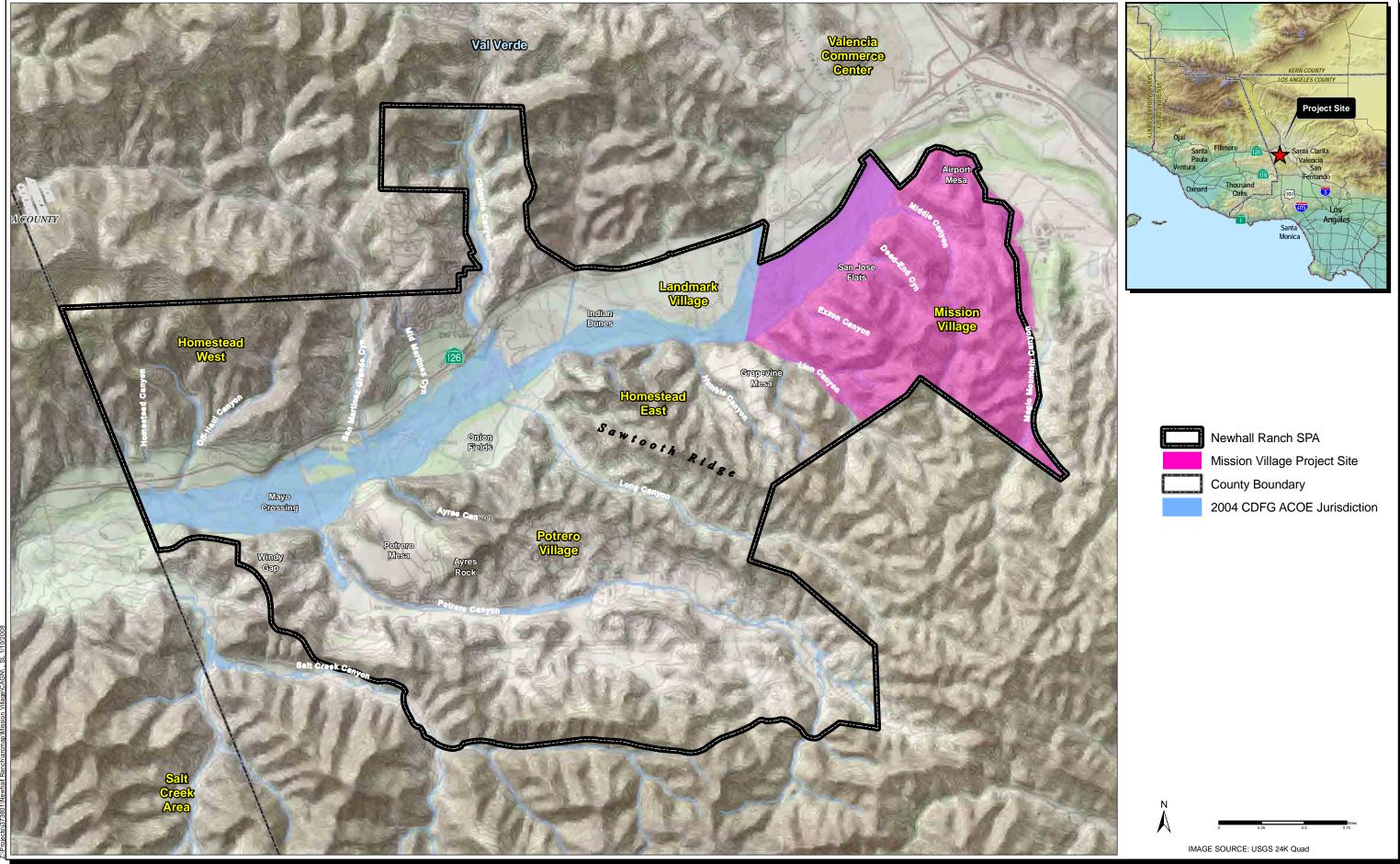
California Department of Fish and Game. 2003. The Vegetation Classification and Mapping Program: List of California Terrestrial Natural Communities Recognized by the California Natural Diversity Database. September 2003.

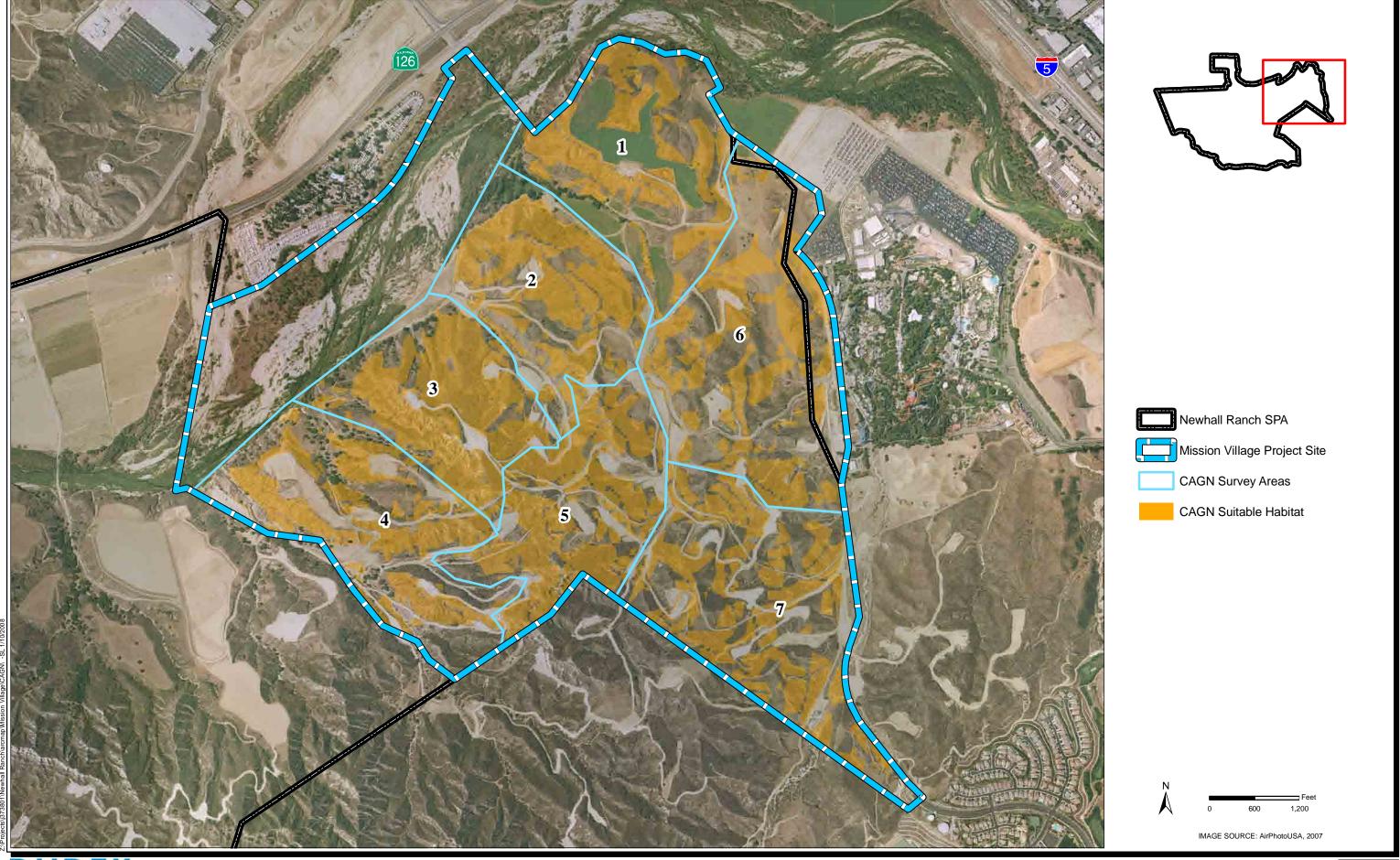
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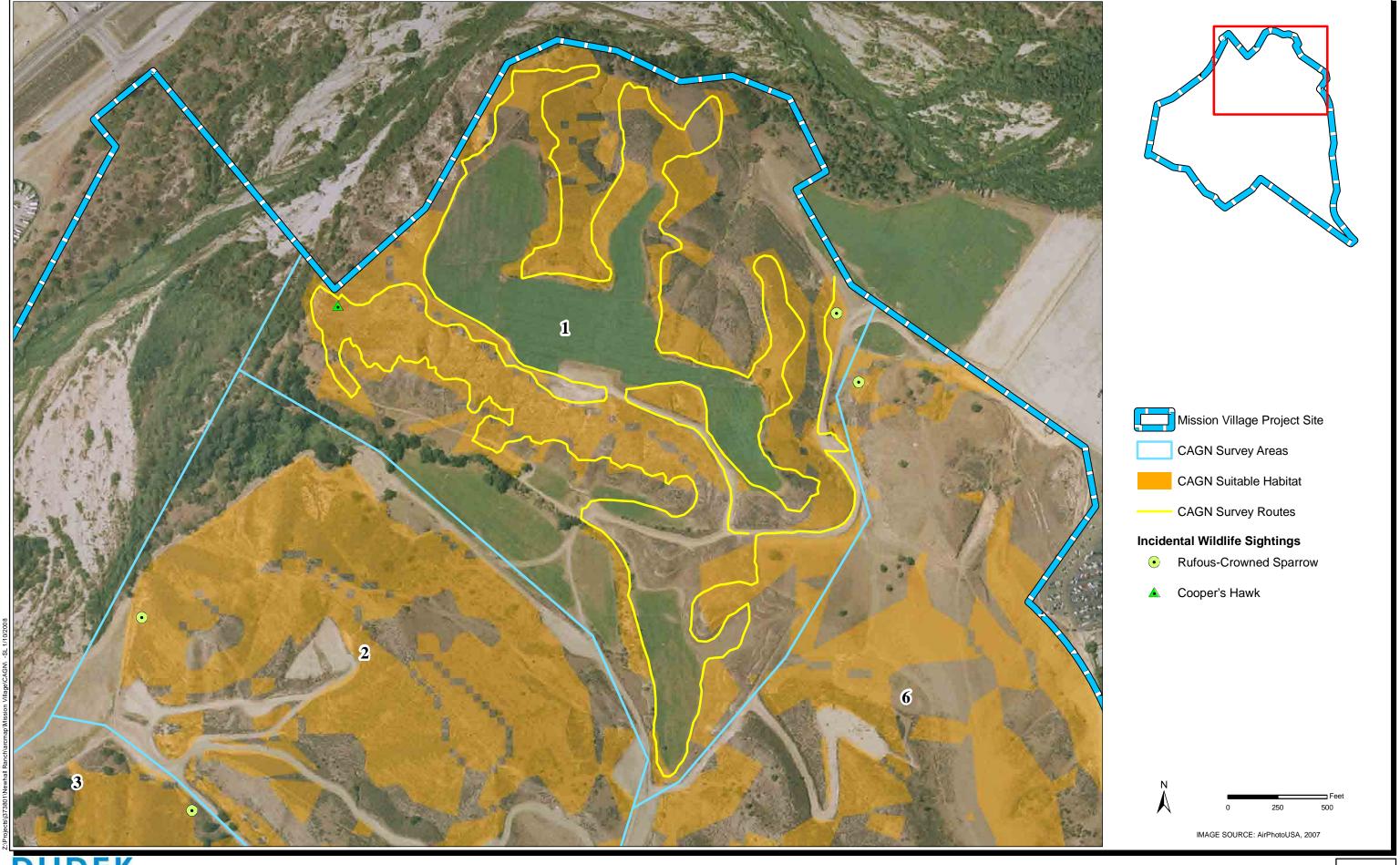




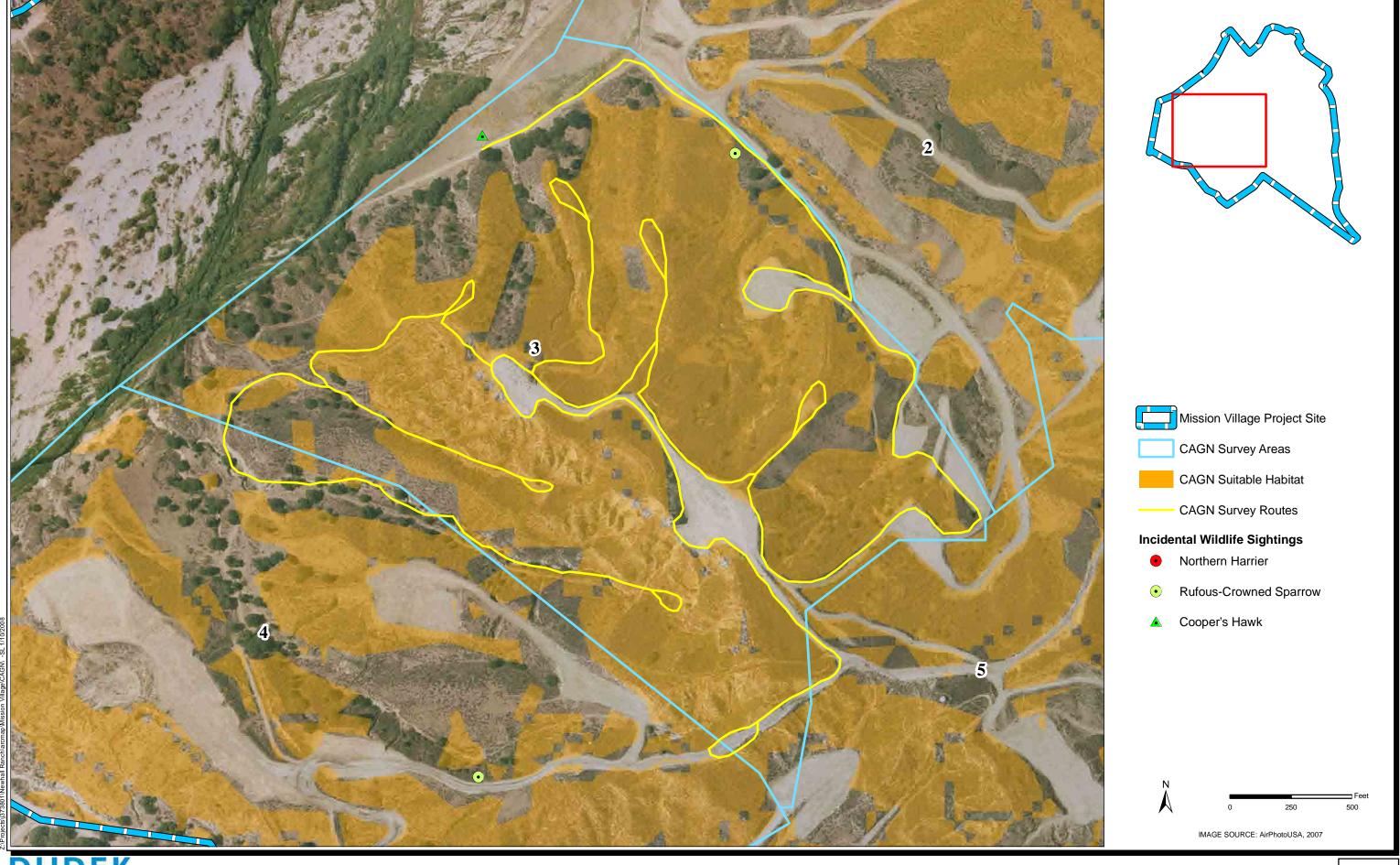
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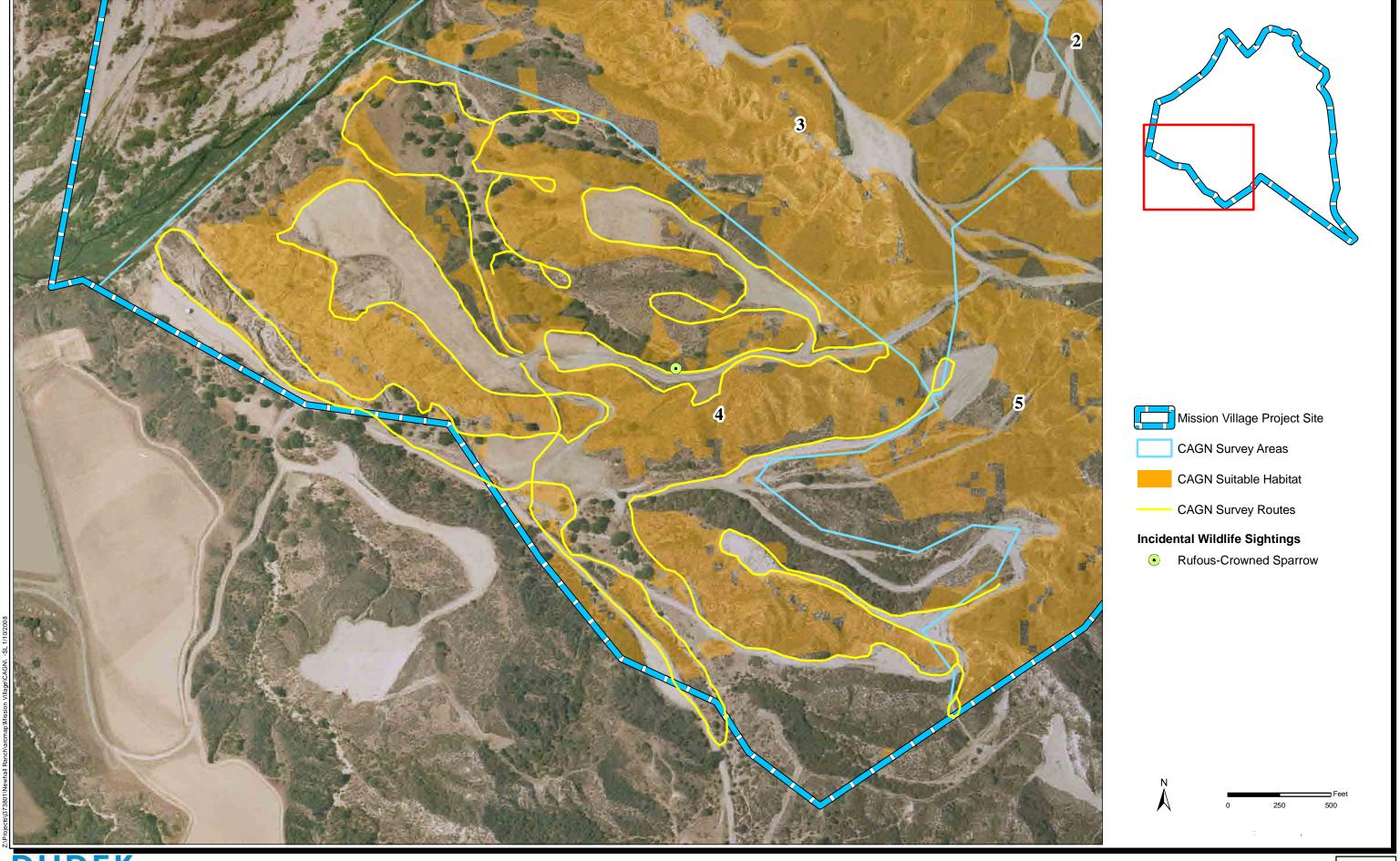


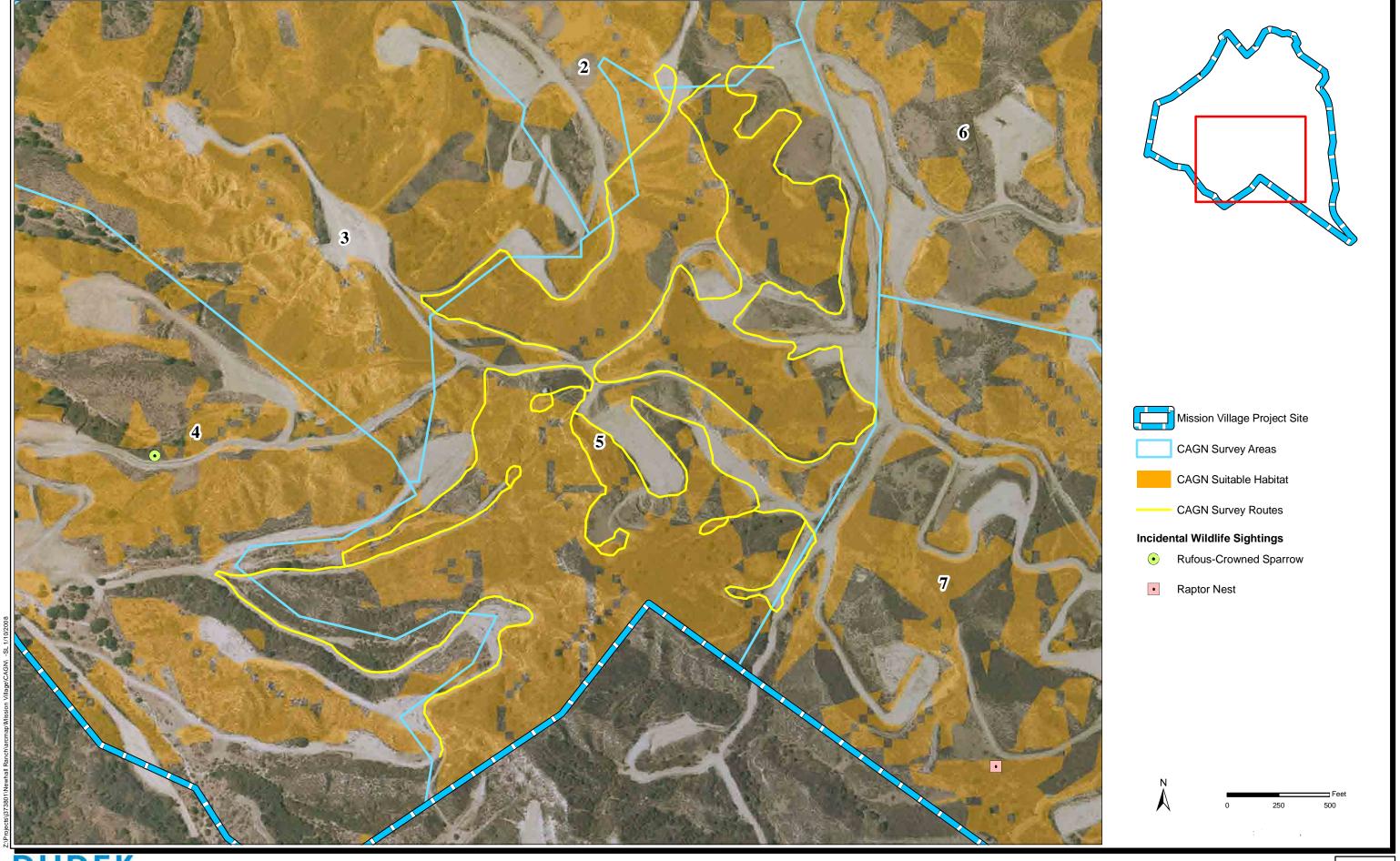






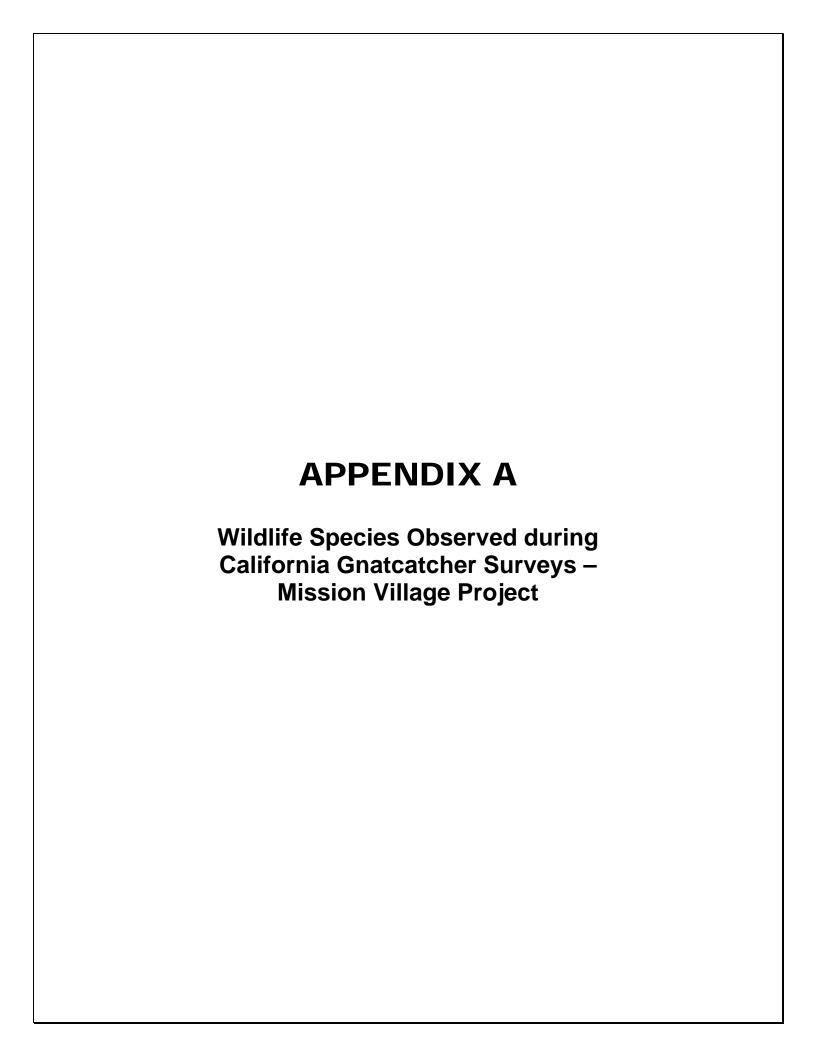












APPENDIX A

Wildlife Species Observed during California Gnatcatcher Surveys Mission Village Project

WILDLIFE SPECIES – VERTEBRATES

REPTILES

IGUANIDAE – IGUANID LIZARDS

Sceloporus occidentalis – western fence lizard Uta stansburiana – side-blotched lizard

BIRDS

ARDEIDAE - HERONS

Ardea herodias – great blue heron Ardea alba – great egret

ANATIDAE – WATERFOWL

Anas platyrhynchos – mallard

CATHARTIDAE - NEW WORLD VULTURES

Cathartes aura – turkey vulture

ACCIPITRIDAE - HAWKS

Accipiter cooperii – Cooper's hawk
Buteo jamaicensis – red-tailed hawk
Buteo lineatus – red-shouldered hawk
Circus cyaneus – northern harrier
Elanus leucurus – white-tailed kite

FALCONIDAE – FALCONS

Falco sparverius – American kestrel

PHASIANIDAE – PHEASANTS AND QUAILS

Callipepla californica – California quail

CHARADRIIDAE – PLOVERS

Charadrius vociferus – killdeer

SCOLOPACIDAE – SANDPIPERS

Numenius americanus – long-billed curlew



LARIDAE – GULLS AND TERNS

Larus occidentalis – western gull

COLUMBIDAE - PIGEONS AND DOVES

* Columba livia – rock dove

Patagioenas fasciata – band-tailed pigeon

Zenaida macroura – mourning dove

CUCULIDAE - CUCKOOS AND ROADRUNNERS

Geococcyx californianus – greater roadrunner

TYTONIDAE - BARN OWLS

Tyto alba – barn owl

STRIGIDAE - TRUE OWLS

Bubo virginianus – great horned owl

CAPRIMULGIDAE – GOATSUCKERS

Chordeiles acutipennis – lesser nighthawk

TROCHILIDAE – HUMMINGBIRDS

Calypte anna – Anna's hummingbird Calypte costae – Costa's hummingbird Selasphorus rufus – rufous hummingbird Selasphorus sasi – Allen's hummingbird

PICIDAE - WOODPECKERS

Colaptes auratus – northern flicker Melanerpes formicivorus – acorn woodpecker Picoides nuttallii – Nuttall's woodpecker

TYRANNIDAE – TYRANT FLYCATCHERS

Myiarchus cinerascens – ash-throated flycatcher Sayornis nigricans – black phoebe Sayornis saya – Say's phoebe Tyrannus vociferans – Cassin's kingbird Tyrannus verticalis – western kingbird

ALAUDIDAE - LARKS

Eremophila alpestris – horned lark

HIRUNDINIDAE – SWALLOWS

Hirundo rustica – barn swallow



Petrochelidon pyrrhonota – cliff swallow Stelgidopteryx serripennis – northern rough-winged swallow Tachycineta thalassina – violet-green swallow

CORVIDAE - JAYS AND CROWS

Aphelocoma californica – western scrub-jay Corvus brachyrhynchos – American crow Corvus corax – common raven

PARIDAE - TITMICE

Baeolophus inornatus – oak titmouse

AEGITHALIDAE – BUSHTITS

Psaltriparus minimus – bushtit

TROGLODYTIDAE - WRENS

Thryomanes bewickii – Bewick's wren Troglodytes aedon – house wren

REGULIDAE – KINGLETS

Regulus calendula – ruby-crowned kinglet

SYLVIIDAE - GNATCATCHERS

Polioptila caerulea – blue-gray gnatcatcher

TURDIDAE – THRUSHES AND BABBLERS

Sialia mexicana – western bluebird

TIMALIIDAE – LAUGHINGTHRUSH AND WRENTIT

Chamaea fasciata – wrentit

MIMIDAE - THRASHERS

Mimus polyglottos – northern mockingbird Toxostoma redivivum – California thrasher

PTILOGONATIDAE - SILKY-FLYCATCHERS

Phainopepla nitens – phainopepla

LANIIDAE - SHRIKES

Lanius ludovicianus – loggerhead shrike

STURNIDAE – STARLINGS

* Sturnus vulgaris – European starling



VIREONIDAE – VIREOS

Vireo huttoni – Hutton's vireo

PARULIDAE – WOOD WARBLERS

Dendroica coronata – yellow-rumped warbler *Dendroica petechia* – yellow warbler

EMBERIZIDAE – BUNTINGS AND SPARROWS

Aimophila ruficeps – rufous-crowned sparrow
Chondestes grammacus – lark sparrow
Melospiza melodia – song sparrow
Passerculus sandwichensis – Savannah sparrow
Pipilo crissalis – California towhee
Pipilo maculatus – spotted towhee
Zonotrichia leucophrys – white-crowned sparrow

CARDINALIDAE – CARDINALS AND GROSBEAKS

Pheucticus melanocephalus – black-headed grosbeak

ICTERIDAE – BLACKBIRDS AND ORIOLES

Euphagus cyanocephalus – Brewer's blackbird Sturnella neglecta – western meadowlark

FRINGILLIDAE – FINCHES

Carpodacus mexicanus – house finch Carduelis psaltria – lesser goldfinch Carduelis tristis – American goldfinch

MAMMALS

LEPORIDAE – HARES AND RABBITS

Sylvilagus bachmani – brush rabbit

SCIURIDAE – SQUIRRELS

Spermophilus beecheyi – California ground squirrel

GEOMYIDAE - POCKET GOPHERS

Thomomys bottae – Botta's pocket gopher

MURIDAE - RATS AND MICE

Neotoma sp. – woodrat (midden)



CANIDAE – WOLVES AND FOXES

Canis latrans - coyote

PROCYONIDAE - RACCOONS AND RELATIVES

Procyon lotor – common raccoon

MUSTELIDAE – WEASELS, SKUNKS, AND OTTERS

Mephitis mephitis – striped skunk

FELIDAE – CATS

Lynx rufus – bobcat

CERVIDAE - DEERS

Odocoileus hemionus – mule deer

BOVIDAE - BISON, GOATS, AND SHEEP

* Bos bovis – domestic cattle

WILDLIFE SPECIES – INVERTEBRATES

BUTTERFLIES AND MOTHS

PAPILIONIDAE – SWALLOWTAILS

Papilio rutulus – tiger swallowtail

PIERIDAE – WHITES AND SULFURS

Pieris rapae rapae – cabbage butterfly *Pontia protodice* – checkered white

RIODINIDAE - METALMARKS

Apodemia mormo virgulti – Behr's metalmark

* signifies introduced (non-native) species

