
Priest, J., "Focused California Gnatcatcher Survey, Landmark Village Project, Los Angeles County, California" (July 9, 2007; 2007B)

July 9, 2007

3738-123

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Attn: Recovery Permit Coordinator
6010 Hidden Valley Road
Carlsbad, CA 92009

Subject: Focused California Gnatcatcher Survey, Landmark Village Project, Los Angeles County, California

Dear Recovery Permit Coordinator:

This report documents the results of six protocol-level presence/absence surveys for the coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*; gnatcatcher) that were conducted for the approximately 1,043.3-acre Landmark Village project area by Dudek in spring 2007. The surveys were conducted in all areas of suitable habitat, (*i.e.*, California sagebrush scrub habitat and sagebrush sub-associations with less than 50% slopes). Approximately 143 acres of California sagebrush scrub habitat and sagebrush sub-associations present onsite were surveyed.

The 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 elevation and on slopes less than 40%, but gnatcatchers have been observed at elevations greater than 2,000 feet. 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 292.6-acre Landmark Village tract map 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. The site lies on flat terraces above the Santa Clara River. The majority of the site is currently used for agricultural purposes and is subject to agricultural disking. Topography across the site is relatively flat, with elevations ranging from 800 feet to 960 feet above mean sea level (msl). Habitat on the tract map site varies in quality from high biological value in riparian areas associated with the Santa Clara River channel, to highly disturbed habitat such as upland agricultural areas.

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To facilitate development of the Landmark Village tract map site, several off-site, project-related components would be implemented on an additional 750.9 acres of land within the boundaries of the approved Specific Plan. The Adobe Canyon borrow site south of the river is characterized by sloping hillsides and adjacent agricultural use. The borrow site is dominated by California sagebrush scrub – black sage, but also includes areas of undifferentiated chaparral, California annual grassland, and coast live oak woodland. Elevations on the borrow site range from approximately 920 feet (near the river) rising to 1,260 feet above msl further south. The Chiquito Canyon grading site is dominated by California annual grassland, California sagebrush scrub, and agricultural/disturbed areas, with smaller amounts of California sagebrush scrub – California buckwheat and California sagebrush scrub – purple sage. Elevations at this off-site grading site range from approximately 970 feet near State Route 126 (SR-126) rising to 1,190 feet above msl further north.

The utility corridor alignment and the water tank site in the Valencia Commerce Center represent disturbed, vacant land containing ruderal vegetation and disturbed/developed uses. Vegetation on the reclaimed water tank site within Chiquito Canyon is dominated by California sagebrush scrub.

The Long Canyon Road Bridge and portions of the buried bank stabilization would be placed on land within the river corridor. Plant communities such as mulefat scrub, river wash, southern cottonwood-willow riparian forest, herbaceous wetlands, and seasonal aquatic habitats dominate these areas.

VEGETATION COMMUNITIES

A total of 17 plant communities (and associated alliances) and two existing land use areas (active agriculture and developed areas) were identified and characterized as occurring on the project site during the field investigations. Ten of these plant communities (and associated alliances), including California annual grassland, southern cottonwood-willow riparian forest, coast live oak woodland, California sagebrush scrub, undifferentiated chaparral, arrow weed scrub, mulefat scrub, southern willow scrub, southern coast live oak riparian forest, and big sagebrush scrub correspond with CDFG's *Vegetation Classification and Mapping Program, List of California Terrestrial Natural Communities Recognized by the California Natural Diversity Database*. The remaining six described communities, disturbed land, herbaceous wetlands, California sagebrush scrub/undifferentiated chaparral, open channel – developed, river wash, and alluvial scrub, do not fit a defined plant community classification and, therefore, are defined by their dominant plant species. The plant communities and land uses mapped on the project site are shown on *Figure 3*; their acreages are shown in *Table 1*.

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**TABLE 1
VEGETATION COMMUNITIES AND LAND COVER TYPES**

VEGETATION COMMUNITY/ LAND COVER TYPE	MAP SYMBOL	ACREAGE
Agriculture	AGR	404.92
Alluvial Scrub	AS	0.47
Arrow Weed Scrub	AWS	6.93
Big Sagebrush Scrub	BSS	11.59
Big Sagebrush Scrub - California Buckwheat	CB-BSS	0.54
Chamise Chaparral	CC	2.84
California Annual Grassland	CGL	49.95
Undifferentiated Chaparral	CHP	48.64
Southern Coast Live Oak Riparian Forest	CLORF	0.64
Coast Live Oak Woodland	CLOW	1.81
California Sagebrush Scrub	CSB	84.57
California Sagebrush Scrub – <i>Artemisia californica</i>	CSB-A	0.42
California Sagebrush Scrub - Black Sage	CSB-BS	5.58
California Sagebrush Scrub – California Buckwheat	CSB-CB	40.93
California Sagebrush Scrub/Undifferentiated Chaparral	CSB-CHP	62.05
California Sagebrush Scrub - Purple Sage	CSB-PS	14.45
Southern Cottonwood/Willow Riparian Forest	CWRF	26.66
Developed	DEV	9.52
Disturbed Land	DL	239.93
Herbaceous Wetlands	HW	2.35
Mulefat Scrub	MFS	10.74
Open Channel developed	OC (DEV)	0.02
River Wash	RW	14.07
Southern Willow Scrub	SWS	3.70
TOTAL		1043.32

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 are a total of 208 acres of these vegetation types within the project area; in accordance with the agreements with the USFWS only those areas with less than 50% slope and below 1,800 feet elevation were surveyed, approximately 143 acres.

There are 84.5 acres of California sagebrush scrub on the project site. This community predominantly occurs on gentle to steep hill slopes within the Chiquito Canyon grading site, the water tank sites, and the borrow site, as well as in an isolated area in the northwest portion of the tract map site and within the utility corridor. Dominant native species found in this plant community include California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum* var. *foliolosum*) and

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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*).

California sagebrush scrub associations were also mapped onsite. 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- *Artemisia californica* (dominated only by California sagebrush) (32.010.01) – 0.4 acre
- California Sagebrush Scrub-Purple Sage Scrub (32.010.04), including disturbed – 14.5 acres
- California Sagebrush Scrub-Black Sage (modified) – 5.6 acres
- California Sagebrush Scrub-California Buckwheat (modified) – 40.9 acres
- California Sagebrush Scrub-Undifferentiated Chaparral (equal dominance of California sage scrub and chaparral scrub species) (modified from 32.300.00) – 62.0

METHODS

The focused survey for the California gnatcatcher was conducted for the project site between March 17 and June 14, 2007 by Dudek biologists Jeff D. Priest (JDP; permit # TE-840619), Tricia Wotipka (TLW; #TE-840619), Kam Muri (KJM; #TE-051250), Paul Lemons (PL; #TE-051248), and Brock Ortega (BAO; #TE-813545). The survey was conducted following the currently accepted protocol of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Coastal California Gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila californica californica*) Presence/Absence Survey Protocol (July 28, 1997). The survey included the six visits at a minimum of weekly intervals. Partial and complementary surveys were performed on April 17, May 15, 18, 30 and 31 and June 7, 2007. On all other dates the surveys were completed in a single day. Survey routes were arranged to ensure complete coverage of the suitable habitat onsite (Figures 4 - 6). Binoculars (7 x 50) were used 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 and when a gnatcatcher was detected, the playing of the tape ceased in order to avoid harassment.

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TABLE 2
SURVEY DATES AND CONDITIONS

DATE	HOURS	PERSONNEL	CONDITIONS
4/17/07	0745- 1215	JWP, TLW (NW and NE areas)	0 - 10% cloud cover (cc), wind 0 - 6 miles per hour (mph), 60 – 71° Fahrenheit (F)
5/1/07	0715-1210	KJM, TLW (all areas)	10%-100% cc, wind 0-3 mph, 55-69° F
5/8/07	0630-1130	KJM, BAO (all areas)	0% cc; wind 0-3 mph; 55-81° F
5/15/07	0640 - 1015	KJM (NW and NE areas)	10 – 100% cc; wind 0 – 7 mph; 59- 74° F
5/18/07	0730 - 1230	PL (southern area)	0 – 100% cc; wind 2 – 6 mph; 61- 81° F
5/30/07	0800 - 1300	PL (NW and NE areas)	0% cc; wind 0 – 4 mph; 60- 86° F
5/31/07	0545 -1115	PL (southern area)	0% cc; wind 0 – 4 mph; 50- 75° F
6/7/07	0650 -0945	JDP (southern area)	0% cc; wind 0 – 4 mph; 60- 75° F
6/14/07	0720 - 1040	TLW (NW and NE areas)	0% cc; wind 0 – 4 mph; 70- 85° F
6/14/07	0615 – 1100	PL (southern area)	0% cc; wind 0 – 5 mph; 61- 85° F

RESULTS

No coastal California gnatcatcher were detected onsite.

Sixty-two species of wildlife were observed during the surveys, comprising two species of reptile, 49 bird species, nine mammal species, and two 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) 479-4287 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.

Very truly yours,

Dudek



Jeff D. Priest
Wildlife Biologist

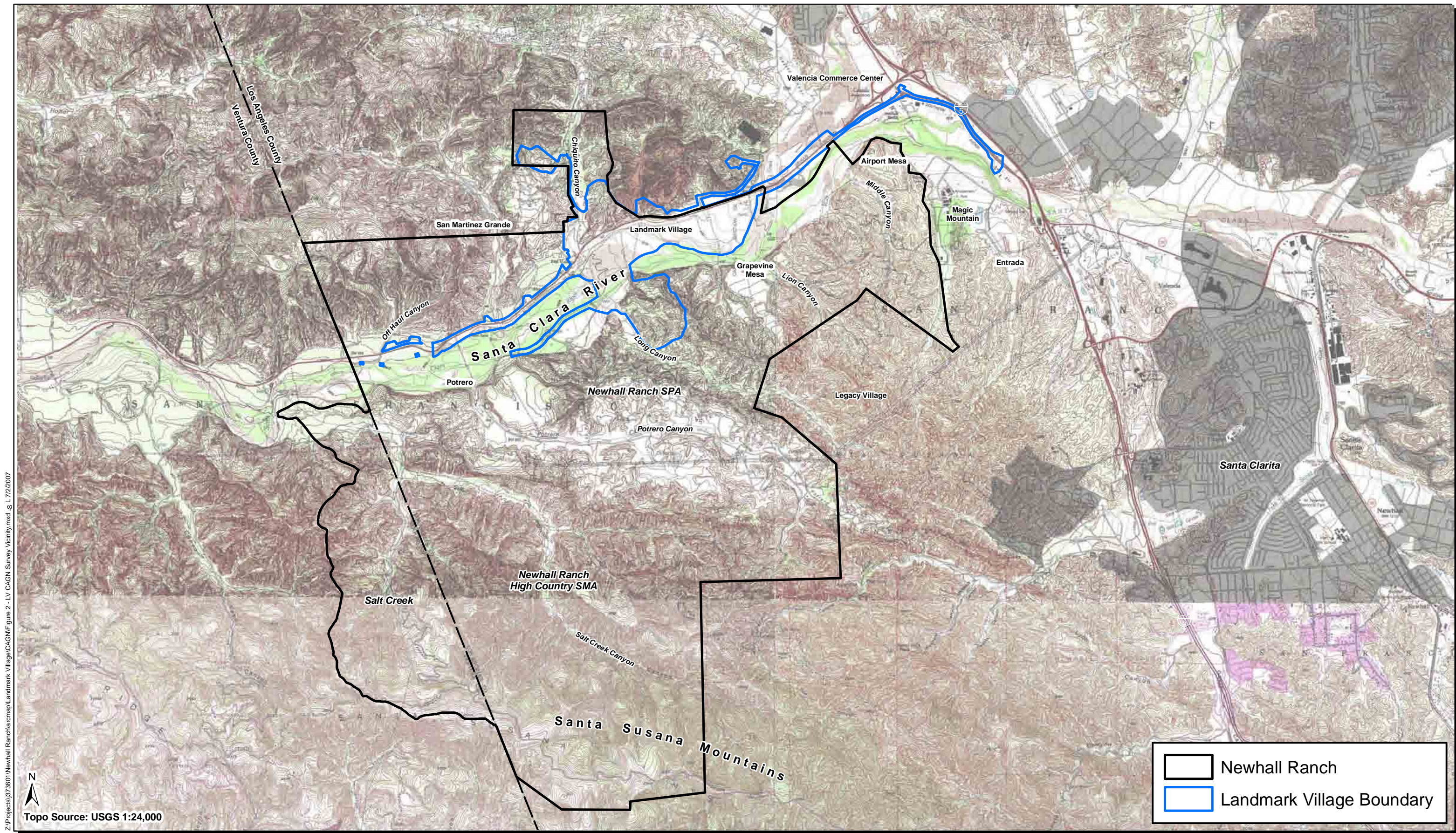
att: *Figures 1-6*
 Appendix A

Focused California Gnatcatcher Survey, Landmark Village Project Los Angeles County, California

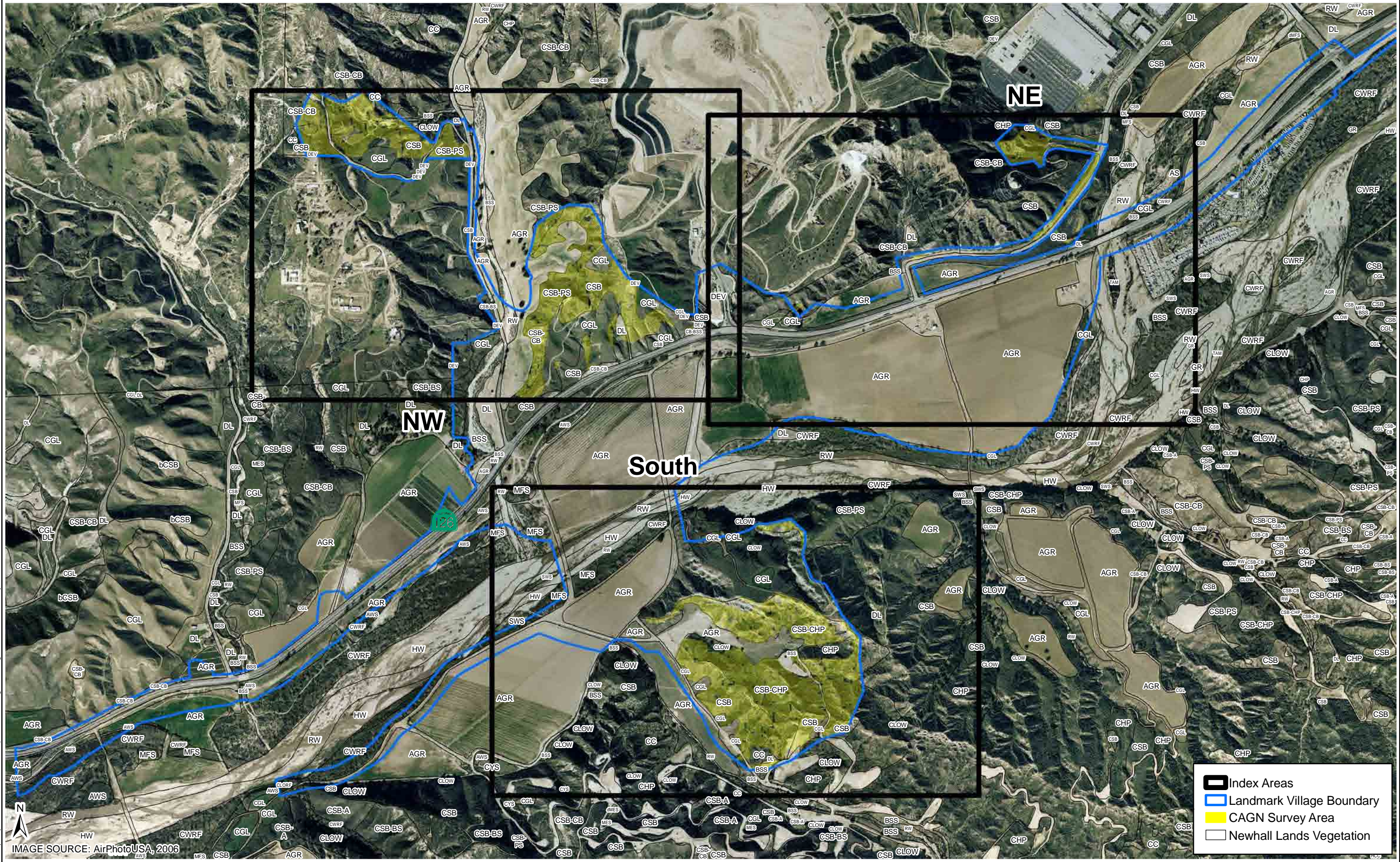
*Cc: Matt Carpenter, Newhall Land
Glenn Adamick, Newhall Land
Brock Ortega, Dudek
Kam Muri, Dudek
Tricia Wotipka, Dudek
Paul Lemons, Dudek
Sherri Miller, Dudek*



Z:\Projects\37380\1Newhall Ranch\map\Landmark Village\CAGN\Figure 1 - CAGN Survey Regional.mxd -SL 7/2/2007



Z:\Projects\373801\Newhall Ranch\map\Landmark Village\CAGN\Figure 2 - LV CAGN Survey Vicinity.mxd, 5/17/2007



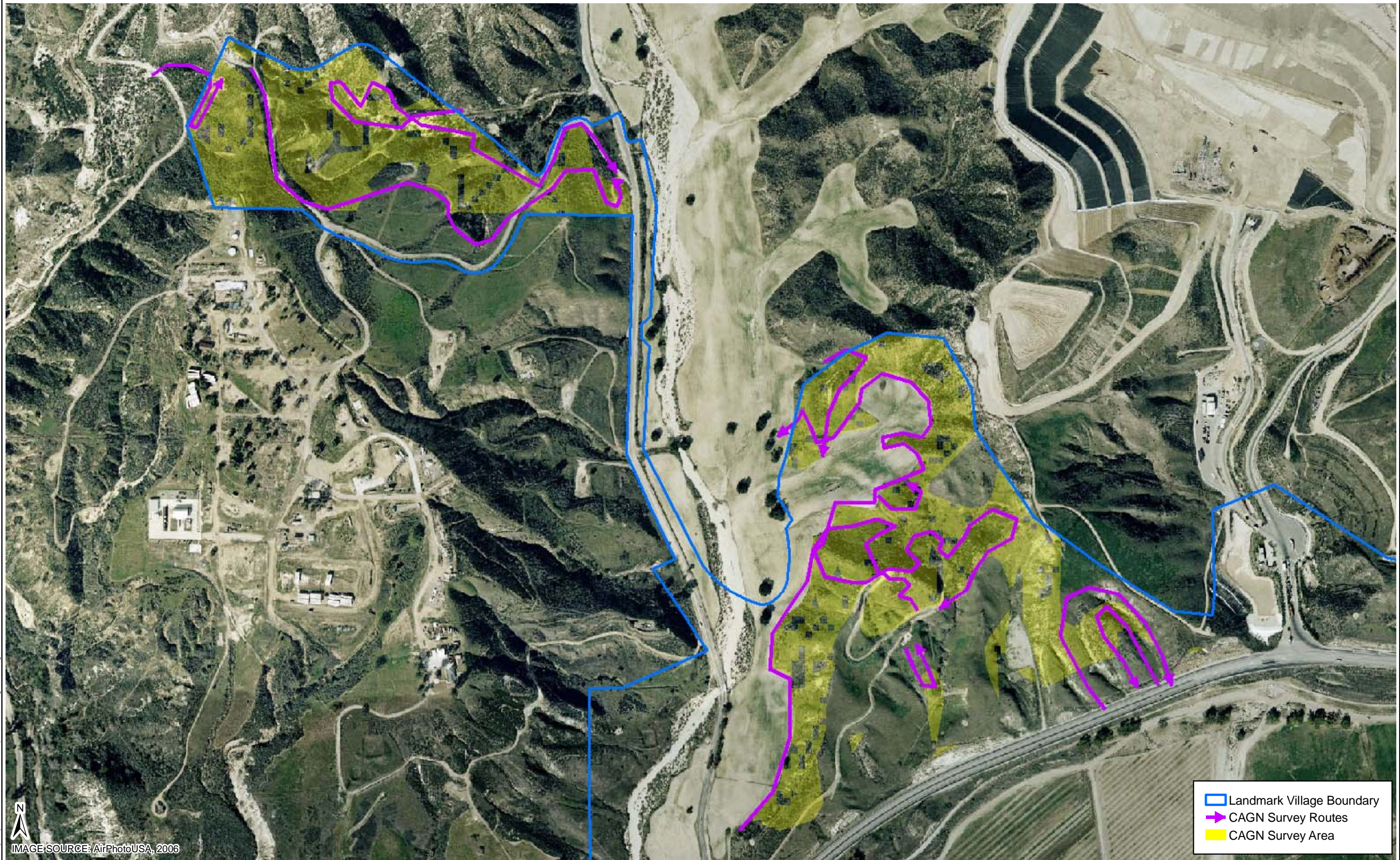
Z:\Projects\37380\1Newhall Ranch\map\Landmark Village\CAGN\Figure 3 - LV CAGN Survey Index.mxd - SL 7/2/2007

IMAGE SOURCE: AirPhotoUSA, 2006

DUDEK
 Santa Barbara GIS Division
 621 Chapala St
 Santa Barbara, Ca 93101
 (805)963-0651

0 0.25 0.5 Miles

Landmark Village California Gnatcatcher Survey
Landmark Village Index



Z:\Projects\37380\1Newhall Ranch\map\Landmark Village\CAGN\Figure 4 - LV CAGN Routes NW.mxd -SL 6/29/2007

IMAGE SOURCE: AirPhotoUSA, 2006
 0 0.1 0.2 Miles

DUDEK
 Santa Barbara GIS Division
 621 Chapala St
 Santa Barbara, Ca 93101
 (805)963-0651

Landmark Village California Gnatcatcher Survey
Landmark Village NW

FIGURE
4

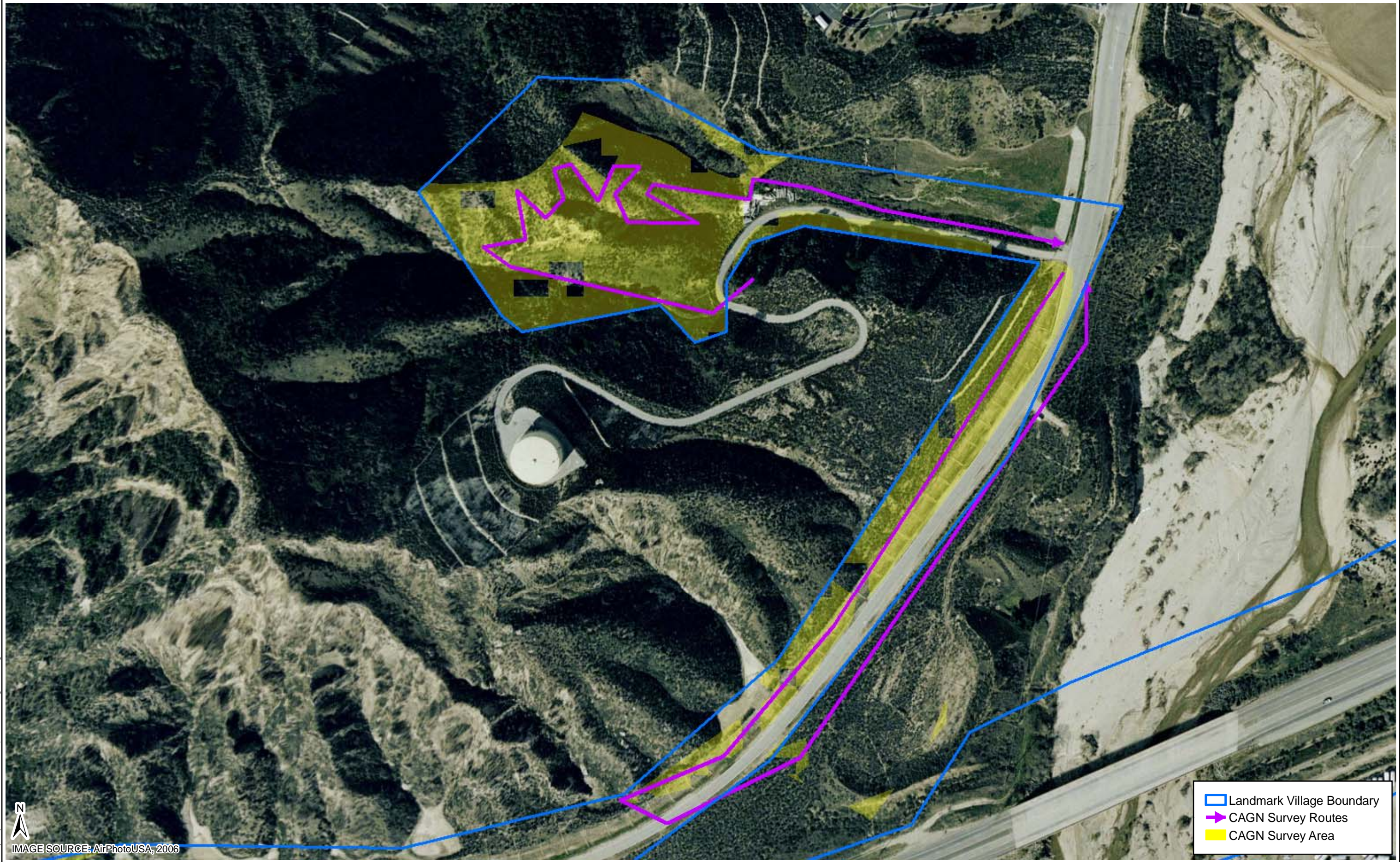
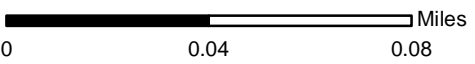


IMAGE SOURCE: AirPhotoUSA, 2006

- Landmark Village Boundary
- CAGN Survey Routes
- CAGN Survey Area

DUDEK
Santa Barbara GIS Division
621 Chapala St
Santa Barbara, Ca 93101
(805)963-0651



Landmark Village California Gnatcatcher Survey
Landmark Village NE

FIGURE
5



Z:\Projects\37380\1\Newhall Ranch\map\Landmark Village\CAGN\Figure 6 - LV CAGN Routes S.mxd -SL 6/29/2007

IMAGE SOURCE: AirPhotoUSA, 2006

DUDEK
Santa Barbara GIS Division
621 Chapala St
Santa Barbara, Ca 93101
(805)963-0651

0 0.07 0.14 Miles

Landmark Village California Gnatcatcher Survey
Landmark Village S

FIGURE
6

APPENDIX A

Wildlife Species Observed During California Gnatcatcher Surveys Landmark Village Project

APPENDIX A

WILDLIFE SPECIES -VERTEBRATES

REPTILES

IGUANIDAE - IGUANID LIZARDS

Sceloporus occidentalis - western fence lizard

Uta stansburiana - side-blotched lizard

BIRDS

CATHARTIDAE - NEW WORLD VULTURES

Cathartes aura - turkey vulture

ACCIPITRIDAE - HAWKS

Accipiter cooperii - Cooper's hawk

Buteo jamaicensis - red-tailed hawk

FALCONIDAE - FALCONS

Falco sparverius - American kestrel

PHASIANIDAE - PHEASANTS & QUAILS

Callipepla californica - California quail

CHARADRIIDAE - PLOVERS

Charadrius vociferus - killdeer

LARIDAE - GULLS & TERNS

Larus sp.- gull

COLUMBIDAE - PIGEONS & DOVES

* *Columba livia* - rock dove

Zenaida macroura - mourning dove

CUCULIDAE - CUCKOOS & ROADRUNNERS

Geococcyx californianus - greater roadrunner

TYTONIDAE - BARN OWLS

Tyto alba - barn owl

APPENDIX A

CAPRIMULGIDAE - GOATSUCKERS

Chordeiles acutipennis - lesser nighthawk

TROCHILIDAE - HUMMINGBIRDS

Calypte anna - Anna's hummingbird

Calypte costae - Costa's hummingbird

PICIDAE - WOODPECKERS

Colaptes auratus - northern flicker

Picoides nuttallii - Nuttall's woodpecker

TYRANNIDAE - TYRANT FLYCATCHERS

Myiarchus cinerascens - ash-throated flycatcher

Sayornis nigricans - black phoebe

Tyrannus vociferans - Cassin's kingbird

ALAUDIDAE - LARKS

Eremophila alpestris - horned lark

HIRUNDINIDAE - SWALLOWS

Petrochelidon pyrrhonota - cliff swallow

Stelgidopteryx serripennis - northern rough-winged swallow

Tachycineta sp. - swallow

CORVIDAE - JAYS & CROWS

Apelocoma californica - western scrub-jay

Corvus brachyrhynchos - American crow

Corvus corax - common raven

PARIDAE - TITMICE

Baeolophus inornatus - oak titmouse

AEGITHALIDAE - BUSHTITS

Psaltiriparus minimus - bushtit

TROGLODYTIDAE - WRENS

Thryomanes bewickii - Bewick's wren

TIMALIIDAE - LAUGHINGTHRUSH AND WRENTIT

Chamaea fasciata - wrentit

APPENDIX A

MIMIDAE - THRASHERS

Toxostoma redivivum - California thrasher

PTILOGONATIDAE - SILKY-FLYCATCHERS

Phainopepla nitens - phainopepla

VIREONIDAE - VIREOS

Vireo gilvus - warbling vireo

PARULIDAE - WOOD WARBLERS

Dendroica coronata - yellow-rumped warbler

Geothlypis trichas - common yellowthroat

Icteria virens - yellow-breasted chat

Wilsonia pusilla - Wilson's warbler

EMBERIZIDAE - BUNTINGS & SPARROWS

Melospiza melodia - song sparrow

Pipilo crissalis - California towhee

Pipilo maculatus - spotted towhee

Zonotrichia leucophrys - white-crowned sparrow

CARDINALIDAE - CARDINALS AND GROSBEAKS

Passerina caerulea - blue grosbeak

ICTERIDAE - BLACKBIRDS & ORIOLES

Agelaius phoeniceus - red-winged blackbird

Euphagus cyanocephalus - Brewer's blackbird

Icterus cucullatus - hooded oriole

Icterus bullockii - Bullock's oriole

Molothrus ater - brown-headed cowbird

FRINGILLIDAE - FINCHES

Carpodacus mexicanus - house finch

Carduelis psaltria - lesser goldfinch

APPENDIX A

MAMMALS

LEPORIDAE - HARES & RABBITS

Sylvilagus bachmani - brush rabbit

Sylvilagus audubonii - desert cottontail

SCIURIDAE - SQUIRRELS

Spermophilus beecheyi - California ground squirrel

GEOMYIDAE - POCKET GOPHERS

Thomomys bottae - Botta's pocket gopher

MURIDAE - RATS & MICE

Neotoma sp. - woodrat

CANIDAE - WOLVES & FOXES

Canis latrans - coyote

MUSTELIDAE - WEASELS, SKUNKS, & OTTERS

Mephitis mephitis - striped skunk

FELIDAE - CATS

Felis concolor - mountain lion

Lynx rufus - bobcat

CERVIDAE - DEERS

Odocoileus hemionus - mule deer

WILDLIFE SPECIES - INVERTEBRATES

BUTTERFLIES AND MOTHS

PAPILIONIDAE - SWALLOWTAILS

Papilio rutulus - tiger swallowtail

RIODINIDAE - METALMARKS

Apodemia mormo virgulti - Behr's metalmark

* signifies introduced (non-native) species

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