

**Final Report - NCCP/MSCP Raptor Monitoring**  
**Project (January 1, 2001 – December 31, 2003)**

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*for*

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## **BACKGROUND**

The Natural Communities Conservation Planning (NCCP) Raptor Monitoring Project is part of the urgent implementation tasks associated with the Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP). The MSCP is the local representation of the State's NCCP Program of which the City of San Diego is a participating member and the lead agency. The County of San Diego is also an active participant (County of San Diego 1997). The city adopted the MSCP on March 18, 1997 and entered into a binding contract on July 16, 1997 with the State of California Department of Fish and Game and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service to implement the MSCP.

Each habitat conservation plan (HCP) requires a monitoring program to determine the efficacy of that plan. The "Biological Monitoring Plan for the Multiple Species Conservation Program" (Ogden 1996) recommended monitoring for certain plant species, coastal sage scrub (Coastal California Gnatcatcher and Cactus Wren), herpetofauna, and grasslands (specifically, using raptors).

## **THE PROJECT AND ITS OBJECTIVES**

Monitoring of raptors is a critical component of the MSCP. This project, specifically, addresses monitoring the raptor species identified as target species for MSCP monitoring with one exception--the Burrowing Owl (BO; *Athene cunicularia hypugaea*). In addition to the Burrowing Owl, the MSCP Biological Monitoring Plan (Ogden, 1996) identified the following raptor species (hereafter referred to as the "target" species) to be monitored: Golden Eagle (GE; *Aquila chrysaetos*), Bald Eagle (BE; *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), Peregrine Falcon (PF; *Falco peregrinus*), Northern Harrier (NH; *Circus cyaneus*), Ferruginous Hawk (FH; *Buteo regalis*), Swainson's Hawk (SH; *Buteo swainsoni*), and Cooper's Hawk (CH; *Accipiter cooperii*). Prior to the subject work, no comprehensive study had been conducted for any of these species, within the geographical limits of the MSCP.

The Wildlife Research Institute, Inc. (WRI), a non-profit organization, has been working with all MSCP participants to identify appropriate long-term raptor monitoring locations (based on the results of the current WRI raptor surveys), develop a scientifically-based monitoring program (including survey locations and protocols), test the monitoring methods, and identify opportunities for population enhancements.

The original project objectives (taken from the contract's scope of work) are as follows:

- Determine where breeding and wintering individuals (of the target species) are located within the study areas.
- Wherever possible, document the breeding success of active pairs.
- Characterize situations of both successful and less successful or unsuccessful habitat.
- Identify, modify, or create, if necessary, survey raptor monitoring methods, based on scientific principles that would be appropriate to meet the objectives of the MSCP Monitoring Plan.
- Identify management, including research, needs and enhancement opportunities.

## **THIS REPORT**

**Constraints.** This report covers WRI's raptor surveying activity for the three years of this project (January 1, 2001 through December 31, 2003), focusing on the breeding and wintering seasons. For the record, our work did not, officially, include the BO. Therefore, with few exceptions, surveys were not conducted during what would normally have been the most productive time for this species (i.e., early morning and early evening). Fieldwork was conducted during the daylight hours to maximize chances for seeing the diurnal raptors that were the focus of the contracted scope. Although nocturnal owls can be expected to nest and winter in many of the study sites, they would be expected to often escape observation under this temporal survey regime. However, our methods required documenting any raptor, regardless of whether or not it was a target species and, when a BO or any other owl was observed, it was noted.

A natural phenomenon created a situation that could be considered a constraint. This was the extreme drought that the region experienced for several years (1999-2004). Therefore, 2001 through 2003 may not have been the best of raptor breeding years. Drought clearly plays a significant factor in the density and reproductive success of raptors. This study was conducted during the worst drought for San Diego in over 160 years. This fact should be noted for future researchers and resource managers/planners. This kind of extreme drought has the potential effect of reducing the available prey biomass, which, in turn, can have at least two effects. First, it likely reduces the "attractiveness" of a habitat complex, partly because of low prey densities, and may encourage raptors and other predators to look elsewhere. Second, for those individuals that choose to stay in a less-than-ideal environment, the lack of prey often results in lowered reproductive success or even total nest failure (see Discussion, below). If a nest site is not successful, the birds are more likely to disperse, which leaves the historically active territories apparently, or actually, vacant.

**Intent.** It is the intent that this, the Final Report, will not only serve to (1) provide data analysis and interpretation but, importantly, it strives to (2) provide an initial baseline of information on many of the breeding and wintering raptors within the MSCP and environs, (3) identify resource management challenges and opportunities, and (4) recommend needed research and management, including what areas should be considered for the MSCP Long-term Raptor Monitoring Program (LRMP).

## **METHODS**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW, INTERVIEWS, DATA SEARCHES, ETC.**

We first contacted other professional biologists, regarding available literature and monitoring programs already in place. We acquired relevant literature, which we did not already have, and met with and/or phone-interviewed members of the outdoor-oriented public as well as key professionals in the San Diego ornithologist community (including Mr. John Oakley, Mr. David Mayer, Mr. Phil Unitt, Dr. Jim Hannan, and others listed in the Acknowledgements section) to inquire about raptor sightings. Using existing published and gray literature, the Natural Communities Data Base, museum collections, raw data from the San Diego County Bird Atlas (then in prep.), MSCP vegetation and sensitive species GIS data, and discussions with knowledgeable experts, a project bibliography, relevant to the MSCP and the target species, was produced (Appendix A).

## STUDY SITES

The choice of *study sites* (i.e., those which would be the focus of the 2001-2003 field observations) began with the raptor monitoring locations proposed by the “Biological Monitoring Plan for the Multiple Species Conservation Program” (Ogden 1996). Through consultations with CDFG staff and other knowledgeable biologists, we initially identified 22 sites. After some consolidation and the addition of several sites, including control sites and five sites recently acquired by the state or federal government (numbers 34, and 39 through 43), this number was, ultimately, increased to 45 locations within, and juxtaposed to, the MSCP (hereafter referred to as “study sites”; Figure 1 and Table 1). These became the sites, which were surveyed and considered as *potential* sites, or components of sites, for the Long-term *Monitoring Plan*. The basis for choosing the study sites included that they (1) could be expected to support raptors, (2) were part of an area which was managed by a public or private organization or, alternatively, could serve as a control site over time, (3) were accessible by vehicle and could be safely surveyed with repeatability, (4) contained grassland and/or other relevant habitat which was representative of the MSCP area, and (5) were within or immediately juxtaposed to the MSCP area. We considered all ten sites recommended by the Ogden (1996) report. Of those ten sites, we believe all are covered by one or more of the above 45 locations unless they did not meet the above criteria.

## MONITORING SITES

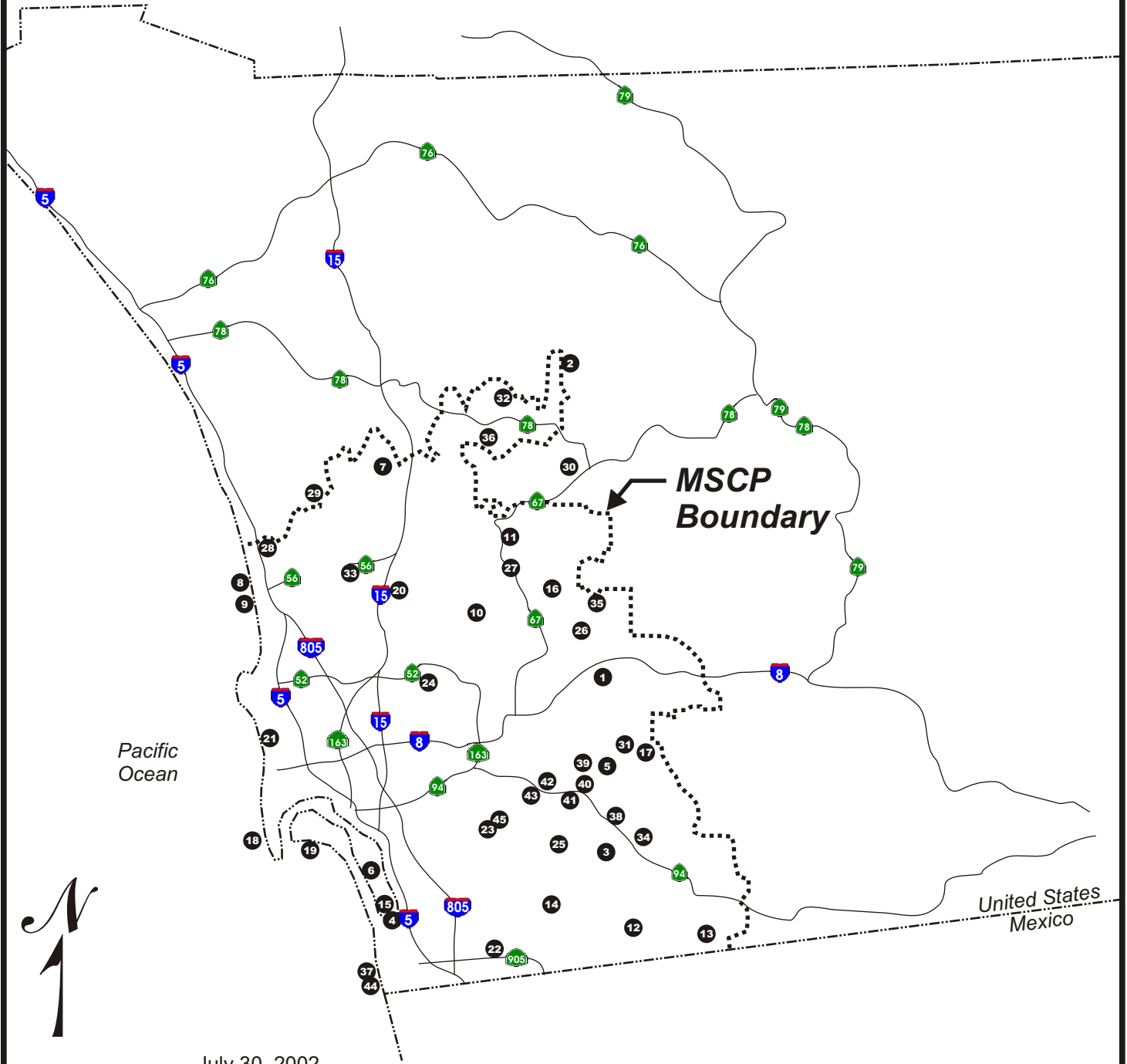
The parameters considered in order to make the recommendations for monitoring sites (i.e., those which would be used in the MSCP Long-term Monitoring Program; LRMP) were discussed at a meeting with representatives of CDFG, USFWS, the City of San Diego and the County of San Diego, on January 27, 2002, at the CDFG San Diego office. It was agreed that the following were important when reviewing each study site as a potential MSCP LRMP site:

- Number of individual raptors documented at a site
- Number of raptor species
- Number of target raptor species
- Diversity of raptors and/or target raptor species
- Number of raptor territories
- Number of crows and/or ravens
- Incidence and/or expectation of management/enforcement problems
- Likely changes in habitat and disturbance over time

In order to identify which sites are the most appropriate for the MSCP LRMP during the breeding season, each site was examined, based on two species diversity parameters (number of total raptors and number of target raptors, both of which were normalized by level of effort) and a third parameter for evenness (Probability of an Interspecific Encounter or PIE; Hurlburt, 1971). The analysis for evenness provided a logical break between the top 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> sites. All sites were then arranged in descending order for each of these three parameters. If any site came out in the top 19 for any two of the three parameters, it was considered a candidate for the MSCP LRMP. Seventeen sites met this requirement. Each site was reviewed, based on our biological knowledge of that site and how it fit into the geographic distribution of recommended monitoring sites. Finally, juxtaposed sites were combined and sites and site boundaries were adjusted based on historic raptor numbers and improved geographic coverage.

# LEGEND

- SITE LOCATIONS
- INTERSTATES
- STATE HIGHWAYS



Source: County of San Diego, DPLU GIS

**Table 1. Raptor Study Sites (2001-2003)**

**NOTE TO READER:** In order to facilitate the reader's access to the following topographic maps, they are listed below alphabetically and by site number.

<u>Number</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Number</u>
1	Crestridge	Boden Canyon	2
2	Boden Canyon	Border Fields	44
3	Jamul Ranch	Brown Field Complex	22
4	SDNWR*/Salt Works/Egger Ghio	Crestridge	1
5	McGinty Mountain Complex	Grasslands/Route 67	30
6	San Diego Bay NWR (winter only)	Hollenbeck Canyon	34
7	Lake Hodges	Immenschuh	39
8	Penasquitos Lagoon	Iron Mountain	11
9	Torrey Pines	Jamul Ranch	3
10	Sycamore Canyon	Lake Hodges	7
11	Iron Mountain	Los Montanas (North)	40
12	Otay Mountain	Los Montanas (South)	41
13	Marron Valley	Marron Valley	13
14	Otay Lakes	McGinty Mountain Complex	5
15	SDNWR* Sweetwater Marsh	Miramar Reservoir	20
16	San Vicente	Mission Bay	21
17	Sycuan Peak	Mission Trails	24
18	Point Loma	North Island	19
19	North Island	Otay Lakes	14
20	Miramar Reservoir	Otay Mountain	12
21	Mission Bay	Penasquitos Canyon	33
22	Brown Field Complex	Penasquitos Lagoon	8
23	SDNWR*/San Miguel Mountain	Point Loma	18
24	Mission Trails	Proctor Valley	25
25	Proctor Valley	Rancho San Diego (East)	42
26	San Diego River	Rancho San Diego (West)	43
27	Route 67 South	Rock Mountain	35
28	San Dieguito Lagoon	Rockwood Canyon	32
29	Route S-6 (deleted/safety issue)	Route 67 South	27
30	Grasslands/Route 67	Route 94 (North and South)	38
31	Sloan Canyon	Route S-6	29
32	Rockwood Canyon	San Diego Bay NWR (winter only)	6
33	Penasquitos Canyon	San Diego River	26
34	Hollenbeck Canyon	San Dieguito Lagoon	28
35	Rock Mountain	San Pasqual	36
36	San Pasqual	San Vicente	16
37	SDNWR*Tijuana Slough	SDNWR* Sweetwater Marsh	15
38	Route 94 (North and South)	SDNWR*/Salt Works/Egger Ghio	4
39	Immenschuh	SDNWR*/San Miguel Mountain	23
40	Los Montanas (North)	SDNWR*Tijuana Slough	37
41	Los Montanas (South)	Sloan Canyon	31
42	Rancho San Diego (East)	Sweetwater Reservoir	45
43	Rancho San Diego (West)	Sycamore Canyon	10
44	Border Fields	Sycuan Peak	17
45	Sweetwater Reservoir	Torrey Pines	9

\*San Diego National Wildlife Refuge

After completing the above analysis, it became clear that the coastal portions of the MSCP were excluded from the proposed breeding season monitoring because the vast majority and greatest diversity of raptor species breed somewhat inland of the coast. In addition, our data showed that the MSCP area supported a sizable wintering PF population, most of which would be excluded without a coastal component to the MSCP LRMP. Therefore, a winter monitoring route was established that included a good sampling of the coastal wintering raptor habitat that could be driven safely and consistently.

## FIELD SURVEYS

By way of clarification, we will be discussing two kinds of raptor searching and documentation. The first is the *survey*—the approach we took to investigate each of the 45 study sites, some of which we are recommending for the MSCP LRMP. This approach utilized several techniques in order to capture a maximum amount of raptor data on sites of considerable environmental variation. The second kind of raptor searching and documentation is the *monitoring protocol*, which will be recommended for MSCP LRMP. This was based on which *survey* techniques were most useful, what has become standardized for raptors, and what will meet the objectives of a monitoring program (discussed below).

Based on a review of the MSCP Biological Monitoring Plan, discussions with the Contract Manager, and our knowledge of survey techniques that are widely accepted, we established guidelines for WRI biologists to follow for the breeding and wintering surveys (WRI 2004, Appendices A and B). As discussed in the Year 1 and 2 reports (WRI 2002, 2004), because of latitude, and the resulting mild climate of the MSCP area, raptor nesting activities can start as early as December and run into August. However, wintering raptors are commonly observed in this region December through February, with some remaining (or migrating through) into mid-March. Therefore, we have, somewhat arbitrarily, called field observations made December through February “winter” survey data. However, “breeding” season data are not limited to a specific timeframe, often overlap with the “winter” observation, and are based on observed behavior (e.g., copulation, nest building, incubation, bringing food to the nest, presence of young).

Table 1 provides a reminder of all the sites that were in the original list of those to be examined. One of the objectives of the 2003 fieldwork was to fill in some data gaps. We had difficulty gaining access to one site (San Diego National Wildlife Refuge/San Miguel Mountain, Site 23) because it involved the use of an access across private property. Table 1 does not reflect surveys that were conducted for the GE or numerous surveys conducted by WRI volunteers and cooperators. During this last year of study, we also continued our coordination with individuals responsible for managing the study sites to keep them apprised of project progress, maintain a point of contact, enlist their input, coordinate access, etc.

Although most of the fieldwork was conducted by vehicle and on foot, as described in WRI (2004, Appendices A and B), some observations, which were focused on the GE, were conducted by helicopter (WRI 2005).



## **RESULTS**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The Project Bibliography has been completed (Appendix A); although, we would welcome any additions from those who review it. This bibliography is not intended to be comprehensive but is intended to provide the reader and local resource manager with important references that relate to: (1) relevant natural history of the target raptors; (2) the presence or distribution of the target raptors within the MSCP, and/or (3) survey or monitoring techniques that could be applied to the target raptor resources by land and wildlife managers within the MSCP. It is arranged by sections for each raptor target species, followed by a section on general raptor literature, with a focus on raptor management.

### **FIELD SURVEYS**

The GE and the PF are addressed separately below because they are unique in both their biological status and their potential for being disturbed. The PF was only recently removed from the listing category and the GE has shown a marked (approximately 50 percent), and well-documented, decline in San Diego County.

#### **Golden Eagle**

The GE has been reported on separately (WRI 2005) for a number of reasons relating to resource protection. The detailed site-specific maps are provided in that document so that CDFG has the option of distributing those data separate from the other, less sensitive, raptor data depending on the recipient's need to know.

As an overview, however, after 16 years of consistent monitoring, we estimate that thirty one (31) pairs formerly occupied the San Diego MSCP. Today, fifteen (15) pairs are still active and sixteen (16) pairs have been extirpated. Most of these extirpations occurred in the last 35 years. The fifteen (15) breeding pairs of Golden Eagles remaining in the SD MSCP represent 30 percent of all the breeding Golden Eagles in San Diego County. Seven (7) of the fifteen (15) remaining active pairs within the SD MSCP are in serious jeopardy of being extirpated in the next 5-10 years. Three (3) of the seven (7) pairs predicted to become extirpated may, in fact, already be lost.

The first changes of significance that affected the SD MSCP Golden Eagle population were from intensive agriculture such as avocado and citrus groves. This agriculture replaced cattle grazing and grasslands. Some extirpations were documented to occur in San Diego County in the 1950s and 1960s, after the build-up of military personnel post-WWII, but most disappeared after the 1970s, when major freeways opened land for development that was formerly cattle ranches. Interstate and local freeways made access easy and allowed development to proceed.

Extirpated Golden Eagle territories were primarily located on private land (56 percent). Currently only three (20 percent) of the remaining pairs of Golden Eagles core nesting areas remain on private lands. Twelve (80 percent) of the currently active Golden Eagles within the SD MSCP nest on public land. *This is a significant and valuable opportunity for the future management and survival of Golden Eagles within the SD MSCP.*

In order to properly manage this far-ranging species, specific information about their ecological needs is required, including the limits of the core area around the nest, the primary foraging areas, and the limits of the defendable territory. These are provided in the Golden Eagle report (WRI 2005).

## **Peregrine Falcon**

### **Breeding Season Results**

Of the 12 current and/or historic PF territories known for the county, nine were (and, in five cases, are) located within the MSCP boundaries. Of the five territories located within the MSCP, only one territory is located at one of the study sites (Point Loma, Site 18; see Table 2). The status of that territory and others that we are aware of, within the MSCP, is as follows: Point Loma—active (likely produced young, 2002; was active, 2003); downtown San Diego—active (nest success not known, 2001-2003); La Jolla Cove—active (thought to have produced young, 2002); La Jolla Cliffs—active (nest success not known, 2001-2003); Downtown El Cajon—active (2002) but nest success not known.

### **Winter Results**

A total of 14 PFs were documented during the winter months of 2002 and we believe this was typical for the study period (2001-2003). These were observed at ten study sites (Table 3). One individual was observed at each of nine sites, 2 at one site, and 3 were noted at, or near, another site (Point Loma; site 18). Most birds were observed along the coast or associated with large bodies of water, where shorebirds and other water-associated birds were abundant. Based on other observations, and input from knowledgeable raptor biologists, it is likely that there were roughly 20 PFs wintering in San Diego County during each of the period 2001-2003.

## **Other Raptors**

### **Breeding Raptors**

The raptor breeding season data, by study site, presented in Table 2 and Appendix B provides a picture of what each of the study sites can be expected to support under conditions of average-to-poor precipitation. Maps of all 45 study sites are provided. In cases where no data were collected, or data were combined between two sites, a note on the map provides that explanation. During the period 2001-2003, we examined 44 out of 45 sites (land access was not possible at SDNWR/San Miguel Mountain, Site 23 although we were able to survey a nearby GE nest by helicopter). We documented a total of 15 raptor species and 539 raptor breeding territories (excluding the CR but including 78 stick nests, which we could not positively identify as to raptor species). Of the 539 raptor breeding territories, 96 were target species (all but the BE, SH, and FH, which do not, currently, breed in the MSCP area). Sites varied greatly in their ability to support breeding raptors. Some sites didn't support more than one or two territories, while, others, like the Ramona Grasslands, supported almost 90 territories. Four sites supported no breeding raptors (see those with note "NBR"), while one site (Ramona Grasslands) supported 9 raptor species, including three target species.

The RT was the most commonly documented nesting raptor species, with a total of 177 nests and/or territories located on 34 sites. The next most commonly documented raptor

**TABLE 2. Number of Raptor Nests and/or Territories by Site (2001-2003)**

SITE	SPECIES**																				Stick Nest	Target Spp.	Total Spp.	Notes	Site No.			
	AK	BE	BR	BO	CH	CR	FH	GE	GO	LO	NH	OS	PF	RS	RT	SO	SH	TV	WK									
1	Crestridge	1				1	2							3	2									1	9		1	
2	Boden Canyon					2								2	2										2	6		2
3	Jamul Ranch					2	2			1				1	13							2	15	2	36		3	
4	SDNWR*/Salt Works/Egger Ghio																							0	0	NBR	4	
5	McGinty Mountain Complex					1								1	5									1	7		5	
6	San Diego Bay NWR			1			1								1								2	0	5	Note 1	6	
7	Lake Hodges	1		2		2	1			1	2			5	8							1		3	23		7	
8	Penasquitos Lagoon																							0	0	Note 5	8	
9	Torrey Pines						6								1									0	7	Note 5	9	
10	Sycamore Canyon			1							3			1	1	1								0	7		10	
11	Iron Mountain			2		4	1			1	1			11	13					1	2			5	37	Note 2	11	
12	Otay Mountain						2			2				1	5								1	2	11		12	
13	Marron Valley						2			1					6								10	1	19		13	
14	Otay Lakes	1				2	2				1			2								1	4	4	17		14	
15	SDNWR* Sweetwater Marsh													2										2	3	NBR	15	
16	San Vicente									1					3						2			1	8		16	
17	Sycuan Peak																							0	0	NBR	17	
18	Point Loma													1		1								1	2		18	
19	North Island				6								1		1								1	6	9		19	
20	Miramar Reservoir					1							1		1									1	3		20	
21	Mission Bay																							0	0	NBR	21	
22	Brown Field Complex	1			4		1						1			5							1	5	13		22	
23	SDNWR*/San Miguel Mountain												1											1	1	NSC	23	
24	Mission Trails					1								1	2							1	1	1	6		24	
25	Proctor Valley	3				1									3								1	1	8		25	
26	San Diego River	1				3	1			1	1			3	9									4	19		26	
27	Route 67 South/Iron Mtn #11																							0	0	Note 2	27	
28	San Dieguito Lagoon												1			4						1		1	6		28	
29	Route S-6																							0	0	Note 4	29	
30	Grasslands/Route 67	10			1	1	1			1	6			25	41					1	3		3	90		30		
31	Sloan Canyon						7			1				2	4							1	2	1	17		31	
32	Rockwood Canyon					1	1			1				1	4									2	8		32	
33	Penasquitos Canyon	3		2		7	1				2		2	9	4					1	6		9	37		33		
34	Hollenbeck Canyon	4				1	4						2	2	4							1	4	3	22		34	
35	Rock Mountain						1			1				1	2									1	5		35	
36	San Pasqual	1		4		2	2				3			9	16					1	2		7	2	47		36	
37	SDNWR*Tijuana Slough	1											2											2	3		37	
38	Route 94 (North and South)																							0	0	Note 3	38	
39	Immenschuh					1																	1	1	2		39	
40	Los Montanas (North)														1	1							1	0	3		40	

**TABLE 2. Number of Raptor Nests and/or Territories by Site (2001-2003)**

SITE		SPECIES**																			Stick Nest	Target Spp.	Total Spp.	Notes	Site No.		
		AK	BE	BR	BO	CH	CR	FH	GE	GO	LO	NH	OS	PF	RS	RT	SO	SH	TV	WK							
41	Los Montanas (South)														2								0	2		41	
42	Rancho San Diego (East)	1				1									3					1			5	1	11		42
43	Rancho San Diego (West)					2									1								8	2	11		43
44	Border Fields	1		2		6				1					2	1				2			12	19	40		44
45	Sweetwater Reservoir					5	3			2					1	5				1			2	5	19		45
<b>Total</b>		29	0	14	11	47	41	0	12	20	3	25	6	1	83	177	1	0	6	25		78	96	579			

\* San Diego National Wildlife Refuge.

NBR No breeding raptors observed.

NSC No formal raptor surveys conducted (see notes on topo report maps).

- (1) Breeding raptors and ravens observed in residential areas to east of study area.
- (2) Data for Route 67 South (# 27) and Iron Mountain (#11) were combined. See Iron Mountain (#11).
- (3) The Route 94 transect overlaps other study sites. Data from this transect were assigned to other appropriate sites.
- (4) No data collected due to safety and access issues.
- (5) Data for Penasquitos Canyon (#8) combined with Torrey Pines (#9). See Torrey Pines (#9).

\*\*Species:

AC American Crow	CR Common Raven	<b>NH Northern Harrier</b>	SO Screech Owl
AK American Kestrel	<b>FH Ferruginous Hawk</b>	OS Osprey	SS Sharp-shinned Hawk
<b>BE Bald Eagle</b>	<b>GE Golden Eagle</b>	<b>PF Peregrine Falcon</b>	<b>SH Swainson's Hawk</b>
BH Black Hawk	GO Great-horned Owl	PR Prairie Falcon	TV Turkey Vulture
BR Barn Owl	HH Harris' Hawk	RS Red-shouldered Hawk	WK White-tailed Kite
<b>BO Burrowing Owl</b>	LO Long-eared Owl	RT Red-tailed Hawk	
<b>CH Cooper's Hawk</b>	MR Merlin		

Table 3. Number\* of raptors observed during the winter (primarily January, February, and December) surveys--2001-2003.

SITE	SPECIES***																				Total Target Spp.	Total Raptors	Notes	Site No.		
	AK	BE	BR	BO	CH	CR	FH	GE	GO	LO	MR	NH	OS	PF	PR	RS	RT	SO	SS	SH					TV	WK
1	Crestridge				1	19										3	4				1		1	28		1
2	Boden Canyon				2			2								2	6				3		4	15		2
3	Jamul Ranch	5				6					1						7						1	19		3
4	SDNWR*/Salt Works/Egger Ghio	2			1	2	1				1	4	3	1			4					1	7	20		4
5	McGinty Mountain Complex					2										2	5						0	9		5
6	San Diego Bay NWR	3				1	1				1	1	1										3	8		6
7	Lake Hodges	5		4	3	2		2	2		1	2	1			8	36				2	3	7	71		7
8	Penasquitos Lagoon																						0	0	Note 1	8
9	Torrey Pines					12							2				2						2	16	Note 1	9
10	Sycamore Canyon			2							6					2	2	2					0	14		10
11	Iron Mountain			4	8	2		1	2			2				22	18				2	4	9	65	Note 2	11
12	Otay Mountain	2				18		1			1						5						2	27		12
13	Marron Valley	1			1	14										1	6				1		1	24		13
14	Otay Lakes	5			3	10					2	2	1			1	5				1		6	30		14
15	SDNWR* Sweetwater Marsh	2			1	1					1	3	1				5					1	4	15		15
16	San Vicente																4					2	0	6		16
17	Sycuan Peak																						0	0	Note 3	17
18	Point Loma	1			1	3								3			3						4	11	Note 4	18
19	North Island	2			3	6						2					3						3	16	Notes 3 & 5	19
20	Miramar Reservoir				2												2				2		2	8		20
21	Mission Bay	2				2											2						0	6		21
22	Brown Field Complex	4			3	1	8				4						7					2	8	29		22
23	SDNWR*/San Miguel Mountain																						0	0	NWC	23
24	Mission Trails	1			2	6										3	3				1	2	2	18		24
25	Proctor Valley	3			1	132							1				8						2	145		25
26	San Diego River	5			6	2			2		1	1				7	22					2	7	48		26
27	Route 67 South/Iron Mtn #11																						0	0	Note 2	27
28	San Dieguito Lagoon										2						8					2	2	12		28
29	Route S-6	2															2						0	4	Note 4	29
30	Grasslands/Route 67	7			2	1	3	9	3	6	1		1	1		4	12		1		40	16	91		30	
31	Sloan Canyon					5		1								2	1						1	9	Note 3	31
32	Rockwood Canyon				2	2		2									6						4	12		32
33	Penasquitos Canyon	6		4	14	2		4	2		4	2				18	8				2	12	22	76		33
34	Hollenbeck Canyon	7			1	13		2			3			1		3	5						6	35		34
35	Rock Mountain							3															3	3		35
36	San Pasqual	11		7	2	6		2	6		1		1		16	57		1			3	8	6	121		36
37	SDNWR*Tijuana Slough	3			1	4		1			1	2	1	1			4						5	18		37
38	Route 94 (North and South)																						0	0	Note 6	38
39	Immenschuh				1																		1	1		39
40	Los Montanas (North)																3						0	3		40
41	Los Montanas (South)					4											3						0	7		41
42	Rancho San Diego (East)	2			3	6											4					1	3	16		42
43	Rancho San Diego (West)					3											1						0	4		43
44	Border Fields	8										6				1	13					3	6	31		44

Table 3. Number\* of raptors observed during the winter (primarily January, February, and December) surveys--2001-2003.

45	Sweetwater Reservoir	9	2			3	38			2		1		1	1			5			1	1	6	64		45	
<b>Total</b>		98	2	21	8	61	334	11	24	20	6	5	36	21	14	1	95	291	2	2	0	59	44	156	1155		

\* Numbers refer to maximum number of birds observed.

\*\* San Diego National Wildlife Refuge.

- (1) Data for Penasquitos Lagoon (#8) and Torrey Pines (#9) combined. See Torrey Pines (#9).
- (2) Data for Route 67 South (# 27) and Iron Mountain (#11) were combined. See Iron Mountain (#11).
- (3) Includes March survey.
- (4) Two PFs were observed to the north of this site, near the S.D. Airport.
- (5) Seven widely-spaced active burrows suggested that there were at least seven B0s on this study site.
- (6) The Route 94 transect overlaps other study sites. Data from this transect were assigned to other appropriate sites.

\*\*\*Species

AK American Kestrel	CR Common Raven	MR Merlin	RS Red-shouldered Hawk	TV Turkey Vulture
<b>BE Bald Eagle</b>	<b>FH Ferruginous Hawk</b>	<b>NH Northern Harrier</b>	RT Red-tailed Hawk	WK White-tailed Kite
BR Barn Owl	<b>GE Golden Eagle</b>	OS Osprey	SO Screech Owl	
<b>BO Burrowing Owl</b>	GO Great-horned Owl	<b>PF Peregrine Falcon</b>	SS Sharp-shinned Hawk	
<b>CH Cooper's Hawk</b>	LO Long-eared Owl	PR Prairie Falcon	<b>SH Swainson's Hawk</b>	

nests/territories were those of the RS with 83 and the CH with 47. The CR (a non-raptor, but a species that can have an impact on raptors) was fourth in frequency with 41 nests/territories. The next level of frequency was shared by AK (29), NH (25), WK (25), and GO (20). To a great extent, this frequency distribution is a function of site size, amount of appropriate habitat, and sometimes local conditions on the respective sites.

Of the eight project target species, nesting was documented for five—CH, NH, GE, BO, and, PF. CH nesting was observed at the highest number of study sites, with nests and/or territories documented at 21 sites (48 percent of the 44 sites surveyed). GE was observed nesting at 11 sites (25 percent); while NH was documented at only 8 sites (18 percent) with 13 of the 25 territories found at Border Fields. BO were found nesting at only 3 (7 percent) of the sites and PF at only 1 (0.23 percent) of the sites.

The CH nested, primarily, at those sites that contain healthy riparian habitat; however, this species has become somewhat of a generalist and also nests elsewhere (see Discussion). GEs limited their nesting to sites with sheer cliffs away from human activity and close to nearby grasslands for hunting (see below). The NH and the PF were concentrated primarily along the coast. However, one PF pair attempted nesting in downtown El Cajon and a few scattered NHs were observed nesting at more inland sites. NHs nested in mostly coastal marsh and open field habitat; although we have observed NHs nesting in ruderal areas (J. Oakley, pers. comm.). PFs utilized mostly man-made structures, along the coast, with nearby sources of shorebirds and other prey. Most of BOs, located on the study sites, were found in sandy soil with low grass and open areas (see also WRI 2003, Lincer and Bloom 2003, in prep.). BE and FH winter within the MSCP but are not known to breed there. SHs only pass through during migration, are infrequently documented, and when they are, they are usually not within the MSCP. Some of the SH migrants seen are in the Ramona area and large numbers (over 5,200) have been recently documented migrating along the desert front to the east of the MSCP during the spring (Unitt 2004).

Based on the number of *all* nesting raptor species (plus the CR) and all the sites surveyed during the 2001-2003 breeding seasons, Site 30 (Ramona Grasslands/Route 67) contained the most nests/territories of all sites surveyed. Eighty-nine nests/territories were documented, representing nine raptor species (and 1 CR). The site to show the next highest number of territories was San Pasqual (Site 36) with 47 territories (including two CR and 7 unidentified stick nests that were not duplications of known territories). Border Fields State Park (Site 44) showed the next highest number of territories with 40 territories (including 12 non-duplicative unidentified stick nests).

Site 44 (Border Fields) contained the highest number of *target* species nests/territories of all sites surveyed (19). Penasquitos Canyon (Site 33) supported 9 target species territories while North Island (Site 19) supported 6 and Brown Field Complex (Site 22) and Iron Mountain (Site 11) tied, with both supporting 5 nests of the target raptor species.

## **Wintering Raptors**

A total of 20 raptor species were documented on our study sites during the winter months (January, February, and December) of 2001-2003 (Table 3). Of course, at San Diego's latitude, a number of the resident breeders are actively nesting while many of the wintering birds are still on site. All target raptors, but the SH, were documented during the winter observation period (December-February). Numbers ranged from 0 to 22 individual target raptors per site for a total of 154 individuals for all study sites. Comparable numbers for all raptors (plus the Common Raven) were 0 to 145 as a range. A total of 1,153 wintering individuals were documented (or 819, without the ravens).

The CR was, clearly, the most common wintering bird of those surveyed for. The three most commonly documented wintering raptors were the RT, AK, and RS, with totals of 291, 98, and 95, respectively. Of those sites surveyed in this study, the following held the highest number of wintering individuals (raptors and ravens): Site 25 (Proctor Valley) – 145, Site 36 (San Pasqual) – 121, Site 30 (Ramona Grasslands) – 91 (which included 9-16 FHs; with 20 documented in 2005), Site 33 (Penasquitos Canyon) – 76, and Site 7 (Lake Hodges) – 71.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Weather as a Factor**

In reviewing any body of data, it is important to consider how typical the sampling period was. So just how “typical” were 2001 through 2003? Drought plays a significant factor in the density and reproductive success of raptors and other predators. During the El Nino of 1998/99, NHs were breeding in areas where they have not bred since and in lower numbers in other locations. The demonstrable impacts of drought on GEs and Prairie Falcons, throughout southern California, were presented by Bittner et al. (2003). This study was conducted during the worst drought for San Diego in 160 years. This should be noted for future researchers.

### **Management and Enforcement Issues**

Table 4 is a summary of management and enforcement issues by site. Clearly, some study sites are substantially impacted, either directly or indirectly, by human activities. Some sites are currently without major impacts. Unfortunately, many of the more diverse and potentially productive sites are the same ones that are experiencing multiple management and enforcement challenges. Of those that are obviously impacted, the following activities are the most common: humans walking or hiking (36 out of 45 sites or 80%) and pets, primarily dogs being allowed to run free, (26 out of 45 sites or 57 %).



Table 4. Management Enforcement Issues Identified by Raptor Study Site

Site No.	Name	Humans Walking/Hiking	Rock Climbing	Off-road Vehicle Use	Pets	Disking, etc. Agricultural Activities	Rodent/Ground Squirrel Poisoning	Construction/Development	Newly-developed Access Road(s)	Other
1	Crestridge	X								
2	Boden Canyon	X		X	X				X	6
3	Jamul Ranch									6?
4	SDNWR*/Salt Works	X								
5	McGinty Mountain Complex			X	X					
6	San Diego Bay NWR	X			X					
7	Lake Hodges	X	X	X	X			X	X	6
8	Penasquitos Lagoon	X			X					
9	Torrey Pines	X			X					7
10	Sycamore Canyon	X		X	X				X	
11	Iron Mountain	X	X	X	X				X	
12	Otay Mountain	?	X	X						1
13	Marron Valley	X	X	X	X					1
14	Otay Lakes	X			?				X	8
15	SDNWR* Sweetwater Marsh	X		X	X					
16	San Vicente	X	X		X				X	
17	Sycuan Peak									
18	Point Loma	X								
19	North Island	X								2
20	Miramar Reservoir	X						X		
21	Mission Bay	X		X	X			X		
22	Brown Field Complex	X		X	X			X		1,3,4
23	SDNWR*/San Miguel Mountain	X		X	X				X	
24	Mission Trails	X	X		X					
25	Proctor Valley	X		X	X		X	X		
26	San Diego River	X	X		X		X			7
27	Route 67 South	X		X				X	X	
28	San Dieguito Lagoon	X				X		X		
29	Route S-6	X						X		
30	Grasslands/Route 67	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	
31	Sloan Canyon	X			X					
32	Rockwood Canyon	X	X					X		
33	Penasquitos Canyon	X		X	X				X	
34	Hollenbeck Canyon									6
35	Rock Mountain	X	X							5
36	San Pasqual	X		X	X	X	X	X		5
37	SDNWR*Tijuana Slough	X		X	X	X	?			

Table 4. Management Enforcement Issues Identified by Raptor Study Site

38	Route 94 (North and South)									
39	Immenschuh									
40	Los Montanas (North)									
41	Los Montanas (South)									
42	Rancho San Diego (East)	X			X					
43	Rancho San Diego (West)	X			X					
44	Border Fields	X			X					1
45	Sweetwater Reservoir									

\*San Diego National Wildlife Refuge

- (1) Border Patrol and illegal alien activities.
- (2) Conflicts with Navy goals and endangered species recovery program.
- (3) Potential conflict with future Navy goals at Satellite Surveillance Station.
- (4) Heavy predation by Coyotes and Barn owls.
- (5) Future threats from proposed trail construction and associated access to rock climbers, ORVs, etc. activities.
- (6) Shooting (legal and illegal).
- (7) Paragliding.
- (8) Cattle grazing.

## **Management Conflicts**

The following are observed management conflicts, which lead to our recommended management and research (see Recommendations):

- As indicated above, human uses [rock-climbing, hiking, jogging, walking dogs (often without leashes), vehicular use, etc.] impact the normal behavior of raptors (and other wildlife).
- In many cases, the size of protected parcels is substantially smaller than that required by a raptor's functional territory, including foraging areas.
- The public/political pressure to create new trails into MSCP preserve lands provides a path for, and encourages, increased disturbance to raptors (and other wildlife).
- The public/political perception that MSCP preserve lands have been created primarily for active, and in some cases, consumptive, recreation, sets up an obvious conflict for managing raptors (and other wildlife).
- The constraint of using fire as a management tool in proximity to human habitation limits habitat management tools.
- Inadequate funding to both acquire important lands and properly manage MSCP lands which are acquired.

## **Raptor Monitoring**

The following is a reiteration of considerations, regarding the MSCP Long-term Raptor Monitoring Program, that were presented previously (WRI 2004) and discussed elsewhere (Lincer and Bittner 2002; Lincer et al. 2003). For further reading, relevant issues are proposed and discussed by Oakley, Thomas, and Fancy (2003).

### **Sample Design**

The ideal sample design should be:

1. Representative of the study area and the issues at hand. (e.g., habitat loss, disturbance, etc.) ;
2. Representative of the habitats of interest and the seasons during which those habitat support the monitored species (e.g., the MSCP not only provides important breeding habitat for numerous raptor but it is also a significant habitat for several wintering raptors, including some that are considered target raptors, like the PF, BE, FH, and BO);
3. Inclusive of all focus species or represent them in some functional way;
4. Sensitive to the objectives of the MSCP monitoring requirements;
5. Sensitive to logistics;
6. Statistically appropriate (which may be compromised by above logistics);
7. Able to predict, and take into consideration, *detectability* (i.e., how counts relate to the actual number of raptors in the sampled area; one approach is to use a "double count" approach). This objective may also be compromised by above logistics.

## Questions to be Answered and Objectives to be Met

How will the data be used by the various management entities? When do they need what? An example of a clear monitoring objective would be, "Be able to detect a 25% change in population (individual species or overall raptor group?), in each chosen habitat, in 10 years." This is the approach that is being attempted by NARMS (North American Monitoring Strategy) but some of the best raptor monitoring minds are having a serious challenge addressing these objectives. It is entirely possible that we won't have enough observations for some species to detect a significant change in a timely manner.

## Possible Monitoring Approaches

*Levels of effort* and *agency commitment* are, integrally tied. For instance, the MSCP program could adopt a:

1. Highly rigorous, scientific approach that would be costly but could withstand the most challenging statistical/legal tests, or
2. More practical, less expensive approach that would be more likely to be funded, and therefore carried out, but would stand the chance of being successfully, challenged at some time in the future.

As to *which, and how many, species* should be involved, the program could use a:

1. Multiple species approach, using selective target species only,
2. Multiple species approach, using selective target species, but recording all raptors (and ravens) observed,
3. Single species approach, using a keystone species, like the Golden Eagle or
4. Combination of the above.

## Target Species and Other Multiple Species Approaches

A monitoring approach that focuses on one or more so-called "target" species has the appeal of apparent simplicity and the implication that these target species will, somehow, reflect a broader suite of species and be sensitive to whatever perturbations are experienced. Having surveyed raptors for many years, it is apparent that each species often responds to similar impacts differently. Although GOs and RTs might show similar population changes in response to small mammal population changes, and most raptors will show some response to a record-breaking drought, such as we have just experienced, there are likely more differences than similarities between species. Those differences are not only in *degree* but also in *direction*. For instance, GEs and PRs responded to the recent drought to different degrees (Bittner et al. 2003), with the PR being less impacted by presumed small mammal population decreases because it takes a wider range of prey species than the GE, which is heavily dependent on jackrabbit and ground squirrel populations. In addition, some raptors (e.g., GE) are far more negatively responsive to human activity than others (e.g., AKs, RTs, RSs, and some CHs). There are also differences in response, both within and between species, depending on the time of year (e.g., during the

breeding season vs. the wintering season) and where a disturbance occurs (e.g., on the hunting grounds or within the nest territory).

Regarding raptors responding in a different direction, one only needs to recognize that many different raptors require different habitats and, although not many species will persist if usable habitat is replaced with a development (although some CHs and RSs may defy this simplification), a conversion from one habitat/land use to another will often affect different species in different ways. For instance, if an extensive riparian habitat were to be replaced by an agricultural land use, and some hedge rows were to be left/created, we could expect that there would be a decrease in RSs, CHs, and several owl species. But, at the same time, there would likely be an increase in AKs, RTs, and perhaps WKs.

The point to the above exercise is that, if an arbitrary few species are chosen as “target” species, and the other raptors are not monitored, there will be a good chance that only some kinds of impacts will be reflected in the population trends of those raptors monitored. In our opinion, the MSCP Long-term Monitoring Program should include a broad-based approach, which documents all raptors observed and uses observed changes/trends to identify appropriate adaptive management strategies.

### **Single Species Monitoring Approach**

Having sung the praises of a multiple raptor species approach (above), there is at least one raptor species in the western United States that has the ability to reflect regional trends in environmental health. This is the Golden Eagle. The attraction of using the GE, as a regional “miner’s canary,” is that (1) it requires a reasonably large and intact territory, and (2) there exists, in San Diego County, a unique and relevant historical regional database for this species. The Wildlife Research Institute has a long history of investigating the historical presence of GE in southern California, which includes the MSCP and environs (Bittner and Oakley 1999; WRI 2005). This collection of records has been compiled to reflect past documentation of GE pairs, their nesting success, hunting territories, and numbers of egg and /or young. The WRI database includes both active and extirpated territories beginning with records as early as 1864. WRI became involved in 1987 with the start of the San Diego GE Project (see Discussion in WRI 2005). *This project, in total, represents the longest such study of any eagle population in the Western Hemisphere, and is the second to longest in the world, next to one study in Switzerland.*

Providing this historical information, in conjunction with current trend data, is critical to managing the GE into the future. Only if we understand the extant population (within the context of the historical variation) can we properly evaluate the population and meet the needs of the species under current and future changing environmental and land-use conditions. If this is accomplished, it will reflect the success of the MSCP program.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Long-term MSCP Raptor Monitoring**

Long-term monitoring is recommended under three categories: (1) Breeding Season, (2) Winter Season, and (3) Single Species Monitoring Program.

## **Breeding Season Monitoring Program**

Twelve areas are recommended for breeding season portion of a Long-term Raptor Monitoring Program (Figure 2 and Table 5). Each Raptor Monitoring Area (RMA) consists of one to four of the individual raptor study sites that were surveyed during the period 2001-2003, the analysis of which led up to these recommendations. The choices of RMAs were based on a number of biological parameters (e.g., raptor diversity and population parameters, known history of raptor use), logistical considerations (how a monitor would move efficiently through a monitoring area), and a reasonable geographic coverage of the MSCP study area (see Methods). The Breeding Season Monitoring Program should, initially, be conducted every two years and encompass all 12 RMAs each time (i.e., don't conduct different portions of the total every other year). After a maximum of 5 monitoring events (i.e., 10 years), a statistical trend analysis should be conducted to determine if the frequency of every two years is adequate or, perhaps, unnecessarily frequent. Depending on the data, it may make sense to conduct this analysis earlier.

Raptor monitoring for the Breeding Season Monitoring Program should follow the protocol provided in Appendix C. This monitoring should be conducted by qualified raptor biologists with several years of relevant regional experience with the raptors found in the MSCP and proper training in the specific techniques necessary to conduct this monitoring.

Thanks to a grant from the San Diego Foundation, for post- (2003) fire studies, WRI was able to test this monitoring program on seven RMAs, representing varying degrees of being burned:

- B. Ramona Grasslands (Control Area)
- D. Iron Mountain (Burned)
- E. San Diego River (Burned)
- F. Sloan Canyon (Burned)
- H. Proctor Valley (Partially Burned)
- I. Rancho Jamul (Partially Burned)
- L. Otay Mountain (Burned)

The results of this monitoring effort were reported to the San Diego Natural History Museum (Lincer 2005).

## **Winter Season Monitoring Program**

Because (1) the MSCP provides important wintering grounds for many raptors (some of which are *only* here during the winter), (2) coastal portions of the MSCP are not captured by the above breeding season monitoring approach, and (3) it is important to track at least three raptor species, that are primarily coastal in the MSCP, which have proven to be ideal bioindicators (PF, NH, and Osprey), we recommend conducting a winter monitoring program that focuses on the coastal portions of the MSCP (Figure 3). This, like the Breeding Season Monitoring program, should be conducted every two years (alternating years with the breeding season monitoring would be acceptable). After a maximum of 5 monitoring events (i.e., 10 years), a statistical trend analysis

should be conducted to determine if the frequency of every two years is adequate or, perhaps, unnecessarily frequent. Depending on the data, it may make sense to conduct this analysis earlier.

**TABLE 5. Proposed MSCP Areas for Long-term Raptor Monitoring (Breeding Season)**

<u>Area</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Study Sites* (original number(s))</u>
A	San Pasqual	San Pasqual (36), Lk. Hodges (7), Boden Cyn. (2), Rockwood (32)
B	Ramona Grasslands	Ramona Grasslands (30)
C	Penasquitos Canyon	Penasquitos Canyon (33)
D	Iron Mountain Complex	Iron Mountain**(11), San Vicente (16), Route 67 (27)
E	San Diego River	San Diego River (26)
F	Sloan Canyon	Sloan Canyon (31), McGinty Mtn. North (5), Sycuan Mtn. North (17)
G	Sweetwater River	Sweetwater Reservoir (45), Rcho. S.D. East (42), Rcho. S.D. West (43), San Miguel Mtn. North (23)
H	Proctor Valley	Proctor Valley (25), San Miguel Mtn. South (23), Upper Otay Lk.(14)
I	Rancho Jamul	Jamul Ranch (3), Hollenbeck Canyon (34)
J	Border Fields	Border Fields (44), Tijuana River (part)
K	Brown Field Complex	Brown Field (22), Otay River, Spring Cyn. (part), Dennery Cyn. (part)
L	Otay Mountain	Otay Mountain (12), Marron Valley (13), Lower Otay Lake (14)

\* In some cases, only a portion of a study site is included because of access, visibility, or some other reason (see detailed maps, Appendix C, for details).

\*\* Including Monte Vista Ranch.

Raptor monitoring for the Winter Season Monitoring Program should follow the protocol provided in Appendix C. This monitoring should be conducted from a vehicle, following the route depicted by Figure 3, and be conducted by qualified raptor biologists with several years of relevant regional experience with the raptors found in the MSCP.

### Single Species Program

For the reasons covered in the Discussion section, we recommend that the GE (breeding season only) be used for the Single Species Program. Because of the dynamic nature of the GE pairs and the use of their territory, including their primary foraging area, these surveys should be conducted *every year* as they have been by WRI's biologists for the last 16 years. GE monitoring should follow the protocol that has been used for the San Diego GE Study for the last 16 years (Bittner and Oakley 1999, WRI 2005). WRI (2005) provides the details of both the breeding history of the GEs in the MSCP and recommendations on monitoring and future research. WRI (2005) is provided as a separate report for the protection and proper management of the GE. As an overview, observations must begin in December and go through June of each year. GEs begin courtship and nest building in December and January. They lay eggs in February and early March, hatch young in late March and April and fledge young in May and June. Therefore, it is essential that monitoring biologists be in the field for critical portions of the entire season (six months) to obtain all the data needed to monitor the GE population properly.

Aerial surveys have been a crucial part of the current study providing new insight into once-difficult areas to investigate potential territories. Patagial tags (and soon radio transmitters) placed on the GE's wings are now also an integral part of the eagle tracking process. Territory

Fig. 2. Prop'd RMAs (breeding)

Contact WRI for maps



integrity is fairly well documented in the San Diego MSCP and is being refined. See MSCP (2005) for more details.

### **Consistency in Monitoring**

If data to be collected for this, or *any* monitoring program, are to have any utility in showing trends, they must be collected in a consistent fashion. As discussed above, the areas and routes to be monitored should be monitored frequently enough to reveal a complete picture of what is breeding and wintering on those respective areas and routes but these data are only a *sampling* of the entire MSCP. Therefore, it is extremely important that monitoring protocol is consistent both between sites/areas and over time (i.e., between years). To do this, a significant effort will have to go into selecting qualified raptor biologists, making sure that they are familiar with the required protocol, geography and species, and ensuring consistency between sites and years.

### **Other Recommendations**

#### **Management Needs and Enhancement Opportunities**

- Restriction of inappropriate human activities where they are in conflict with, especially nesting, raptors.
- Apply the lessons learned in the development of the MSCP to the North and East County MSCPs and other HCPs.
- Develop a comprehensive management plan for the dwindling Burrowing Owl population within the MSCP.
- Selectively install artificial burrows, for BOs, and nest boxes for AKs, BRs, and Screech Owls (SOs). Keep in mind that BRs are an effective predator on not only small mammals but also medium size raptors, like the BO.
- Consider the use of grazing and/or fire as appropriate management tools to maintain grasslands, maintain/improve biological diversity, and manage fire fuel loading.

#### **Recommended Research**

- Transmitter study to better define the use of MSCP lands by GEs (initial studies in progress).
- Investigate the feasibility of reintroducing SHs into historical sites within the MSCP.
- Investigate the most efficient approaches to captive rearing and hacking BOs into appropriate habitat (either as is or as it can be modified and managed) within the MSCP.
- In order to prioritize the management of raptors that winter within the MSCP, but breed elsewhere (e.g., FH, MR, OS, BE, and some of the WK), determine the natal areas for these birds. If the natal areas have substantial threats, then no amount of MSCP management will have substantial positive impact.
- Document the growing OS population and determine emigration and immigration.
- Document the presence of, and habitat use by, crepuscular (BO) and nocturnal raptors (e.g., BR, SO, GO, Long-eared Owl).
- Document the recovery of raptors after the November 2003 fires and apply findings to future management strategies.

Fig. 3. Prop'd Winter Monit. Areas.

Contact WRI for Maps

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# APPENDIX A

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# APPENDIX B

## BREEDING SEASON RAPTOR NESTS AND TERRITORIES BY SITE (2001-2003)

The following pages reflect raptor breeding territories which were typical of the below study sites for the period 2001-2003. To facilitate the reader's access to the following topographic maps, they are listed below alphabetically and by site number.

<u>Number</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Number</u>
1	Crestridge	Boden Canyon	2
2	Boden Canyon	Border Fields	44
3	Jamul Ranch	Brown Field Complex	22
4	SDNWR*/Salt Works/Egger Ghio	Crestridge	1
5	McGinty Mountain Complex	Grasslands/Route 67	30
6	San Diego Bay NWR (winter only)	Hollenbeck Canyon	34
7	Lake Hodges	Immenschuh	39
8	Penasquitos Lagoon	Iron Mountain	11
9	Torrey Pines	Jamul Ranch	3
10	Sycamore Canyon	Lake Hodges	7
11	Iron Mountain	Los Montanas (North)	40
12	Otay Mountain	Los Montanas (South)	41
13	Marron Valley	Marron Valley	13
14	Otay Lakes	McGinty Mountain Complex	5
15	SDNWR* Sweetwater Marsh	Miramar Reservoir	20
16	San Vicente	Mission Bay	21
17	Sycuan Peak	Mission Trails	24
18	Point Loma	North Island	19
19	North Island	Otay Lakes	14
20	Miramar Reservoir	Otay Mountain	12
21	Mission Bay	Penasquitos Canyon	33
22	Brown Field Complex	Penasquitos Lagoon	8
23	SDNWR*/San Miguel Mountain	Point Loma	18
24	Mission Trails	Proctor Valley	25
25	Proctor Valley	Rancho San Diego (East)	42
26	San Diego River	Rancho San Diego (West)	43
27	Route 67 South	Rock Mountain	35
28	San Dieguito Lagoon	Rockwood Canyon	32
29	Route S-6 (deleted/safety issue)	Route 67 South	27
30	Grasslands/Route 67	Route 94 (North and South)	38
31	Sloan Canyon	Route S-6 (deleted/safety issue)	29
32	Rockwood Canyon	San Diego Bay NWR (winter only)	6
33	Penasquitos Canyon	San Diego River	26
34	Hollenbeck Canyon	San Dieguito Lagoon	28
35	Rock Mountain	San Pasqual	36
36	San Pasqual	San Vicente	16
37	SDNWR*Tijuana Slough	SDNWR* Sweetwater Marsh	15
38	Route 94 (North and South)	SDNWR*/Salt Works/Egger Ghio	4
39	Immenschuh	SDNWR*/San Miguel Mountain	23
40	Los Montanas (North)	SDNWR*Tijuana Slough	37
41	Los Montanas (South)	Sloan Canyon	31
42	Rancho San Diego (East)	Sweetwater Reservoir	45
43	Rancho San Diego (West)	Sycamore Canyon	10
44	Border Fields	Sycuan Peak	17
45	Sweetwater Reservoir	Torrey Pines	9

\*San Diego National Wildlife Refuge

# LEGEND

## Symbols

Center of raptor/corvid territory or assumed or documented nest site.

**Note:** Above symbol without an acronym following it indicates that a stick nest was documented but species was not determinable. If species was known for the nest or territory, the above symbol is followed by the appropriate acronym (see below).

## Acronyms for Raptor and Corvid Species

AC	American crow
AK	American kestrel
<b>BE*</b>	<b>BALD EAGLE</b>
BH	Black hawk
BR	Barn owl
<b>BO*</b>	<b>BURROWING OWL</b>
<b>CH*</b>	<b>COOPER'S HAWK</b>
CR	Common raven
<b>FH*</b>	<b>FERRUGINOUS HAWK</b>
<b>GE*</b>	<b>GOLDEN EAGLE</b>
GO	Great-horned owl
HH	Harris' hawk
LO	Long-eared owl
MR	Merlin
<b>NH*</b>	<b>NORTHERN HARRIER</b>
OS	Osprey
<b>PF*</b>	<b>PEREGRINE FALCON</b>
PR	Prairie falcon
RS	Red-shouldered hawk
RT	Red-tailed hawk
SE	Short-eared owl
SO	Screech owl
SS	Sharp-shinned hawk
<b>SH*</b>	<b>SWAINSON'S HAWK</b>
TV	Turkey vulture
UA	Unidentifiable accipiter
UB	Unidentifiable buteo
UF	Unidentifiable falcon
UR	Unidentifiable raptor
WK	White-tailed kite
WH	White-tailed hawk
ZH	Zone-tailed hawk

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\* MSCP target species.

# APPENDIX C

## LONG -TERM RAPTOR MONITORING PROTOCOL

## **BACKGROUND**

The Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) is a comprehensive, long-term habitat conservation plan that addresses the needs of multiple species and the preservation of natural vegetation in San Diego County (County of San Diego 1997). The size and configuration of the preserve network is continually evolving but it may ultimately encompass approximately 172,000 acres. In order to determine if the MSCP or any management area, for that matter, is functioning correctly, a meaningful monitoring plan must be in place. A vast area, such as the MSCP, cannot be comprehensively monitored for any but a few species with very limited and specific habitat requirements. Raptor species will, therefore, be monitored using a reproducible sampling approach. Details of this approach are described below after reminding the reader of the ultimate monitoring objectives.

## **OBJECTIVES**

The overall goal of the MSCP monitoring is to detect changes in habitat quality and population trends in those habitats and species covered by the MSCP (Ogden 1996). Specific objectives, as they relate to raptors, are as follows:

1. Document the protection of target species as specified in subarea plans and implementing agreements.
2. Document changes in preserved populations of covered species.
3. Describe new biological data collected.
4. Evaluate impacts of land uses and construction activities in and adjacent to the preserve.
5. Evaluate management activities and identify enforcement difficulties.

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance for consistency in the approach to surveying for raptors *during the breeding season and during the wintering period*. The below protocol is generic in nature but site-specific details, as to route, viewshed locations, and other important site features, are provided for each Raptor Monitoring Area (RMA) in Appendix C-1.

## **APPROACH**

The following provides methodological details for the professional, with adequate raptor expertise, to conduct the breeding season and wintering period raptor monitoring in a consistent manner. The ability to detect trends (e.g., in raptor numbers, distribution, diversity, etc.) will be extremely important in order that adaptive management decisions be made in a timely manner. If trend analyses are to be interpretable, it is essential that the same locations within the preserve be monitored in a consistent manner. This would best be accomplished if the same individual or team monitored all locations, for all surveys.

## **ACRONYMS AND DEFINITIONS**

Acronyms and definitions are attached (Appendix C-2). Use them consistently in order that there be continuity and clarity in all observations and record keeping.

## **SPECIES**

Although all raptor species will be noted, there are eight MSCP, so-called “target,” raptor species: Bald Eagle (BE), Burrowing Owl (BO), Cooper’s Hawk (CH), Ferruginous Hawk (FH), Golden Eagle (GE), Northern Harrier (NH), American Peregrine Falcon (PF), and the Swainson’s Hawk (SH). Although you will not, necessarily, be searching for the BO at the most desirable time of day (early morning/early evening), any observations of BO or any other raptor species should be documented. Raptors will be the focus of the surveys but any observed sensitive species (regardless of taxa), interesting road kill, unusual biological observation, breeding colony, bird roost site, or other unique resource should also be noted on the WRI “Field Datasheet” (Appendix C-3).

## **TIMING AND FREQUENCY OF SURVEYS**

Although it is common for ornithologists to identify a specific time of year as the “breeding season,” it is not possible to specify a timeframe, for our local raptors, that does not overlap with what is considered the wintering period. Because of the latitude of the MSCP, raptors are not restricted to a brief portion of the spring within which to breed. Many of our local raptors start breeding while other wintering and migrating raptors are still in the MSCP study area and environs. Therefore, the time of year that we call the “breeding season” could span December through August but varies considerably by species. Some GEs, for instance, can start nest building as early as December and still have nestlings in that nest as late as June. BOs, on the other hand, can start laying eggs in early April but fledge some young as late as August.

## **EQUIPMENT/SUPPLIES**

Field vehicles should have 4WD capability if terrain requires. Binoculars, a camera, and a spotting scope of sufficient power for raptor observations are required. A magnification of 10X for binoculars and a range of approximately 20-60X for scopes are recommended. A cell phone may be very helpful in some locations, as could a set of “walkie-talkies” if more than one investigator will be in the field at the same time. Bring these survey guidelines, a copy of any authorization letters from resource agencies, any windshield placards (that indicates that you are under contract to conduct these surveys), local and project-generated site maps, and an adequate supply of “Transect Data Sheets” (Appendix C-3). To this, add your standard field equipment and supplies (field guides, hat, water, snacks, etc.). Although observers should be thoroughly familiar with all the local raptors, field guides that should be helpful include the Peterson guide, *Hawks* (Clark and Wheeler 1987) and the accompanying photographic guide (Wheeler and Clark 1999).

## **WEATHER**

Monitoring should be conducted only during certain desirable weather conditions to maximize chances of documenting raptors. Inclement weather (rain, fog, winds greater than 20 mph, etc.) should be avoided. Occasional drizzle and winds up to 20 mph will not normally affect most raptor behavior. Observation in cold or wet weather should be done very carefully or completely discouraged. If an incubating bird is accidentally flushed during surveys, total nest failure could result for that season.

## TIME OF DAY

The time of day, during which observations are made, is more important during the breeding season surveys than for the winter surveys (for most raptor species). Monitoring should take place from dawn through 1200, although professional experience may allow for some flexibility. Although BOs are not, necessarily, most active during this timeframe, you may note them and they should be documented as indicated below, as you would any raptor species. Since this is a crepuscular species, however, schedule sites that may support BOs for the early morning and/or early evening, whenever possible, to maximize chances of seeing this crepuscular species.

## TWO TYPES OF OBSERVATIONS

Observations will be made two ways: (1) in vehicles, along established routes, and (2) at designated viewshed (i.e., observation) points. In addition, all reliable reports provided by interested individuals and cooperators will be verified and included in the data set but noted as “personal communications” with the appropriate documentation.

### Vehicular Transects

Many of the breeding season raptor observations, and all those for the winter period, will be conducted from a vehicle. Therefore, vehicle speed will be an important variable. Speed will vary between road transects, depending on the road conditions, including traffic, and weather. That speed, however, should be consistent (year-to-year) for a particular transect in order that meaningful data comparisons can be made over time. Speed on a busy highway will have to be adequate to safely keep up with traffic. Some highway transects, that were deemed too dangerous, were removed from consideration. On a backcountry road, however, 10 mph may be the right speed. Safety should be the highest priority, and for that reason, an assistant to the driver is recommended to make observations and take notes, especially on busy roads.

### Point/View shed Observations

Observation points have been established along some vehicle routes and at other desirable view shed locations for breeding season monitoring (see Appendix C-1). These will be especially important for riparian areas and inaccessible mountainous, and other, areas, where limited vehicle access prevents a reasonable survey of a RMA. At observation points along vehicle routes, a minimum of 10 minutes of actual observation is required. This means allowing whatever time is necessary to stop the vehicle in a safe, repeatable location, get out of the vehicle, and set up equipment (spotting scope, etc.) before starting the formal ten-minute observation (i.e., watching *and* listening). In situations where the observer is driving *through* the relevant habitat, a 5-minute observation period may be adequate. At some viewshed locations (like the top of a mountain), the observation time will be longer (perhaps 30 minutes). The most important issue here is that, once a viewing time period has been established for a particular RMA, it is maintained for consistency each year.

## WHAT TO NOTE

All relevant data must be documented (see Transect Data Sheet, Appendix C-3). Sightings for *all* raptors will be documented. Note specific location of the raptor species *the first time it is observed* on each day of observation. Note age, sex, and any unusual plumage (if relevant) and

describe location(s) of any band(s) (metal right or metal left and sequence and numbers of any color bands), transmitter, or patagial wing markers. Avoid duplicate counts by noting unique characteristics of an individual and, when a bird is moving, its direction and relative speed. Record courtship and nesting behavior. If a nest is observed during the “winter” surveys, note its location on the topo map, what species of tree its in, height, size of nest, composition, and whether you consider it active. Indicate the basis for assumed activity (for instance, presence of an adult or pair near the nest, young, recent whitewash or greenery in /around nest).

## **CONTROL NUMBERING**

Each control number for a study site and day of observation will be alphanumeric. For each species observed, the control number will start with the acronym for that species (see Appendix C-2) and be followed by “01.” The following control numbers, for that species, will end with 02, 03, etc., in the sequence in which the observations take place. This number is entered on the field data sheet (with all of its associated observations) and on the topo survey map, on which is always placed the survey date and the name(s) of the biologist(s). For instance, if the first observation of the day, at Mission Trails Regional Park, is a RT (Red-tailed Hawk), the control number will be “RT01.” The second RT will receive the control number “RT02.” If the next observation were a Cooper’s Hawk, it would be “CH01.” It will simplify records if each Transect Data Sheet and topo map is only used for one day’s observation at each site. However, there may be situations (such as when it takes more than one day to adequately survey a site or when it may lead to duplication or confusion later) when it makes sense to enter more than one day’s information on the same data sheet/map. It may also be beneficial to have all the breeding data on one map which keeps the picture in front of the observer at all times. This allows the observer to see gaps for certain species and explore areas not previously covered. The most important objective is to make sure the record is clear as to the date of each observation/set of observations and the name of the investigator so that clarification can be sought, if necessary.

Raptor, and other, nests are often less visible later in the breeding season, when deciduous trees have regained their foliage. However, note any stick nests in the area as “SN” followed by the appropriate observation number. Indicate on the data sheet if you know or suspect what species it belongs to and why. When summarizing yearly data, it will be important to determine which nests are alternate nests of the same pair and which represent additional pairs/territories. Do not get close enough to potentially disturb any nests, without approval from the Project Manager (PM) and Management Unit administrator.

Keep careful track of miles driven and times spent during vehicle transects and point location observations. Deduct any miles/time not spent on monitoring. These details are very important in order to allow data to be normalized over both time and distance to properly analyze for trends. There may be situations when you will not be able to track mileage or the miles you track are complicated by circling back through a study area to recheck a nest to confirm nesting, etc. Just keep good records that can be interpreted by someone else.

## **ENFORCEMENT/MANAGEMENT ISSUES**

Note any enforcement or management problems or opportunities. Suggest corrective action or adaptive management, as appropriate, to the PM. Report any significant enforcement problems to the PM as soon as possible, but no later than within 24 hours of the observation.



## **RECORDS MANAGEMENT**

Management of records is extremely important. Two-hole punched field forms and computer-generated project topo maps must be kept in Study Site folders (in a hard plastic or other secure file box provided) unless being copied. Field forms and topo maps must be attached to the inside of the Study Site folders using the two-hole clips at the end of each field day. Unless other provisions are made, field record copying should be done no less frequently than once a week, during the active field season, with copies placed in the appropriate administration project file for security.

## **THE SURVEYS**

### **Breeding Season**

In some management units, where a fulltime knowledgeable biologist is on staff, daily observations may be made, thereby providing greater potential for trend detection. However, the objective of these guidelines is to conduct up to 6 surveys at each of 12 RMAs (Figure C-1) for the breeding season raptor monitoring, where the assemblage of species dictates the actual number of replicates. Many stick nests will be located during the winter when the deciduous trees have lost their leaves. The next best opportunity to survey will often be early in the breeding season (December through April) when the adult raptors are establishing their territories and courting. Note that each species has a chronology for these behaviors. Some (like the GE, RT, and RS) will start breeding-related behaviors in December or January, while others (like the CH) may not display until April. At this time, they are obvious and concentrating their activities around the likely, and alternative, nest sites. In order to adequately characterize the raptor species present throughout the breeding season, the initial surveys at each site should be separated by 10-14 days, if possible. Subsequent surveys should be scheduled based on the raptor species present and where they are in their reproductive cycle. There will be a period, during which one of the adults will be incubating eggs or sheltering young, while the other adult is off hunting. During this time, it will be difficult to document many raptors and fieldwork may not be the best use of your time for that RMA. The next logical time to concentrate on conducting breeding season surveys will be when the young have fledged but are still dependent on the adults for food. At this time, there is a lot of activity and an increased chance of spotting a family unit because of the increased number of individuals per territory and, in some cases, the young will call attention to themselves by begging and/or calling to the parents.

The following times are recommended for the (breeding season) Raptor Monitoring Program:

- Late-December
- Mid-January
- Mid-February
- March
- Mid-April
- Mid-May

There are 12 RMAs that will be surveyed (Table C-1).

**TABLE C-1. MSCP Raptor Monitoring Areas (Breeding Season)**

<u>Area</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Study Sites* (original number(s))</u>
A	San Pasqual	San Pasqual (36), Lk. Hodges (7), Boden Cyn. (2), Rockwood (32)
B	Ramona Grasslands	Ramona Grasslands (30)
C	Penasquitos Canyon	Penasquitos Canyon (33)
D	Iron Mountain Complex	Iron Mountain** (11), San Vicente ((16), Route 67 (27)
E	San Diego River	San Diego River (26)
F	Sloan Canyon	Sloan Canyon (31), McGinty Mtn. North (5), Sycuan Mtn. North (17)
G	Sweetwater River	Sweetwater Reservoir (45), Rcho. S.D. East (42), Rcho. S.D. West (43), San Miguel Mtn. North (23)
H	Proctor Valley	Proctor Valley (25), San Miguel Mtn. South (23), Upper Otay Lk.(14)
I	Rancho Jamul	Jamul Ranch (3), Hollenbeck Canyon (34)
J	Border Fields	Border Fields (44), Tijuana River (part)
K	Brown Field Complex	Brown Field (22), Otay River, Spring Cyn. (part), Dennery Cyn. (part)
L	Otay Mountain	Otay Mountain (12), Marron Valley (13), Lower Otay Lake (14)

\* In some cases, only a portion of a study site is included because of access, visibility, or some other reason (see detailed maps, Appendix C-1, for details).

\*\* Including Monte Vista Ranch.

Each study site is followed by a number, which corresponds to the original study site number that was assigned to it (WRI 2002, 2004).

### Winter Surveys

In keeping with the timing of many “winter” surveys (e.g., County Bird Atlas), the MSCP winter raptor surveys will occur primarily from *mid-December through February*, with possible changes in response to changes in weather conditions (i.e., global warming, cycles, etc.). This “winter” time period is somewhat arbitrary and we are not suggesting that raptors observed during this period are, necessarily, only birds that have migrated in and are wintering within the MSCP and environs. Similarly, the winter visit by some species may extend before and/or after this timeframe. The FH, for instance, can arrive on its MSCP wintering grounds by mid-September and not leave until mid-March. Many of the birds that you observe will be the same ones that you document during the “breeding season” surveys. The objective is to conduct three (3) vehicle-based surveys, along the coastal route depicted by Figure C-2. In order to adequately characterize the raptor species present throughout the winter season, the three surveys should be conducted according to the following schedule:

- Late December
- Mid-to-late January
- Mid-to-late February

Raptor, and other, nests are often more visible in the winter, when deciduous trees have lost their foliage. Knowledge about nest and breeding pair locations will help the monitor separate wintering birds from resident pairs. When summarizing yearly data, it will also be important to determine which nests are alternate nests of the same pair and which represent additional pairs/territories. Note any raptor nests in the area and/or if any nesting behavior is observed. Do not approach any nests, without approval from the PM and Management Unit administrator.

## **LITERATURE CITED**

- Clark, W.S. and B.K. Wheeler. 1987. Peterson Field Guides—Hawks. Houghton Mifflin Company. Boston.
- County of San Diego. 1997. “Multiple Species Conservation Program”, County of San Diego; Subarea Plan. Adopted by the Board of Supervisors October 22, 1997.
- Ogden. 1996. “Biological Monitoring for the Multiple Species Conservation Program.” Prepared for the City of San Diego, California Department of Fish and Game, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Revised April 25.
- Wheeler, B.K and W.S. Clark 1999. A Photographic Guide to North American Raptors. Academic Press. San Diego.

## APPENDIX C-2 ACRONYMS AND DEFINITIONS

### Raptor and Corvid Species

AC	American crow
AK	American kestrel
<b>BE*</b>	<b>BALD EAGLE</b>
BH	Black hawk
BR	Barn owl
<b>BO*</b>	<b>BURROWING OWL</b>
<b>CH*</b>	<b>COOPER'S HAWK</b>
CR	Common raven
<b>FH*</b>	<b>FERRUGINOUS HAWK</b>
<b>GE*</b>	<b>GOLDEN EAGLE</b>
GO	Great-horned owl
HH	Harris' hawk
LO	Long-eared owl
MR	Merlin
<b>NH*</b>	<b>NORTHERN HARRIER</b>
OS	Osprey
<b>PF*</b>	<b>PEREGRINE FALCON</b>
PR	Prairie falcon
RS	Red-shouldered hawk
RT	Red-tailed hawk
SE	Short-eared owl
SO	Screech owl
SS	Sharp-shinned hawk
<b>SH*</b>	<b>SWAINSON'S HAWK</b>
TV	Turkey vulture
UA	Unidentifiable accipiter
UB	Unidentifiable buteo
UF	Unidentifiable falcon
UR	Unidentifiable raptor
WK	White-tailed kite
WH	White-tailed hawk
ZH	Zone-tailed hawk

### Other Abbreviations

AB	Active burrow
Ad	Adult
CDFG	California Department of Fish and Game
CN	Cavity nest
F	Female
HY	Hatching year (when a bird is in its first year; i.e., the same calendar year as hatched).
Imm	Immature (a non-specific term that means "not adult").
M	Male
Mel	Melanistic (black/dark)
Ruf	Rufous/reddish
Sa	Sub adult (plumage that precedes adult plumage and appears much like it but with some characters that are not in adult plumage; used only for species, like the Golden Eagle, that can be distinguished at this age).
SN	Stick nest.
U	Unknown (e.g., unknown species, age, or sex).
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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\* MSCP target species.

# APPENDIX C-3

TRANSECT DATA SHEET												
<b>Wildlife Research Institute, Inc.</b>						BIOLOGIST(S):						
		TIME (24hr)		Start		Finish		(minus time out) = TOTAL TIME:				
		TEMP (F):						OTHER WEATHER INFO.:				
DATE: _____		PAGE ___ OF ___		CLOUD CVR (%):				TRANSECT MILEAGE BEGIN:				
TRANSECT NAME & NUMBER:				WIND (mph):				TRANSECT MILEAGE END:				
				VISIBILITY (mi):				SUBTRACT MILEAGE:				
# _____				PRECIP:				TRANSECT TOTAL MILEAGE:				
WAYPOINTS (Start/End Points of Transects, Road Names.etc.)	SPECIES	TIME DURATION	SEX	AGE	PAIR	PERCHING	HUNTING	FEEDING	COURTSHIP	SOAPING	NESTING	COMMENTS, MILEAGE, TIME, ETC.
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<b>COMMENTS:</b> (USE REVERSE FOR DRAWINGS OR ADDITIONAL NOTES)												