

EDAW Inc.

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November 7, 2006

Mr. Chris Dellith Fish and Wildlife Biologist Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office 2493 Portola Road, Suite B Ventura, California 93003

RE: 45-day Summary Report of Focused Presence/Absence Surveys for the Coastal California Gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*) for the Golden Valley Road Bridge, Santa Clarita, Los Angeles County, California

Dear Mr. Dellith:

In compliance with the Special Terms and Conditions for Endangered and Threatened Wildlife Species Permit TE-820658-3, EDAW, Inc. (EDAW) is submitting this letter report summarizing the results of focused surveys for the federally listed threatened coastal California gnatcatcher (CAGN; *Polioptila californica californica*), on behalf of City of Santa Clarita (City) for the Golden Valley Road bridge project. The proposed project is located in Santa Clarita, approximately 35 miles northeast of Los Angeles (Figure 1). EDAW currently holds an Endangered and Threatened Species Permit issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) under Section 10(a) of the Federal Endangered Species Act. This permit, TE-820658, authorizes EDAW to conduct presence/absence surveys for the coastal California gnatcatcher, among other species. Any potential harassment or take of the CAGN resulting from the responsible application of survey methods following the approved USFWS protocol, such as using taped vocalizations, would be allowable under this permit.

Project Description

The City is proposing to construct the Golden Valley Road bridge, a 1,100-foot long bridge over the Santa Clara River. The proposed typical section of the bridge would include a six-lane roadway with a 14-foot median island and pedestrian and bicycle lanes. The total curb-to-curb width would be approximately 90 feet with a total right-of-way width of approximately 120 feet.

The bridge will connect Soledad Canyon Road and the newly extended Newhall Ranch Road. The northern terminus of the proposed project would therefore be the easternmost extent of Newhall Ranch Road, which is currently under construction to the northwest of the project site. Grading for the majority of Newhall Ranch Road is complete and construction is anticipated to be completed between October 2007 and April 2008. The southern terminus of the proposed project would lie at the northernmost extent of the Golden Valley Road/Soledad Canyon Ranch Interchange, which was recently completed and was opened for public access in late 2005.

The proposed Golden Valley Road Bridge Project would result in impacts to biological resources within a 4.48-acre area of effect (Figure 2). Potential impacts to CAGNs were analyzed as part of a Natural Environmental Study Report within a biological study area, characterized by the limits of the proposed project footprint (area of effect) plus a 500-foot survey buffer on each side of the centerline (Figure 2).

Site Description

The biological study area encompasses a marine terrace on the north side of the Santa Clara River and the river bed where the proposed extension of Newhall Ranch Road will cross the river. The river bed supports a seasonal stream during and immediately after storm events. The study area is surrounded by Riversidian coastal sage

scrub and hollyleaf scrub to the north, waters of the U.S. to the east and west, and ruderal and developed areas to the south. The biological study area is largely nonwetland waters of the U.S. (33%), southern riparian scrub (27%), and ruderal (25%), with smaller areas of Riversidian coastal sage scrub (8%), hollyleaf scrub (4%), big sagebrush scrub (2%), and disturbed habitat (2%) (Figure 3).

Background Information

The CAGN, a subspecies of the California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica*), is a federally listed threatened species and is considered a California state species of special concern. The CAGN is a local and uncommon year-round resident of southern California. This species is declining proportionately with the continued loss of coastal sage scrub habitat in the six southern California counties (San Bernardino, Ventura, Los Angeles, Orange, San Diego, and Riverside) located within the coastal plain.

The primary cause of this species' decline is the cumulative loss of coastal sage scrub vegetation to urban and agricultural development. Little of this species habitat is formally protected or managed. Initial studies suggest that the CAGN may be highly sensitive to the effects of habitat fragmentation and development activity (Atwood 1990; ERCE 1990). The USFWS has estimated that coastal sage scrub habitat has been reduced by 70 to 90 percent of its historical extent (USFWS 1991) and little of what remains is protected in natural open space.

CAGN generally inhabit Diegan coastal sage scrub and Riversidian coastal sage scrub dominated by California sagebrush and flat-topped buckwheat generally below 1,500 feet in elevation along the coastal slope. When nesting, this species typically avoids slopes greater than 25 percent with dense, tall vegetation. CAGN pairs will attempt several nests each year, each placed in a different location inside their breeding territory, but most nest attempts are unsuccessful due to depredation by a variety of species. Clutch size ranges from one to five eggs, with three to four eggs most common. CAGN will remain paired through the nonbreeding season and will generally expand their home range when not breeding.

The closest USFWS-designated critical habitat for the CAGN occurs approximately 0.5 mile to the northeast of the site. The closest known occurrence of the species is approximately 2.2 miles to the northeast of the project area in Plum Canyon (USFWS 2000).

Survey Methodology

Prior to 2006 focused CAGN surveys being conducted, the following surveys were completed by qualified EDAW biologists within the biological study area in 2002-2003 as part of the Cross Valley Connector East Project: vegetation mapping, rare plant, wetland delineation, general wildlife, protocol arroyo toad, and protocol CAGN surveys. Additionally, a general wildlife survey was completed during spring 2006 prior to conducting protocol CAGN surveys. All of these survey results mapped vegetation communities and determined areas of suitable CAGN habitat within and adjacent to the project area. Approximately 4.4 acres of habitat were considered suitable for CAGN within the survey area, none of which fell within the project footprint.

Focused, protocol-level CAGN surveys occurred between April 24 and July 7, 2006, within the survey area. To the extent feasible, these surveys followed the current USFWS survey protocol for the species, dated February 28, 1997 (and as amended July 28, 1997). The protocol calls for six surveys to be conducted because the area is not within an approved Natural Communities Conservation Planning (NCCP) program subarea, namely the Coastal Central NCCP area for Orange County. The sixth survey, while conducted after June 30th (the end of the CAGN breeding season), was still in adherence with the USFWS protocol as it was conducted within a calendar week of June 30th (on July 6th).

The survey activity consisted of walking meandering transects through marginal habitat for the species, including all scrub associations, as well as upland and wetland habitats adjacent to areas of scrub. EDAW wildlife biologists Lyndon Quon and Erin Riley conducted the surveys under the current Endangered Species Permit TE-820658-3. Mr. Quon and Ms. Riley conducted passive surveillance (i.e., listening and visually looking for the species) in all habitat with marginal potential to support CAGN. If an observation was not made after approximately 5 to 10 minutes of passive survey activity, a taped vocalization of the CAGN was played for approximately 5 to 10 seconds (i.e., active survey activity), followed by another period of passive observation.

Results

All protocol-level surveys were conducted on foot according to the schedule in Table 1 below. Weather conditions during the surveys were primarily warm, with temperatures ranging from 60 to 80 degrees Fahrenheit (°F) and winds typically ranging from 0 to 2 miles per hour. Details on the date, time, conditions, and surveyors are provided in Table 1, below, and in Appendix A (Field Notes).

Table 1
Coastal California Gnatcatcher Focused Protocol Surveys
Dates, Personnel, Weather Conditions, and Observations

Date	Time	Weather Conditions	Field Biologist	CAGN Observations
4/24/2006	1045-1145	Start: 62°F, wind moderate, 10% cover	Erin Riley ¹ ,	No CAGN observed
		End: 66°F, wind moderate, 10% cover	Mason Ryan	
5/4/2006	0925-1015	Start: 59°F, wind moderate, 15% cover	Erin Riley ¹ ,	No CAGN observed
		End: 71°F, wind calm, 35% cover	Mason Ryan	
5/17/2006	0610-0700	Start: 62°F, wild calm, 100% cover, fog	Erin Riley ¹ ,	No CAGN observed
		End: 60°F, wind calm, 100% cover, fog	Barbra Calantas	
5/30/2006	0710-0750	Start: 68°F, wind calm, 0% cover	Erin Riley ¹ ,	No CAGN observed
		End: 68°F, wind calm, 0% cover	Mason Ryan,,	
6/7/2006	0610-0640	Start: 66°F, wind calm, 100% cover	Lyndon Quon ¹ ,	No CAGN observed
		End: 66°F, wind calm, 100% cover, mist	Barbra Calantas	
7/6/2006	0615-0645	Start: 69°F, wind calm, 0% cover	Lyndon Quon ¹ ,	No CAGN observed
		End: 82°F, wind calm, 0% cover	Oren Mizrahi	

¹ Permitted biologist (TE-820658-3).

A list of all wildlife species observed or detected during 2006 biological surveys conducted by EDAW is included as Appendix B.

No CAGNs were observed during the focused, protocol-level presence/absence surveys within the original survey area. Five state species of special concern, western spadefoot toad (*Spea hammondii*), Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*), yellow-breasted chat (*Icteria virens*), southern California rufous-crowned sparrow (*Aimophila ruficeps canescens*), and white-tailed kite (*Elanus leucurus*) were detected within the biological study area during 2006 surveys (Figure 4; Appendix B). The western spadefoot toad and rufous-crowned sparrow were confirmed to be breeding within the biological study area.

Discussion

Although moderately suitable habitat for the CAGN is present within the biological study area, protocol surveys conducted in 2003 and 2006 confirmed the current absence of this species onsite. Based on the habitat characteristics present within the scrub communities of the biological study area, the connection of the project site to larger intact high-quality CAGN occupied habitat to the north, and the historical regional data of known CAGN

occurrences within 2.2 miles, there is a moderate potential for the CAGN to breed onsite. The biological study area is moderately suitable for CAGN but currently unoccupied by the species.

If you have any questions or comments regarding this letter report, please contact me at the address above, or call me at (619) 233-1454.

Sincerely,

Erin Riley

Wildlife Biologist

Attachments: Figure 1 – Regional Location Map

Figure 2 – Biological Study Area Figure 3 – Vegetation Communities Figure 4 – Sensitive Species Appendix A – Field Notes

Appendix B – Wildlife Species Observed during 2006 Focused Coastal California Gnatcatcher

Surveys

02080053 Golden Valley 45-Day CAGN Rpt Nov 2006

Bibliography

Atwood, J.L.

1990 Status review of the California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica*). Manomet Bird Observatory, Manomet, Massachusetts. 79 pp.

ERC Environmental and Energy Services Co. (ERCE)

1990 Phase 1 report Amber Ridge California gnatcatcher study. Prepared for Weingarten, Siegel, Fletcher Group, Inc. April. 30 pp.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

1991 Summary of the proposed rule to list the coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica*) as endangered in California and Baja, Mexico. September. 114 pp.

2000 Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Proposed Determination of Critical Habitat for the Coastal California Gnatcatcher; Proposed Rule. Federal Register 50 CFR Part 17, Vol. 65, No. 25. February 7.

APPENDIX A FIELD NOTES

Location Habitat Desc		ta Clarita River
dis	turbed	, river wash, upland - sage scrub, tamarisk
Purpose of V	isitA	56.6° Wind Sp/Dir From 0-2 mgh %Clds 30 Pcp Ø
Start weathe Describe Sui	rrounding	g Land Uses and Discuss Wildlife Movement Corridors and Habitat Linkages.
Obs. No.	Time	Notes
		Night Survey
	<u> </u>	Pac Charus Ecogs
-		1 lock Starley as as (max)
		West. Toods-eggs (many) breeding abults, not calling
		breezing want 13) 1181 Cast 139
		End 155 52, 2°F, & clas 0-2 mps
		N = S = 01
		Day Survey 04.25-06 Start 1015 - 1030 102clds, 0-4msh
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		62.3° €
	1	coyote sent
	1	ATFL WAVI
_	/	MOSO LEGO
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	/	YBCH drasonllies
	/	west fence lizard VABW
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		West whistail
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_	V	BAOW
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	<u> </u>	WIKL
	J	WESS
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		Sandow James Acathire

CAGN Survey. Start 1045-1145am 4/25/06 species observed: same as ARTO species on Pg. 1. tape played: 1050 1100 1105 no response

1135

CAGN-suitable habitat species: Sage 3 p.
eriogonum
sambueus
lotus
lupine
mustard
chamise
goldfields
Scrub oaks
prickly pear
popcor n flower
bluedicks
artem. californica

End 11:45

66°F, 0-4mph, 102 clds

Start Weather Describe Sur	isitr: Temp_ rroundin	ARTO + (AGN Surveys #2) 57.2° Wind Sp/Dir From 0-2 _{in} %Clds 70 Pcp Ø g Land Uses and Discuss Wildlife Movement Corridors and Habitat Linkages.
Obs. No.	Time	Notes
	<u> </u>	Night Survey - ARTO
	-	Western Spadefort heard calling
	 	you approces
		- Pacific charis Angos calling
		V
		- Wostern toad tadpoles (many)
		Killdec
	 	CAMUA Sauvrel
		Charles Signatures
<u>_</u>		
	-	Day Survey - ARTO 05.05.05
	 	59.10E, O-4mah, 15% clds, Opecp 0900
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		THEREUSP YOUR SMOON - NOMO
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	1	WETA - SOSP
	 	West food tadpoles · CALT BLPH × BEWR
	\ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \	ATFL Counte Scat
	7	ATFL Coyote Scat
	_	CORA V RCSP
		LEGO MODO
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		CLSW cottontal SASP Say cabbage white
		SASP Say cabbage white
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	 	CAQU
	ther: Te	7.30

CAGN Durvey 05-05-06
WIMR

Cross Valley

0925-1015 End: 71.0° F, 0-2mph, 352 clds

species observed: Some as pg. 1 Day Survey

0925 played tape twice, no response

0935 " " " " "

Job Name	<u>CO 55</u>	
Observer	EM	
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Purpose of V		Wind Sp/Dir From%CldsPcp
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		crickets
		west toad observed (non-breeding male?)
		Smaller adult,
		- 2nd west tood not calling
		obsived
Y	M 1 4	Pac charus frogs Calling, very active
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		west successful
		Small Snails
		Some west toad tappoles observed
		KI <i>LL</i>
		d sad was me
		dodworms
		End 10:40pm 0-3 mph, 602 clds 74.196
		Day - ARTO 05-18-06 61.9°F, 1002 dos/
		Dprcp, 0-2mph 0540.
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		NOMO RCSP, Bealling, O mostro
	-	ATFL LEGO 0+
		MOSO ANHU BUSH CARU
	.,	Coxtron tail - BSHA
	· ·	KILL V SPTS
	-	CALT BLPH
		AMCR - RODO
	*	BEWR - WEKI
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	\	CA and Squl
Current Was	ther Ta	mpWind Sp/Dir From%CldsPcp
Cuntin wea	mer. Tel	mpwind Sp/Dir Floin
		n 1 c

Page 1 of

CAGN Survey

Stast 0610 -> End 0700 59.9°F, fog.

- Same Species obstred as ARTODay (Pg.1)

- played tape: 0615

0630 no response.

_	_	FIELD JOURNAL	
Job Name(ે જ	Valley/Golden Valley ld Bridge Job#	
Date_()5.	3000	Start Time End Time	
Location	Sant	a Clasita River Valley	
Habitat Descr	iption	over wash, tomarisk, upland -	
Dumose of Vi	eit A	RTO + (AGN (#4)	
Start Weather	: Temp	66.40 Wind Sp/Dir From 0-2mgh %Clds Pcp \ Pcp	
Describe Sur	roundin	g Land Uses and Discuss Wildlife Movement Corridors and Habitat Linkages.	
Obs. No.	Time	Notes	
~ 8	TO	Night - 10:00 5 pm Solds 0-2 mph 66.4°F	
	\sim 10		
		VKILL	
		Pac chorus frogs- calling	
		West Foods - 6 adults observed	
		no tad poles	
		Appears site experienced heavy scouring	
_	/2	Since hasa (ain (25/21/06)	
	>	clean flow, 1855 trash + debris no blood	J82
		no tadpoles, channel patterns changed pome	
		places	
		End 65° F, O-2 mph, &clds 10:45 pm	
_		, , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,	
		ARTO-Day 5/31/06	
		ARTO-Day 5/31/06 0650-07/0am oclds, 0-2mph, 61.7°C	•
	~	WEST	
		AMGO	
		WEKE	
		CALT	
	,	LABU LAZVII	
		RCSP	
		AMC R CLSW	
	,		
	~	HOFI	
	J	woodrat Sp.	
	✓	BUSH	
	~	NOMO Afgind Sq.	
_	~	CAGU dom. dog	
	~	BEUR · cottontail	
	V	505P - SPTD	
	V	BHGB 1 KILL	
	✓	ANHU WREN	
Current Weat	her: Te	mp Wind Sp/Dir From %Clds Pcp	

Page 1 of

05/31/06 CAGN Survey 07/0-0750 68.0°F, 0-2mph, &clds

- same species observed as ARTO Day (Pg.1)
- mud pool @ topoh Slope in upland contro toad trks
- played tape 0715

 0730

 0745

 0750

End Øclds, 0-2md, 0759 68.0°F

1	70	FIELD JOURNAL
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Obs. No.	Time	Notes
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	-	
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Current W		Page 1 of

	1	/, FIELD JOURNAL
Job Name	CROSS	VALLEY CONNECTOR Job#
Observer	YNDON	Add'l Persons OREN MIZRACHI
Date 7- (Start Time $06/5$ End Time $07/5$
Location_		- CLARA RIVER (NORTH BANK) @ CITY OF SANTAC
		DISTURBED CSS, CONTIGUOUS WITH
NATU		
Purpose of		CAGN SURVEY /ARTO SURVEY-Daytime
		p 74% Wind Sp/Dir From O %Clds 20 Pcp 6
		ing Land Uses and Discuss Wildlife Movement Corridors and Habitat Linkages.
Obs. No.	Time	Notes
		START SURVEY @ SOUTHERN END OF
		HABITAT AND CONTINUED IN A
		CLOCKINISE DIRECTIAN OVER THE
		HILL / RIVERBANK.
		CATO
		BEWR
		BUSH
		SPTO
- 		RTHA
		CUA
		CAOU
		1/00/
		1.1-121
		WIRI
	<u> </u>	WEK!
		KILL
	ļ	5057
		WSJA
		NO CAGN OBSERVED. BEWICK'S
		WREN RESPONDING TO TAPED
		VOCALIFATIONS PLAYBACK.
		CORA
		CAUF. GROUNDSQUIRREL
	0715	END SURVEY.
		7
		
		· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·
		2106
Current Wea	ther: Te	emp 76 F Wind Sp/Dir From O %Clds /O Pcp O

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APPENDIX B

WILDLIFE SPECIES OBSERVED DURING 2006 FOCUSED COASTAL CALIFORNIA GNATCATCHER SURVEYS

APPENDIX B

Wildlife Species Observed during 2006 Focused Coastal California Gnatcatcher Surveys for the Golden Valley Road Bridge Project

Scientific Names	Common Names	
Amphibians		
Order Anura	Frogs and Toads	
Family Pelobatidae	•	
Spea hammondii	western spadefoot ¹	
Family Bufonidae	'	
Anaxyrus (Bufo) borea	western toad	
Family Hylidae		
Pseudacris regilla	Pacific chorus frog	
Reptiles		
Order Squamata	Lizards and Snakes	
Family Phrysonomatidae		
Cnemidophorus tigris	western whiptail	
Family Teiidae		
Sceloporus occidentalis	western fence lizard	
Birds		
Order Galliformes	Megapodes, Curassows, Pheasants, Quail, and Relatives	
Family Odontophoridae	mogapodos, odrassoms, i nedsants, wdan, and itelatives	
Callipepla californica	California quail	
Order Falconiformes	Diurnal Birds of Prey	
Family Accipitridae	Diumai Bilus oi Frey	
Elanus leucurus	white-tailed kite ²	
	Cooper's hawk ¹	
Accipiter cooperii	red-shouldered hawk	
Buteo lineatus		
Buteo jamaicensis	red-tailed hawk	
Order Charadriiformes	Shorebirds and Allies	
Family Charadriidae	Lillabor	
Charadrius vociferous Order Columbiformes	killdeer	
	Doves and Pigeons	
Family Columbridae		
Columba livia	rock pigeon	
Zenaida macroura	mourning dove	
Order Strigiformes	Owls	
Family Strigidae		
Tyto alba	barn owl	
Order Apodiformes	Swifts and Hummingbirds	
Family Apodidae		
Chaetura vauxi	Vaux's swift	
Aeronautes saxatalis	white-throated swift	
Family Trochilidae		
Calypte anna	Anna's hummingbird	
Calypte costae	Costa's hummingbird	
Order Passeriformes	Perching Birds	
Family Tyrannidae		
Sayornis nigricans	black phoebe	
Myiarchus cinerascens	ash-throated flycatcher	
Tyrannus verticalis	western kingbird	
Family Vireonidae		
Vireo gilvus	warbling vireo	

Scientific Names	Common Names
Family Corvidae	
Aphelocoma californica	western scrub jay
Corvus brachyrhynchos	American crow
Corvus corax	common raven
Family Hirundinidae	
Stelgidopteryx serripennis	northern rough-winged swallow
Petrochelidon pyrrhonota	cliff swallow
Family Aegithalidae	
Psaltriparus minimus	bushtit
Family Troglodytidae	
Thryomanes bewickii	Bewick's wren
Troglodytes aedon	house wren
Family Timaliidae	
Chamaea fasciata	wrentit
Family Mimidae	
Mimus polyglottos	northern mockingbird
Family Sturnidae	
Sturnus vulgaris	European starling
Family Parulidae	
Vermivora ruficapill	Nashville warbler
Icteria virens	yellow-breasted chat ¹
Family Thraupidae	
Piranga ludoviciana	western tanager
Family Emberzidae	
Pipilo maculates	spotted towhee
Pipilo crissalis	California towhee
Aimophila ruficeps	southern California rufous-crowned sparrow ¹
Amphispiza belli	sage sparrow
Melospiza melodia	song sparrow
Zonotrichia leucophrys	white-crowned sparrow
Family Cardinalidae	
Carduelis psaltria	black-headed grosbeak
Passerina amoena	lazuli bunting
Family Fringillidae	
Carpodacus mexicanus	house finch
Carduelis psaltria	lesser goldfinch
Carduelis tristis Mammals	American goldfinch
Order Carnivora	Flesh-eaters
	i icon-calcio
Family Canidae <i>Canis latrans</i>	coyote
Order Rodentia	Gnawing Mammals
Family Sciuridae	Charling maininate
Citellis beecheyi	California ground squirrel
Family Cricetidae	Mice, Rats, Lemmings, and Voles
Neotoma sp.	unidentified woodrat
Order Lagomorpha	Rabbits, Hares, and Pikas
Family Leporidae	rabbits, Hales, and Finas
Sylvilagus audubonii	desert cottontail
Sylvilagus bachmani California Department of Fish and Game state species of sp	pecial concern.

² California Department of Fish and Game fully protected species.

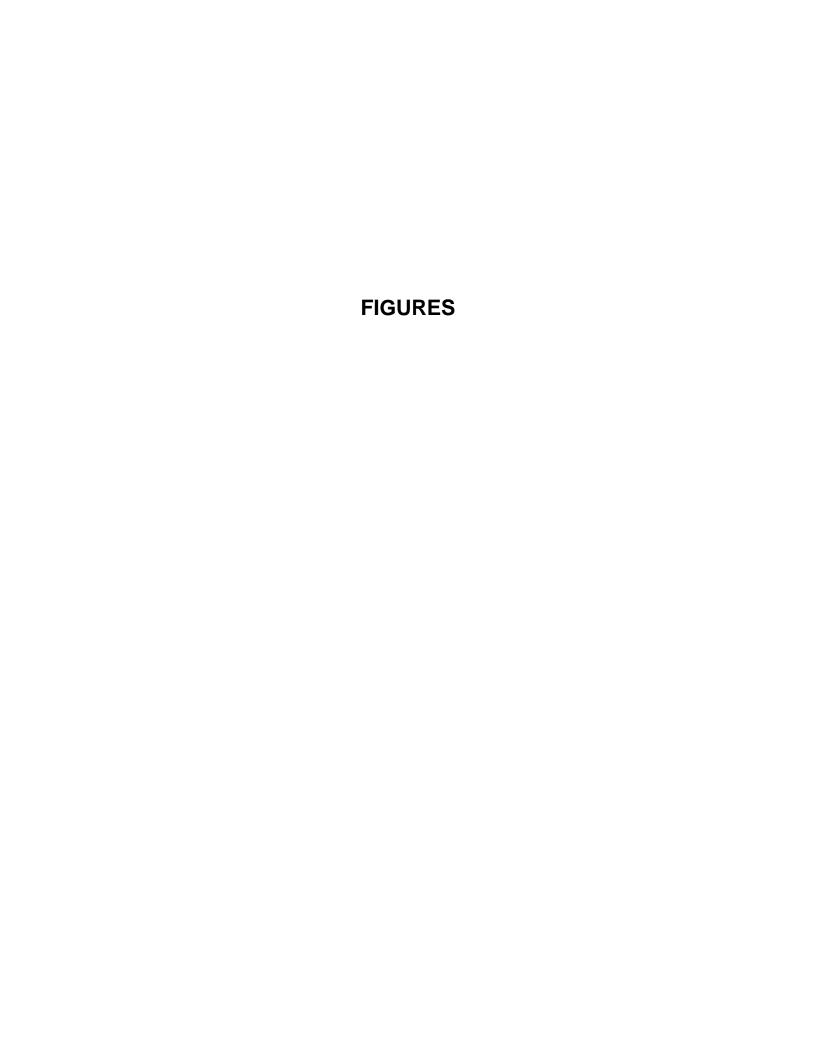






Figure 2

Scale: 1:6,000; 1 inch = 500 feet

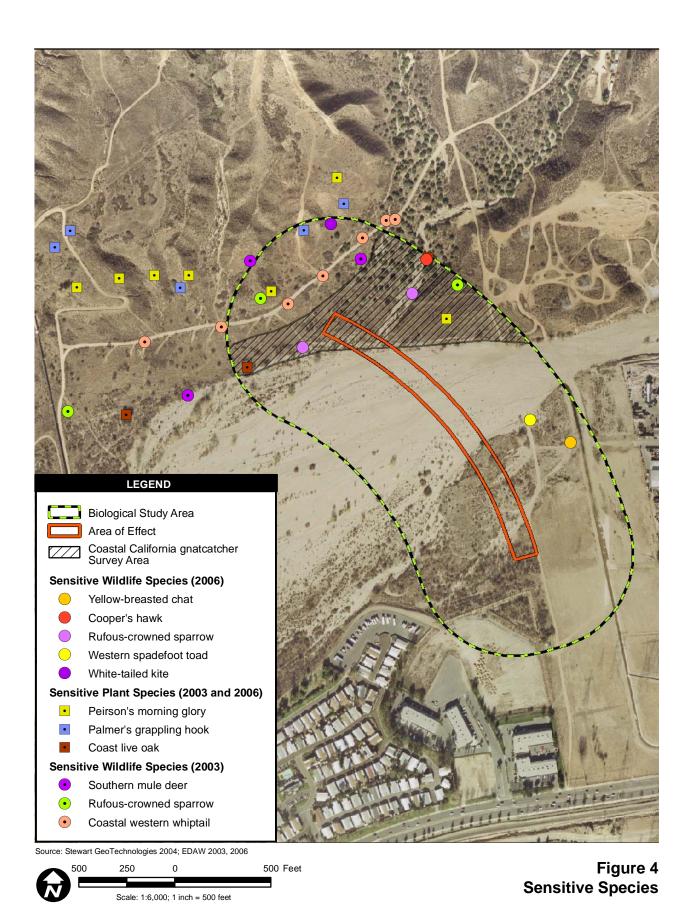
Scale: 1:6,000; 1 inch = 500 feet

Figure 2

Golden Valley Road Bridge Project

Biological Study Area





Golden Valley Road Bridge Project Coastal California Gnatcatcher 45-Day Report