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**Compliance Biology, Mammal Survey Summary Letter, Vista Canyon  
Ranch, Los Angeles County (October 2007)**



October 26, 2007

Mr. Andrew Forde  
Forde Biological Consultants  
5276 Buena Mesa Court  
Camarillo, California 94612

Dear Mr. Forde,

The following is a summary of results of a mammal survey conducted at the property identified as Vista Canyon Ranch, Los Angeles County, California. The purpose of the survey was to evaluate the diversity of mammal species and to determine presence/absence of any special-status mammal species on the subject property.

## **METHODS**

### *SMALL MAMMAL TRAPPING*

A total of 80 Sherman live traps were set out in eight separate lines of 10 traps per line. Locations of each line were selected with the intention of providing a representative sampling of all habitat types present on the project site and are illustrated on Exhibit 1. Representative habitat types sampled included buckwheat scrub, Great Basin sage scrub, non-native grassland/sage scrub ecotone, saltgrass, alluvial scrub, coast live oak canopy/non-native grassland, coastal sage scrub, and ruderal/disturbed.

Traps at each selected location were set and baited each evening with a mixture of rolled oats and wild birdseed and/or hamster and rodent feed. A small amount of high protein cat food was also included in the bait in the event southern grasshopper mouse was present. Each of the eight trap lines were set for five consecutive nights. The following morning after each night of trapping, all traps were checked, captured animals were recorded and released, and the traps were then collected for the day to prevent trap theft and potential mortality of diurnal species.

### *MAMMAL TRACKING*

In addition to the setting of live traps, three scent stations were set up to identify larger mammals and to determine if there were any indication of specific or concentrated wildlife movement through the railway underpass in the southern portion of the site. Scent stations were set utilizing diatomaceous earth and baited with a mixture of dry dog food and canned cat food. An

area of diatomaceous earth, approximately six feet in diameter and one to two inches in depth, was smoothed out each evening of the five-night study and freshly baited. Each following morning when traps were checked, the scent stations were also checked. Following the evaluation of the track stations, trails and roadways on the site were hiked to see if any mammal tracks could be identified in the dirt.

#### BAT SURVEYS

In order to inventory the bat species utilizing the site, focused bat surveys were also conducted. Surveys were conducted both actively and passively utilizing an ANABAT bat detector. The ANABAT records the sonic 'clicking' bats make to navigate and forage. Active surveys included walking around the site in the evening hours holding the bat detector. Passive surveys involved setting the ANABAT detector up in a stationary location and leaving it on from late afternoon to early morning.

**Exhibit 1** illustrates the locations of each of the trap lines, track stations and ANABAT bat detector passive survey site.

#### RESULTS

There were no mammal species detected during the survey effort that are federally- or state-listed as threatened, endangered, candidate species, or otherwise considered to be of special-status by regulatory agencies.

#### SMALL MAMMAL TRAPPING

A total of 104 individual animals were captured in 400 cumulative trap-nights. Of the 104 individuals captured, seven different rodent species were represented. Deer mouse (*Peromyscus maniculatus*) (n=40) and dusky-footed woodrat (*Neotoma fuscipes*) (n=34) were the most common species recorded on the site. Additionally, Pacific kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys agilis*) (n=23), California pocket mouse (*Chaetodipus californicus*) (n=5), and Botta's pocket gopher (*Thomomys bottae*) (n=2) were recorded.

#### MAMMAL TRACKING

Mammalian species recorded through direct observation and sign, including tracks which were identified both in the dirt of open trail areas and in the baited track stations, include desert cottontail (*Sylvilagus auduboni*), coyote (*Canis latrans*), mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), kangaroo rat (likely *D. agilis*), and domestic dog (*Canis familiaris*).

There was no indication from the five-night scent station survey that there was any more or less wildlife movement going through the railroad underpass than anywhere else on site. Although the scent station could not be expanded all the way across the opening – this underpass also

serves as primary access to an adjacent private property – a baited track station was established along the side of the underpass and coyote tracks were observed daily. Additionally, tracks of wildlife moving through the underpass could also be seen in the fine soils that comprised the access road. It is expected that some wildlife does move through the underpass (primarily coyote), and that they also pass directly over and across the railroad tracks.

#### *BAT SURVEYS*

The ANABAT bat detector electronically records the sonic sounds produced by bats in the vicinity of the device and are stored on a memory chip. The resultant recordings indicate the presence of big brown bat (*Eptesicus fuscus*), California myotis (*Myotis californicus*) and free-tailed bat (*Tadarida brasiliensis*).

#### **DISCUSSION**

The overall habitat quality of the subject property is considered moderate to poor for most mammal species. Although six rodent species were identified, higher quality habitats of similar expanse in the region support greater diversity. Additionally, larger mammals including coyote, cottontail and deer are relatively tolerant of human disturbance and, as such, their presence on this site is not indicative of habitat quality. They would be expected to occur in relatively large undeveloped habitats such as this regardless of habitat quality. Additionally, the bat species detected occurred in relatively low numbers and consist of common species. This suggests that common bat species periodically utilize the site for foraging, and may temporarily roost on site, but it is not likely there is a resident population on or immediately adjacent to the site.

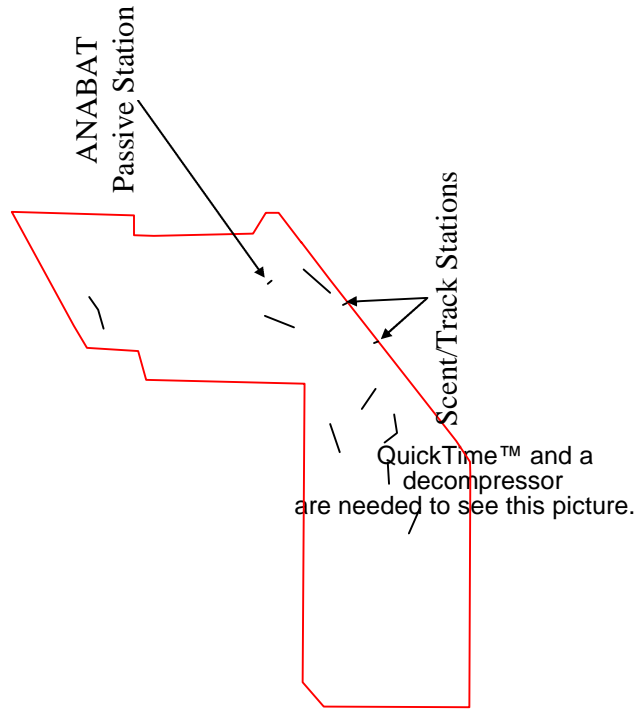
The overall conclusion from this study is that the site does not support any special-status mammal species and that the overall habitat quality for mammal species on the subject property would be considered moderate to poor. There is a long history of disturbance including off-road vehicle use and dumping. The areas of predominantly native habitat remaining on site are relatively isolated and/or surrounded by disturbance. The Santa Clara River habitat, which is dry most of the year, provides the most important biological habitat on site. It provides a corridor for wildlife movement and local dispersal and seasonally, provides aquatic habitat.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions regarding this information.

Sincerely,

Dave Crawford  
President/Principal Biologist

Exhibit 1



Approximate  
Property  
Boundary

Sherman  
Trap Lines