



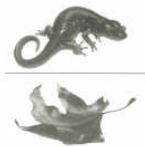
**REPORT ON WINTER SURVEYS OF SPECIAL-STATUS BIRD SPECIES  
ON VISTA CANYON PROPERTY  
LOS ANGELES COUNTY, CALIFORNIA**

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## INTRODUCTION

Bloom Biological, Inc. conducted winter field surveys of all special-status, or sensitive, avian species on Vista Canyon property. Five surveys were conducted between February 8 and March 15, 2009. This report summarizes the findings of these surveys.

The survey area consisted of 185 acres of land along the Santa Clara River, on the south side of Highway 14 in unincorporated Los Angeles County, directly adjacent to the City of Santa Clarita. Habitat within the property includes disturbed non-native grassland, riparian scrub, coastal sage scrub, coast live oak and a eucalyptus wind row.

## METHODOLOGY

Wintering bird surveys were conducted between February 8 and March 15, 2009. Surveys were conducted during daylight hours by walking and/or driving through all habitat types within the property. All birds detected were recorded. Surveys were conducted by Biologists Chris A. Niemela and Peter H. Bloom.

## RESULTS

No special-status avian species were observed on the property, but two active raptor nests were noted. A Cooper's hawk nest was found in a young coast live oak in the southwest portion of the property, at the base of the small hill, directly under the power lines. The nest was not active at the time of the surveys, but an adult Cooper's hawk was seen nearby on two occasions. It is highly likely that the nest will become active this year. An active red-tailed hawk nest was found in the patch of eucalyptus trees in the southeast portion of the property. All species observed on the property are listed in Appendix A.

Several bird species occurring in the vicinity of Vista Canyon property have been classified as "special-status species," by one or more governmental agencies, or "sensitive," by non-governmental conservation organizations. Sensitive bird species that occur or have the potential of occurring on the property site are discussed below.

### California Condor

**Not Observed**

#### *Gymnogyps californianus*

CONSERVATION STATUS: Federally Endangered, California Endangered, California Fully Protected, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Sensitive, National Audubon Society Watch List, American Bird Conservancy Green List, U.S. Bird Conservation Watch List. POTENTIAL TO OCCUR ON SITE: Unlikely. The species nests within 50 miles of the project site. Individuals may occasionally fly over the site but would not be expected to land given the lack of cattle ranching and large animal carcasses. This wide-ranging species nests on remote cliffs, but forages over hundreds of square miles.

**White-tailed Kite****Not Observed*****Elanus leucurus***

CONSERVATION STATUS: California Fully Protected.

POTENTIAL TO OCCUR ON SITE: Moderate to high, breeds locally but numbers greatly reduced across much of the bird's southwestern California breeding range. The site contains good foraging habitat in the form of non-native grasslands and coastal sage scrub.

**Northern Harrier****Not Observed*****Circus cyaneus***

CONSERVATION STATUS: California Species of Special Concern, 3<sup>rd</sup> Priority, IUCN Least Concern.

POTENTIAL TO OCCUR ON SITE: Moderate, breeds in region but no longer known to nest in the surrounding area. The species would be predictably seen during migration or during the post-fledging period.

**Swainson's Hawk****Not Observed*****Buteo swainsoni***

CONSERVATION STATUS: California Threatened, USFWS Bird of Conservation Concern, USDA Forest Service Sensitive, National Audubon Society Watch List, American Bird Conservancy Green List, U.S. Bird Conservation Watch List.

POTENTIAL TO OCCUR ON SITE: Low potential. Winters in South America but may occur during migration as a flyover.

**Golden Eagle****Not Observed*****Aquila chrysaetos***

CONSERVATION STATUS: USFWS Bird of Conservation Concern, BLM Sensitive, California Fully Protected, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Sensitive, IUCN Least Concern.

POTENTIAL TO OCCUR ON SITE: Not Expected. Not enough appropriate foraging or nesting habitat occurs on site.

**Peregrine Falcon****Not Observed*****Falco peregrinus***

CONSERVATION STATUS: California Endangered, USFWS Bird of Conservation Concern, USDA Forest Service Sensitive, California Fully Protected, IUCN Least Concern. Formally Federally Endangered but delisted after recovery following ban on DDT use in U.S.

POTENTIAL TO OCCUR ON SITE: Possible fly-over during migration or by floaters.

**Mountain Plover****Not Observed*****Charadrius montanus***

CONSERVATION STATUS: USFWS Bird of Conservation Concern, California Species of Special Concern, National Audubon Society Watch List, American Bird Conservancy Green List, U.S. Bird Conservation Watch List.

POTENTIAL TO OCCUR ON SITE: None. No appropriate habitat for this species occurs on site.

**Long-billed Curlew****Not Observed*****Numenius americanus***

CONSERVATION STATUS: USFWS Bird of Conservation Concern, California Species of Special Concern<sup>1</sup>, IUCN Lower Risk/Near Threatened, National Audubon Society Watch List, American Bird Conservancy Green List.

POTENTIAL TO OCCUR ON SITE: Extremely unlikely.

**Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo****Not Observed*****Coccyzus americanus occidentalis***

CONSERVATION STATUS: California Endangered, Federal Candidate for Listing, USFWS Bird of Conservation Concern, USDA Forest Service Sensitive, IUCN Least Concern.

POTENTIAL TO OCCUR ON SITE: None. No appropriate habitat for this species occurs on site.

**Burrowing Owl****Not Observed*****Athene cunicularia***

CONSERVATION STATUS: USFWS Bird of Conservation Concern, BLM Sensitive, California Species of Special Concern, IUCN Least Concern.

POTENTIAL TO OCCUR ON SITE: No nesting habitat on site, but might occur on migration or while wintering.

**California Spotted Owl****Not Observed*****Strix occidentalis occidentalis***

CONSERVATION STATUS: USFWS Bird of Conservation Concern, BLM Sensitive, USDA Forest Service Sensitive, California Species of Special Concern<sup>1</sup>, IUCN Lower Risk/Near Threatened, National Audubon Society Watch List, American Bird Conservancy Green List, U.S. Bird Conservation Watch List.

POTENTIAL TO OCCUR ON SITE: None. No appropriate habitat for this species occurs on site.

**Long-eared Owl****Not Observed*****Asio otus***

CONSERVATION STATUS: California Species of Special Concern, IUCN Least Concern.

POTENTIAL TO OCCUR ON SITE: None. The Long-eared owl is a relatively sensitive and intolerant of human disturbance species that is not known to nest within ¼ mile of residential areas in southern California. No appropriate habitat occurs on site, except during migration.

**Short-eared Owl****Not Observed*****Asio flammeus***

CONSERVATION STATUS: California Species of Special Concern, IUCN Least Concern, National Audubon Society Watch List, American Bird Conservancy Green List (nesting), U.S. Bird Conservation Watch List.

POTENTIAL TO OCCUR ON SITE: Limited. This species needs large expanses of grassland or estuaries to forage in and has been extirpated as a breeding species in Los Angeles County. Short-eared owls might occur during winter, but it would be a rare event given the amount of development in the immediate area.

**Willow Flycatcher, including Southwestern Willow Flycatcher** **Not Observed**

***Empidonax traillii* (including *extimus*)**

CONSERVATION STATUS: Federally Endangered (*extimus* only), California Endangered (all subspecies that breed in the state), USDA Forest Service Sensitive, IUCN Least Concern, National Audubon Society Watch List, American Bird Conservancy Green List, U.S. Bird Conservation Watch List. Continues to decline in California.

POTENTIAL TO OCCUR ON SITE: Extremely limited. This species does not winter in North America and no breeding habitat exists on-site.

**Loggerhead Shrike** **Not Observed**

***Lanius ludovicianus***

CONSERVATION STATUS: USFWS Bird of Conservation Concern, California Species of Special Concern, IUCN Least Concern.

POTENTIAL TO OCCUR ON SITE: Moderate, but is a rare resident and occasional wintering species. Occasionally breeds in the local area.

**Least Bell's Vireo** **Not Observed**

***Vireo bellii pusillus***

CONSERVATION STATUS: California Endangered, USFWS Bird of Conservation Concern, IUCN Lower Risk/Near Threatened, National Audubon Society Watch List, and U.S. Bird Conservation Watch List.

POTENTIAL TO OCCUR ON SITE: Not Expected. This species does not winter in North America and no breeding habitat exists on-site.

**California Horned Lark** **Not Observed**

***Eremophila alpestris actia***

CONSERVATION STATUS: California Species of Special Concern<sup>1</sup>, IUCN Least Concern.

POTENTIAL TO OCCUR ON SITE: Moderate potential. This species commonly forages in open grassy fields.

**Purple Martin** **Not Observed**

***Progne subis***

CONSERVATION STATUS: California Species of Special Concern, IUCN Least Concern.

POTENTIAL TO OCCUR ON SITE: Not Expected. No longer breeds at this low elevation site and winters south of the Mexican border.

**Bank Swallow** **Not Observed**

***Riparia riparia***

CONSERVATION STATUS: California Threatened, IUCN Least Concern.

POTENTIAL TO OCCUR ON SITE: This species does not winter in North America. However, it probably does occur as an occasional migrant flying over the site during spring and fall.

**Coastal California Gnatcatcher** **Not Observed**

***Polioptila californica californica***

CONSERVATION STATUS: Federally Threatened, California Species of Special Concern<sup>1</sup>.

POTENTIAL TO OCCUR ON SITE: Not expected. Coastal sage scrub habitat occurs on-site, but the project site is slightly north of the species range.

**Yellow Warbler****Not Observed*****Dendroica petechia brewsteri* and *D. P. morcomi***

CONSERVATION STATUS: California Species of Special Concern, IUCN Least Concern.

POTENTIAL TO OCCUR ON SITE: Occasional migrant. This species does not winter in North America and no breeding habitat exists on-site.

**Yellow-breasted Chat****Not Observed*****Icteria virens***

CONSERVATION STATUS: California Species of Special Concern, IUCN Least Concern.

POTENTIAL TO OCCUR ON SITE: Occasional migrant. This species does not winter in North America and no breeding habitat exists on-site.

**Summer Tanager****Not Observed*****Piranga rubra***

CONSERVATION STATUS: California Species of Special Concern, IUCN Least Concern.

POTENTIAL TO OCCUR ON SITE: This species does not winter in North America, however, could occur on the site occasionally during migration. Does not breed in the region.

**Tricolored Blackbird****Not Observed*****Agelaius tricolor***

CONSERVATION STATUS: USFWS Bird of Conservation Concern, California Species of Special Concern, IUCN Least Concern, Audubon Society Watch List, American Bird Conservancy Green List, U.S. Bird Conservation Watch List.

POTENTIAL TO OCCUR ON SITE: Occasional migrant. No appropriate habitat for this species occurs on site.

**SUMMARY**

No special-status avian species were observed during the winter (February – March) of 2009, but two active raptor nests (Red-tailed Hawk and Cooper's Hawk) were noted. We suspect that the project site offers relatively limited wintering habitat for most species due to surrounding residential and commercial development.

Appendix A. Species detected on Vista Canyon Ranch property from February 8 – March 15, 2009.

COOPER'S HAWK  
RED-TAILED HAWK  
AMERICAN KESTREL  
CALIFORNIA QUAIL  
KILLDEER  
ROCK PIGEON  
MOURNING DOVE  
EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE  
WHITE-THROATED SWIFT  
ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD  
COSTA'S HUMMINGBIRD  
ACORN WOODPECKER  
SAY'S PHOEBE  
WESTERN KINGBIRD  
TREE SWALLOW  
CLIFF SWALLOW  
NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW  
WESTERN SCRUB-JAY  
AMERICAN CROW  
COMMON RAVEN  
OAK TITMOUSE  
BUSHTIT  
BEWICK'S WREN  
NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD  
CALIFORNIA THRASHER  
EUROPEAN STARLING  
YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER  
SPOTTED TOWHEE  
CALIFORNIA TOWHEE  
SONG SPARROW  
WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW  
DARK-EYED JUNCO  
WESTERN MEADOWLARK  
GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE  
BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD  
BULLOCK'S ORIOLE  
HOUSE FINCH  
LESSER GOLDFINCH  
  
BLACK-TAILED JACKRABBIT  
AUDUBON'S COTTONTAIL  
BOTTA'S POCKET GOPHER  
CALIFORNIA VOLE  
COYOTE  
  
GOPHER SNAKE