

EVERETT AND ASSOCIATES
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANTS

ESTABLISHED IN 1975

POST OFFICE BOX 1085
LA JOLLA, CALIFORNIA 92038

(858) 456-2990 TELEPHONE
(760) 765-3113 FACSIMILE

24 August 2014

Farouk Kubba
7021 Leonard Street
Carlsbad, Ca 9201

Re: Report on Focused Protocol Surveys for California Gnatcatchers, Highlands Project Site, San Marcos, California

Dear Mr. Kubba,

This report presents the results of three focused presence/absence surveys that I recently conducted for the federally threatened Coastal California Gnatcatcher *Poliioptila californica californica*. The surveys were conducted within the approximately 200 acre Highlands project site in the City of San Marcos.

The California Gnatcatcher is a federal threatened species, a state species of concern, and is a "target species" of the NCCP process. This species is a non-migratory resident whose range covers the coastal plains and foothills of Southern California and northern Baja California. In San Diego County, it is widespread in coastal lowlands below about 2,000 feet elevation and typically occurs in or near Coastal Sage Scrub (CSS). The California Gnatcatcher population is seriously declining due to loss of habitat. Between 85% and 90% of this species' habitat has been lost to urban or agricultural development. It is almost extirpated from Ventura, San Bernadino, and Los Angeles counties. The U.S. population is estimated to be just under 5000 pairs. San Diego County appears to be the center of abundance within the United States for this species.

The survey site is at the north end of Las Posas Road in the City of San Marcos. (Figures 1 - 4). It is bordered on the south by high density residential development and on the north and east by rural residential and agricultural properties. To the west are a similar undeveloped parcels. The approximate USGS coordinates for the site are 33°10'N, 117°12'W (San Marcos 7.5 minute series quadrangle, see Figure 3).

BIOLOGICAL SETTING

The Highlands property is several legal undeveloped parcels with Agua Hedionda Creek passing through the center of the site. Around Agua Hedionda Creek there are steep slopes vegetated with Coastal Sage Scrub (CSS). The CSS is dominated by California Sagebrush *Artemisia californica*, Black Sage *Salvia mellifera*, Flat-top Buckwheat *Eriogonum fasciculatum* ssp. *fasciculatum*, Laurel Sumac *Malosma laurina*, and other common CSS species. Interestingly, White Sage *Salvia apiana*, Deerweed *Acmispon glaber*, and Chamise *Adenostoma fasciculatum* are very rare on the site.

METHODS

I surveyed the site three times in conformance with current U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) protocol guidelines. Because of the size of the site it was divided into two approximately 100 acre plots. The plots were surveyed on consecutive days. The surveys were conducted under the authority granted to me by USFWS permit # TE-788036. The surveys were conducted by slowly walking routes within the project site. After stopping, listening, and observing at intervals of approximately 30 meters, recorded Coastal California Gnatcatcher vocalizations were played for 30 seconds. After the vocalizations were played, an additional two minutes were spent observing and listening before moving to the next observation site. Weather conditions and time of day were appropriate for the detection of Coastal California Gnatcatchers (Table 1).

TABLE 1
SCHEDULE OF SURVEYS AND CONDITIONS

| Date | Time (hours) | Temperature (°F) | Wind Speed (mph) | Cloud Cover (%) |
|-------------|---------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 6/11/14 | 0710-1200 | 60 - 76 | 0-6 SW | 100 - 0 |
| 6/12/14 | 0650-1145 | 62 - 74 | 0-4 SW | 100 - 10 |
| 6/25/14 | 0700-1100 | 66 - 78 | 0-10 NW | 0 |
| 6/26/14 | 0715-1200 | 65 - 79 | 0-4 NW | 50 - 0 |
| 7/16/14 | 0730-1200 | 62 - 82 | 2-6 SW | 25 - 0 |
| 7/17/14 | 0630-1130 | 60 - 80 | 0-8 SW | 50 - 0 |

Results

One California Gnatcatcher was detected during the focused surveys (Figure 4). The CSS onsite appears highly suitable for occupation by California Gnatcatchers.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to conduct this work and prepare this report. Please contact me if you need any additional information or clarification.

Sincerely,



William T. Everett
Certified Biological Consultant

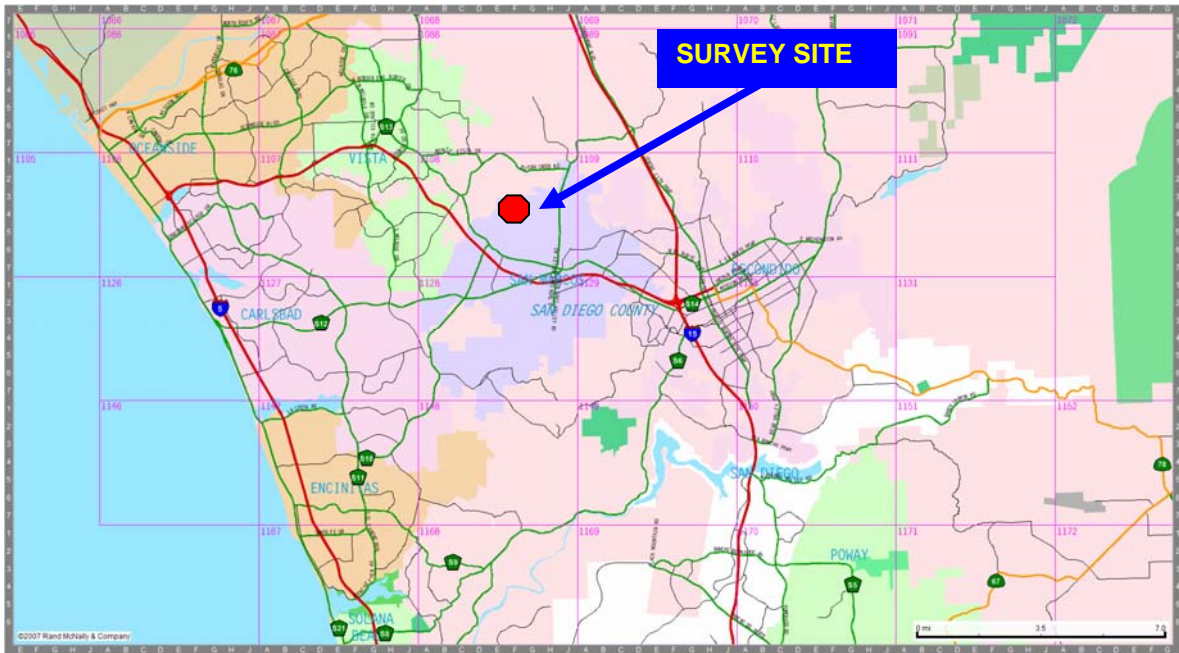


Figure 1. Location of survey site in regional context. Thomas Bros. Map page #1108, F3.

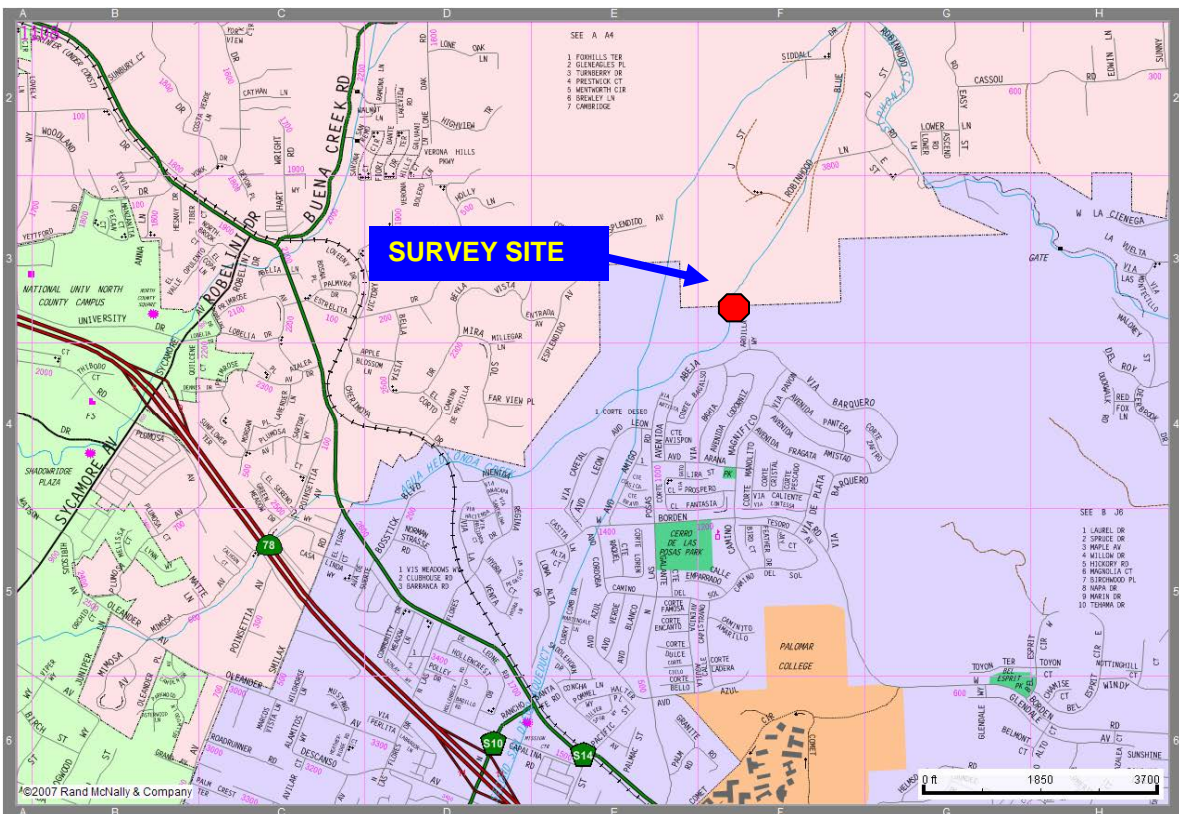


Figure 2. Detail location map of survey site. Thomas Bros. Map page #1108, F3.

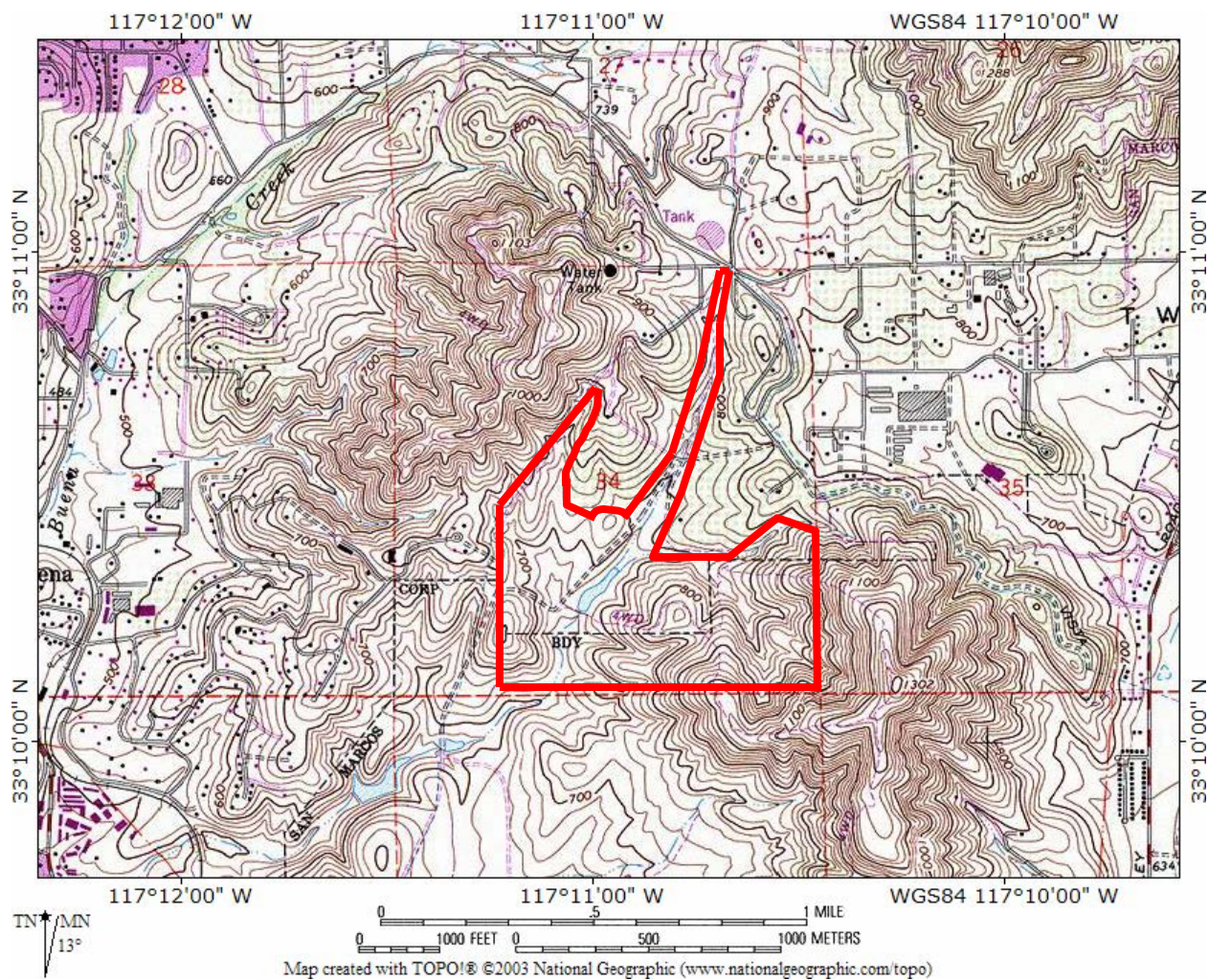


Figure 3. Topographical map showing survey site. Taken from USGS San Marcos 7.5 minute series quadrangle.

SAN MARCOS HIGHLANDS
CITY OF SAN MARCOS, CALIFORNIA

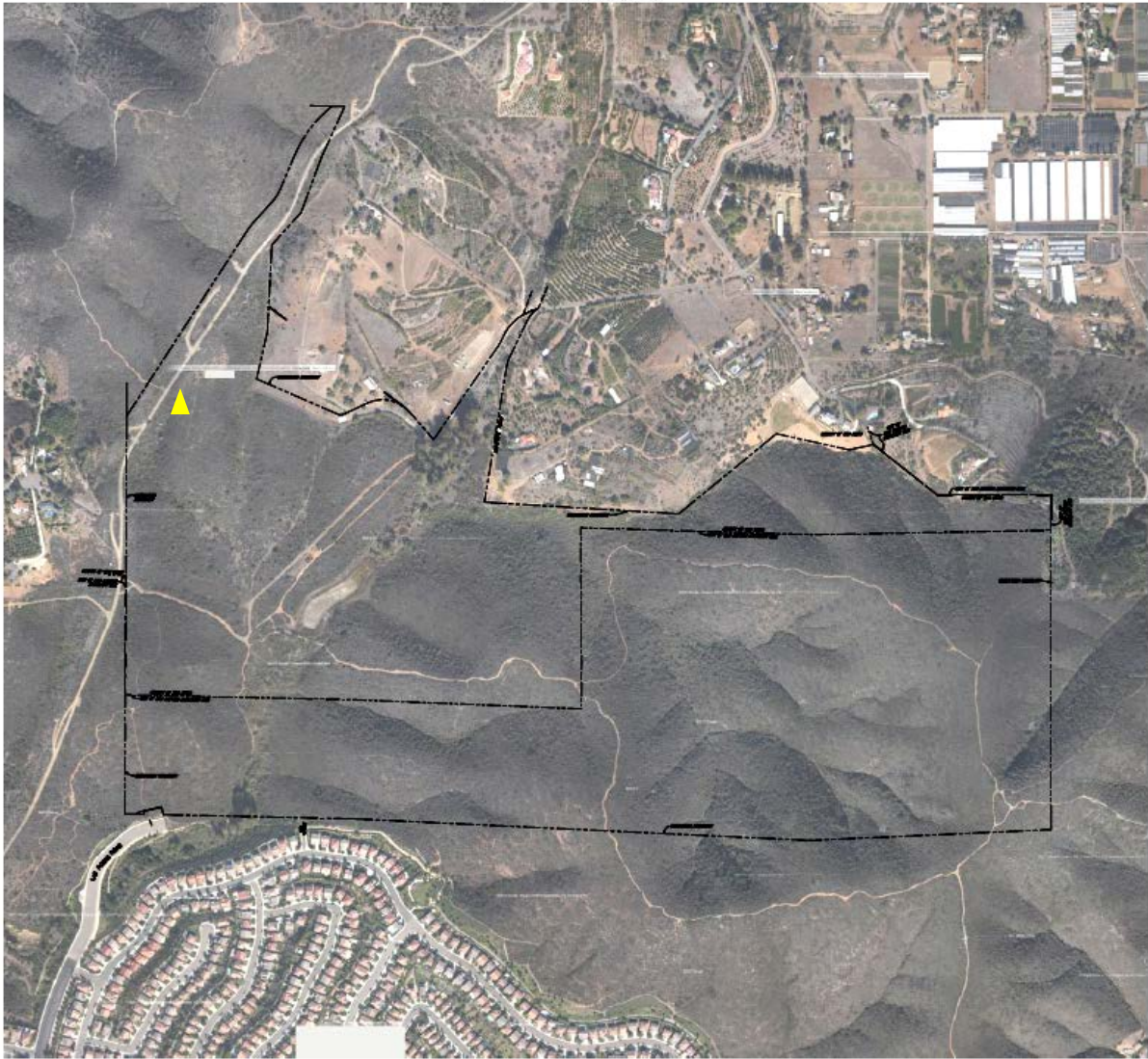


Figure 4. Image of project site with location of California Gnatcatcher shown in yellow triangle.