

APPENDIX D-2

*2018 Least Bell's Vireo and Southwestern Willow
Flycatcher Focused Survey Report
for the Torrey Wind Project*

October 10, 2018

10212

Recovery Permit Coordinator
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
2177 Salk Avenue, Suite 250
Carlsbad, California 92008

***Subject: 2018 Least Bell's Vireo and Southwestern Willow Flycatcher Focused Survey
Report for the Torrey Wind Project, Boulevard, San Diego County, California***

Dear Recovery Permit Coordinator:

This report documents the results of protocol-level presence/absence surveys for the state- and federally listed endangered least Bell's Vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*; vireo) and the state- and federally listed endangered southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*; flycatcher). The surveys were conducted in support of the Torrey Wind project (Project), located in the County of San Diego, California. The Project would involve construction and operation of approximately 32 new wind turbines (rated up to 4.2 megawatts each), an underground electrical collection system, a collector substation, an operation and maintenance (O&M) building and associated parking areas, a temporary staging area, a batch plant, meteorological towers, and various access roads. The Project site contains approximately 13.1 acres of potentially suitable vireo and flycatcher habitat that were surveyed in 2018.

The vireo and flycatcher are closely associated with riparian habitats, especially densely vegetated willow scrub and riparian forest vegetation. These species are threatened primarily by loss, degradation, and fragmentation of riparian habitats. They also are impacted by brown-headed cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) nest parasitism.

LOCATION AND EXISTING CONDITIONS

The study area is entirely on private land in southeastern San Diego County, California in the McCain Valley area, north of the community of Boulevard and is accessed via Interstate 8 and Ribbonwood Road (Figure 1, Project Location). The study area is within the U.S. Geological Survey's 7.5-minute Sombrero Peak and Live Oak Springs quadrangle maps within Township 17 South, Range 6 East, Sections 01, 05, and 06; Township 17 South, Range 7 East, Sections 05 and 06; and Township 16 South, Range 6 East, Sections 19, 20, 29, 30, 31, and 32 (Figure 1).

Elevations range from about 3,280 feet above mean sea level to approximately 4,120 feet above mean sea level.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, the following seven soil series were mapped within the study area: Calpine (coarse sandy loam, 5% to 9% slopes); La Posta (loamy coarse sand, 5% to 30% slopes, eroded; rocky loamy coarse sand, 5% to 30% slopes, eroded); loamy alluvial land; Mottsville (loamy coarse sand, 2% to 9% slopes); and Tollhouse (rocky coarse sandy loam, 5% to 30% slopes, eroded) (USDA 2018).

VEGETATION COMMUNITIES

Approximately 13.1 acres of vireo- and flycatcher-suitable habitat were mapped on the Project site according to Oberbauer et al. (2008) (Figure 2, Least Bell's Vireo and Southwestern Willow Flycatcher Survey Results). Habitats suitable for vireo and flycatcher within the study area include mulefat scrub, mature riparian woodland, and oak woodland.

Mulefat Scrub

Mulefat scrub is a depauperate, tall, herbaceous riparian scrub strongly dominated by mulefat (*Baccharis salicifolia*). This early seral community is maintained by frequent flooding. Site factors include intermittent stream channels with fairly coarse substrate and moderate depth to the water table (Oberbauer et al. 2008). This community type is widely scattered along intermittent streams and near larger rivers.

Riparian Woodland

Riparian woodland is an open to dense riparian woodland dominated by riparian trees, including western sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*), *Populus* species, *Sambucus* species, and other wetland plants (Oberbauer et al. 2008). Riparian woodland is primarily found along streams and rivers.

Oak Woodland

Oak woodland is a forest dominated by oak (*Quercus* sp.) in the tree canopy cover and has a poorly developed shrub layer (Oberbauer et al. 2008). Oak woodland is primarily found along shaded ravines.

METHODS

Suitable habitat areas within the study area were surveyed eight times for vireo and five times for flycatcher. Flycatcher-permitted Dudek wildlife biologist, Brock A. Ortega (Permit # TE813545-

6), conducted all combined flycatcher/vireo surveys (Table 1). The flycatcher-permitted biologist used audio-playback techniques to elicit flycatcher responses. Focused surveys for these species were initiated on May 19, 2018, and continued through July 28, 2018.

Table 1
Vireo and Flycatcher Survey Schedule and Conditions

Survey Pass #/ Focus	Date	Hours	Personnel	Conditions (temperature, cloud cover, wind speed)
1-LBVI 1-SWFL	2018-05-19	6:30 AM–11:00 AM	BAO	60–72°F; 0–20% cc; 0–3 mph wind
2-LBVI	2018-05-28	5:30 AM–10:30 AM	BAO	57–74°F; 0–50% cc; 3–8 mph wind
3-LBVI 2-SWFL	2018-06-07	5:35 AM–10:06 AM	BAO	57–70°F; 20% cc; 3–8 mph wind
4-LBVI 3-SWFL	2018-06-17	6:10 AM–11:05 AM	BAO	60–80°F; 0% cc; 3–5 mph wind
5-LBVI	2018-06-27	5:20 AM–11:10 AM	BAO	55–90°F; 0% cc; 3–8 mph wind
6-LBVI 4-SWFL	2018-07-07	5:30 AM–10:30 AM	BAO	78–95°F; 0% cc; 0–1 mph wind
7-LBVI 5-SWFL	2018-07-17	5:30 AM–10:30 AM	BAO	76–88°F; 20–100% cc; 0–10 mph wind
8-LBVI	2018-07-28	5:45 AM–10:30 AM	BAO	60–89°F; 10–80% cc; 0–3 mph wind

Notes: LBVI = least Bell's vireo; SWFL = Southwestern willow flycatcher; BAO = Brock Ortega; cc = cloud cover; mph = miles per hour; °F = degrees Fahrenheit.

As directed by Stacey Love, United States Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) Recovery Permit Coordinator, surveys for vireo and flycatcher were not conducted concurrently. Due to differences in detectability, surveys were conducted sequentially, with surveys for the flycatcher first (i.e., first thing in the morning) and surveys for the vireo conducted afterwards. Additionally, for linear survey routes within a riparian corridor: flycatchers were surveyed from the starting point to the end, and vireos were surveyed on the way back. This route was arranged to cover all suitable habitat on site. A vegetation map (1:2,400 scale; 1 inch=200 feet) of the study area was available to record any detected vireo or flycatcher. Binoculars (7×50, 10×42, 10×50) were used to aid in detecting and identifying wildlife species.

The five surveys conducted for flycatcher followed the currently accepted protocol (*A Natural History Summary and Survey Protocol for the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher* [Sogge et al. 2010]), which states that a minimum of five survey visits is needed to evaluate project effects on flycatchers. It is recommended that one survey is made between May 15 and 31, two surveys between June 1 and June 24, and two surveys between June 25 and July 17. Surveys during the

final period (June 25 and July 17) were separated by at least five days. A tape of recorded flycatcher vocalizations was used, approximately every 50 to 100 feet within suitable habitat, to induce flycatcher responses. If a flycatcher had been detected, playing of the tape would have ceased to avoid harassment.

A Section 10(a)(1)(A) permit is not required to conduct presence/absence surveys for vireo. The eight surveys for vireo followed the currently accepted *Least Bell's Vireo Survey Guidelines* (USFWS, 2001), which states that a minimum of eight survey visits should be made to all riparian areas and any other potential vireo habitats between April 10 and July 31. The site visits are required to be conducted at least 10 days apart to maximize the detection of early and late arrivals, females, non-vocal birds, and nesting pairs. Taped playback of vireo vocalizations were not used during the surveys. Surveys were conducted between dawn and noon and were not conducted during periods of excessive or abnormal cold, heat, wind, rain, or other inclement weather.

Weather conditions, time of day, and season were appropriate for the detection of flycatcher and vireo (Table 1).

RESULTS

No vireo or flycatchers were observed during focused surveys.

Sensitive species observed included yellow warbler (*Dendroica petechia*), a California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Species of Special Concern; Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*), a CDFW Watch List species; Southern California rufous-crowned sparrow (*Aimophila ruficeps canescens*), a CDFW Watch List species; and San Diegan tiger whiptail (*Aspidoscelis tigris stejnegeri*), a CDFW Species of Special Concern. However, only yellow warbler was mapped during the focused survey. Sensitive species observation locations are shown in Figure 2. Brown-headed cowbird was also detected within the study area.

Fifty-three wildlife species were observed during the focused surveys. A full list of wildlife species observed during the survey is provided in Appendix A.

Please feel free to contact me at 760.479.4254 with questions or if you require additional information.

Recovery Permit Coordinator

Subject: 2018 Least Bell's Vireo and Southwestern Willow Flycatcher Focused Survey Report for the Torrey Wind Project, Boulevard, San Diego County, California

I certify that the information in this survey report and attached exhibits fully and accurately represent my work.

Sincerely,

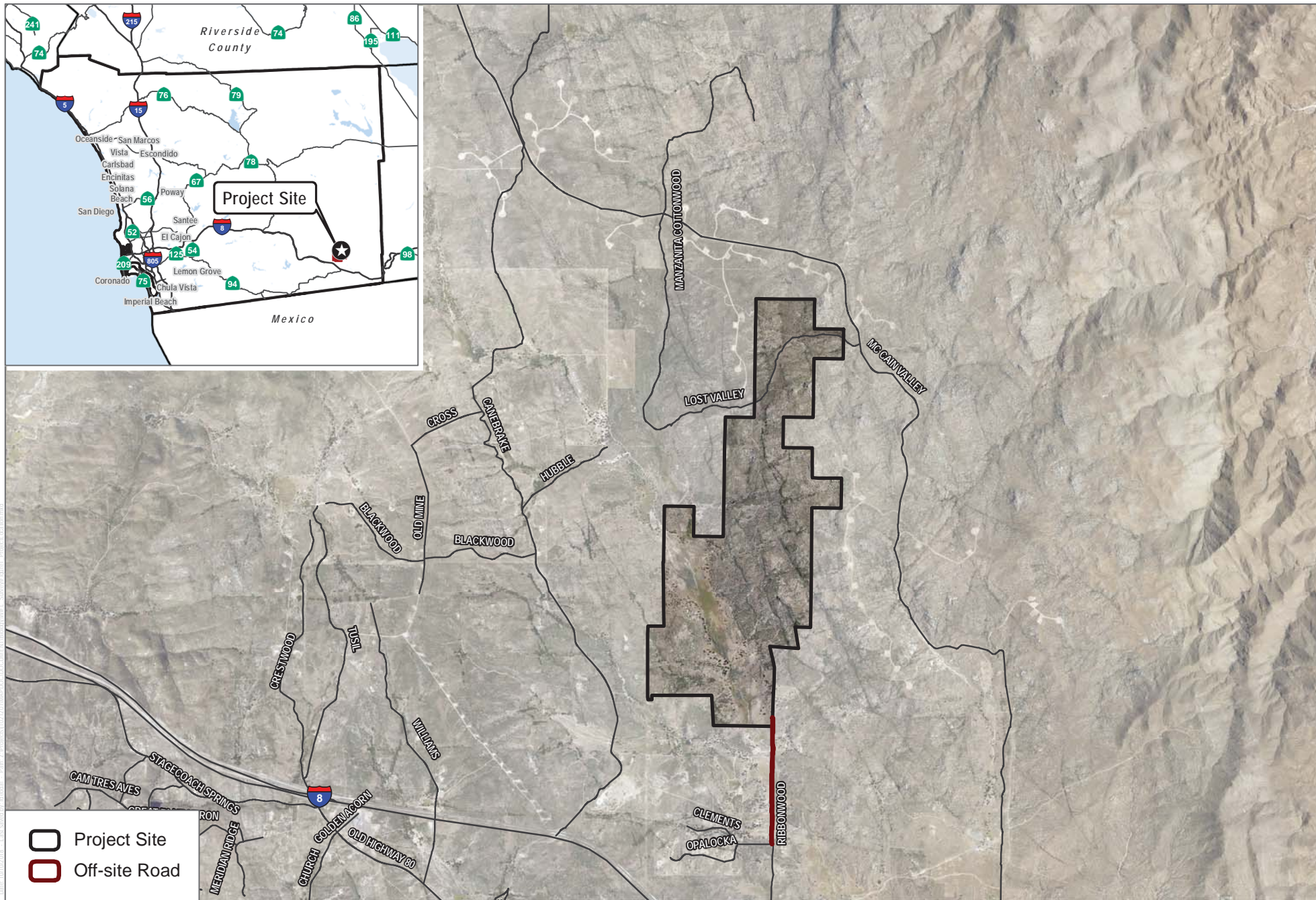


Brock Ortega
Permit #TE813545-6

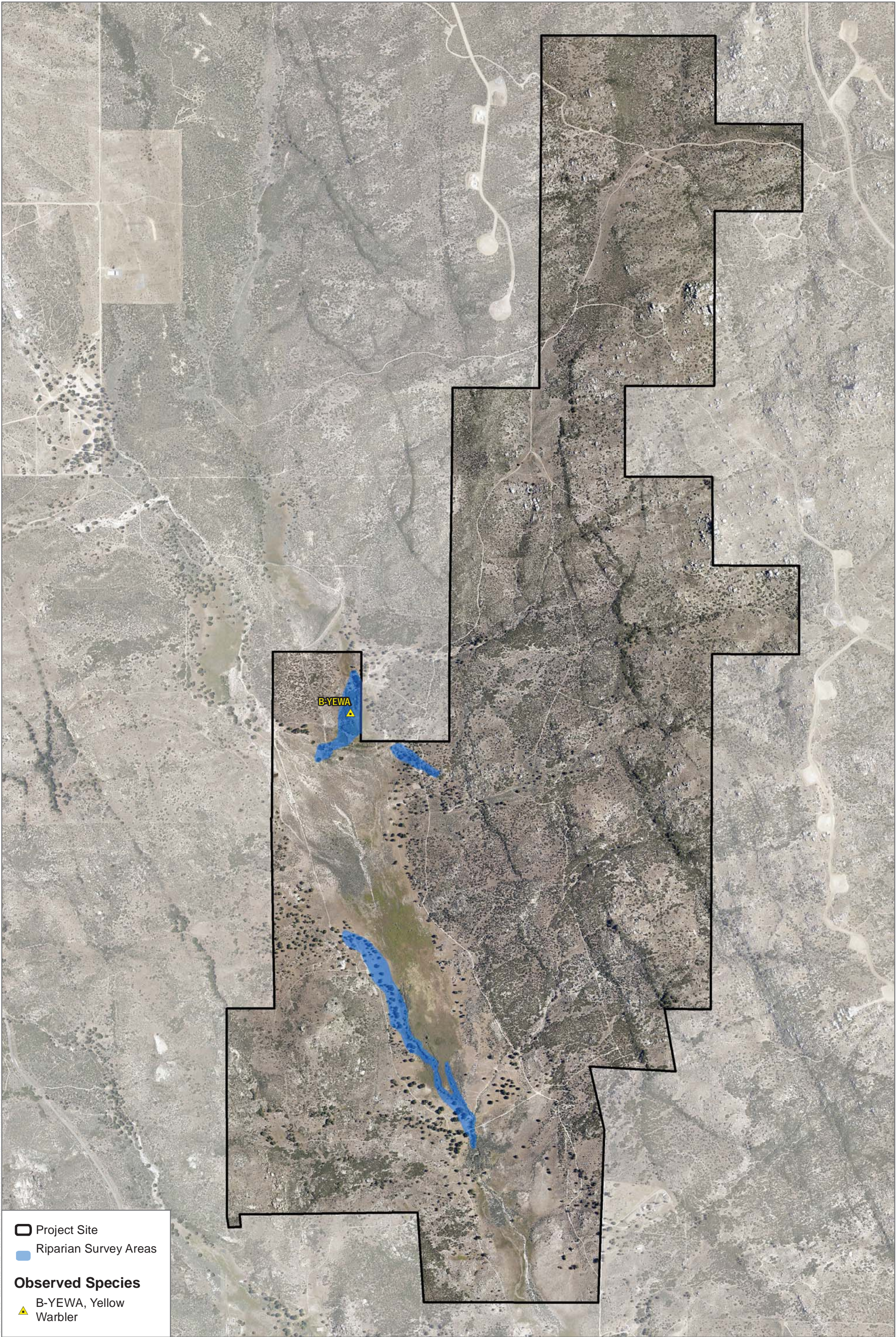
Att: *Figures 1–2*
Appendix A

REFERENCES

- Oberbauer, Thomas, Meghan Kelly, and Jeremy Buegge. March 2008. Draft Vegetation Communities of San Diego County. Based on “Preliminary Descriptions of the Terrestrial Natural Communities of California”, Robert F. Holland, Ph.D., October 1986.
- Sogge, M.K., Ahlers, Darrell, and Sferra, S.J., 2010. *A Natural History Summary and Survey Protocol for the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher*. U.S. Geological Survey Techniques and Methods 2A-10, 38 p.
- USDA (U.S. Department of Agriculture). 2018. Web Soil Survey [web application]. USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service. <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/>.
- USFWS. 2001. *Least Bell's Vireo Survey Guidelines*. January 19.



SOURCE: SANGIS 2017



SOURCE: SANGIS 2017

FIGURE 2

APPENDIX A

Wildlife Species Observed in Study Area

BIRD

BLACKBIRDS, ORIOLES & ALLIES

ICTERIDAE—BLACKBIRDS

Euphagus cyanocephalus—Brewer's blackbird

Icterus cucullatus—hooded oriole

* *Molothrus ater*—brown-headed cowbird

BUSHTITS

AEGITHALIDAE—LONG-TAILED TITS & BUSHTITS

Psaltiriparus minimus—bushtit

CARDINALS, GROSBEAKS & ALLIES

CARDINALIDAE—CARDINALS & ALLIES

Piranga ludoviciana—western tanager

FINCHES

FRINGILLIDAE—FRINGILLINE & CARDUELINE FINCHES & ALLIES

Haemorhous mexicanus—house finch

Spinus tristis—American goldfinch

FLYCATCHERS

TYRANNIDAE—TYRANT FLYCATCHERS

Sayornis nigricans—black phoebe

Sayornis saya—Say's phoebe

Tyrannus vociferans—Cassin's kingbird

HAWKS

ACCIPITRIDAE—HAWKS, KITES, EAGLES, & ALLIES

Accipiter cooperii—Cooper's hawk

Buteo jamaicensis—red-tailed hawk

HUMMINGBIRDS

TROCHILIDAE—HUMMINGBIRDS

Archilochus alexandri—black-chinned hummingbird

Calypte anna—Anna's hummingbird

JAYS, MAGPIES & CROWS

CORVIDAE—CROWS & JAYS

Apelocoma californica—California scrub-jay

Corvus brachyrhynchos—American crow

Corvus corax—common raven

MOCKINGBIRDS & THRASHERS

MIMIDAE—MOCKINGBIRDS & THRASHERS

Toxostoma redivivum—California thrasher

NEW WORLD QUAIL

ODONTOPHORIDAE—NEW WORLD QUAIL

Callipepla californica—California quail

NEW WORLD VULTURES

CATHARTIDAE—NEW WORLD VULTURES

Cathartes aura—turkey vulture

PIGEONS & DOVES

COLUMBIDAE—PIGEONS & DOVES

Zenaida macroura—mourning dove

ROADRUNNERS & CUCKOOS

CUCULIDAE—CUCKOOS, ROADRUNNERS, & ANIS

Geococcyx californianus—greater roadrunner

SILKY FLYCATCHERS

PTILOGONATIDAE—SILKY-FLYCATCHERS

Phainopepla nitens—phainopepla

SWIFTS

APODIDAE—SWIFTS

Aeronautes saxatalis—white-throated swift

THRUSHES

TURDIDAE—THRUSHES

Sialia mexicana—western bluebird

TITMICE

PARIDAE—CHICKADEES & TITMICE

Baeolophus inornatus—oak titmouse

WOOD WARBLERS & ALLIES

PARULIDAE—WOOD-WARBLERS

Cardellina pusilla—Wilson's warbler

Setophaga petechia—yellow warbler

WOODPECKERS

PICIDAE—WOODPECKERS & ALLIES

Colaptes auratus—northern flicker

Dryobates nuttallii—Nuttall's woodpecker

WRENS

TROGLODYTIDAE—WRENS

Salpinctes obsoletus—rock wren

Thryomanes bewickii—Bewick's wren

Troglodytes aedon—house wren

WRENTITS

TIMALIIDAE—BABBLERS

Chamaea fasciata—wrentit

NEW WORLD SPARROWS

PASSERELLIDAE—NEW WORLD SPARROWS

Aimophila ruficeps canescens—Southern California rufous-crowned sparrow

Aimophila ruficeps—rufous-crowned sparrow

Artemisiospiza nevadensis—sagebrush sparrow

Melospiza melodia—song sparrow

Pipilo maculatus—spotted towhee

Spizella atrogularis—black-chinned sparrow

MAMMAL

CANIDS

CANIDAE—WOLVES & FOXES

Canis latrans—coyote

CATS

FELIDAE—CATS

Lynx rufus—bobcat

HARES & RABBITS

LEPORIDAE—HARES & RABBITS

Lepus californicus—black-tailed jackrabbit

Sylvilagus audubonii—desert cottontail

MUSTELIDS

MEPHITIDAE—SKUNKS

Mephitis mephitis—striped skunk

POCKET GOPHERS

GEOMYIDAE—POCKET GOPHERS

Thomomys bottae—Botta's pocket gopher

SQUIRRELS

SCIURIDAE—SQUIRRELS

Ammospermophilus leucurus—white-tailed antelope squirrel

Spermophilus (Otospermophilus) beecheyi—California ground squirrel

UNGULATES

CERVIDAE—DEERS

Odocoileus hemionus—mule deer

RATS, MICE, & VOLES

CRICETIDAE—RATS, MICE, & VOLES

Neotoma sp.—woodrat

REPTILE

LIZARDS

PHRYNOSOMATIDAE—IGUANID LIZARDS

Sceloporus occidentalis—western fence lizard

Uta stansburiana—common side-blotched lizard

TEIIDAE—WHIPTAIL LIZARDS

Aspidoscelis tigris stejnegeri—San Diegan tiger whiptail

* signifies introduced (non-native) species

