

November 6, 2018

10991-10951

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Attn: Recovery Permit Coordinator
Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office
2493 Portola Road, Suite B
Ventura, California 93003

Subject: 2018 Focused California Gnatcatcher Survey Report for The Creek at Dominguez Hills Project and the Carol Kimmelman Sports and Academic Campus Project, City of Carson, California

Dear Recovery Permit Coordinator:

This report documents the results of protocol-level presence/absence surveys for the coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*; CAGN). Non-breeding season focused surveys were conducted throughout all areas of suitable habitat (i.e., California sagebrush-California buckwheat scrub) for the proposed The Creek at Dominguez Hills project site and the adjacent Carol Kimmelman Sports and Academic Campus project site, located in the City of Carson, Los Angeles County, California (Figure 1). Suitable habitat for CAGN consists of approximately 14.9 acres of California buckwheat-California sagebrush scrub and California brittlebush-California sagebrush scrub within the combined study area (both project sites plus a 500-foot buffer). Dudek biologist Tommy Molioo (TE06873C-0.1) conducted CAGN surveys on the study area from August through September 2018.

The CAGN is a federally listed threatened species and a California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Species of Special Concern. It is closely associated with coastal sage scrub habitat and typically occurs below 950 feet elevation and on slopes less than 40% (Atwood 1990), but CAGN have been observed at elevations greater than 2,000 feet. The species is threatened primarily by loss, degradation, and fragmentation of coastal sage scrub habitat, and is also impacted by brown-headed cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) nest parasitism (Braden et al. 1997).

LOCATION AND EXISTING CONDITIONS

The approximately 87-acre The Creek at Dominguez Hills project site and approximately 86-acre Carol Kimmelman Sports and Academic Campus project site (collectively referred to as the project sites) is located in predominantly developed area of the City of Carson, within land owned and operated by the County of Los Angeles (Figure 1). The study area for this survey

effort includes the combined boundary of the project sites, plus a 500-foot buffer around the project sites. Specifically, the study area is physically located southwest of the intersection of East 192nd Street (Martin Luther King Jr. Street) and Avalon Boulevard, within the existing Victoria Park Golf Course facility, northwest of Del Amo Boulevard and northeast of Interstate 405 (Figure 2).

The approximate centroid of the study area is at latitude 33.852773° North and longitude -118.269870° West within Sections 5, 6, and 8, Township 4 South, Range 13 West on the Torrance, California U.S. Geological Survey 7.5-minute topographic quadrangle map.

Elevations on the study area are relatively flat with some undulations and channels, with a range from approximately 5 feet to 30 feet above mean sea level. Soils mapped within the study area include: Urban land-Biscailuz-Hueneme, drained complex, Urban land-Thums-Windfetch complex, Urban land-Aquic Xerorthents, fine substratum-Cropley complex, and Urban land-Windfetch-Typic Haploxerolls complex.

VEGETATION COMMUNITIES

Twelve vegetation communities and land covers were identified within the study area, which are shown in Figure 2. The vegetation communities include: California buckwheat-California sagebrush association, California brittlebush-California sagebrush association, disturbed California buckwheat-California sagebrush association, fourwing saltbush alliance, freshwater marsh alliance, and Menzies's goldenbush alliance. Land covers within the study area include: open water, developed, disturbed habitat, non-native woodland, non-native grassland, and parks and ornamental plantings. Suitable CAGN habitat within the study area includes the California brittlebush-California sagebrush and California buckwheat-California sagebrush scrub, including disturbed portions of California buckwheat-California sagebrush scrub. These vegetation communities that provide suitable habitat for CAGN are described in detail below. These suitable habitat areas are highlighted in Figure 2.

California Brittlebush-California Sagebrush Association

The California brittlebush-California sagebrush association (*Encelia californica-Artemisia californica*) includes California sagebrush and black sage as the co-dominant shrubs in the canopy. This alliance has a continuous or intermittent shrub canopy less than 7 feet (2 meters) in height with a variable ground layer (Sawyer et al. 2009). Species associated with this alliance include chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*), California brittlebush, Eastern Mojave buckwheat,

chaparral yucca, common deerweed, and white sage (Sawyer et al. 2009). This community occurs in the southern portion of the study area, in an area located between golf course fairways.

The California brittlebush-California sagebrush association does not have a state ranking, meaning it is apparently secure globally and is not vulnerable to extirpation or extinction in the state. This association is not considered a special-status vegetation community per CDFW (2010b).

California Buckwheat-California Sagebrush Association

The California buckwheat-California sagebrush association (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*-*Artemisia californica*) includes Eastern Mojave (California) buckwheat and California sagebrush as the co-dominant shrubs in the canopy. This association has a continuous or intermittent shrub canopy less than 7 feet (2 meters) in height with a variable ground layer that may be grassy (Sawyer et al. 2009). Species typically observed within this association include black sage (*Salvia mellifera*), white sage (*Salvia apiana*), California brittlebush (*Encelia farinosa*), chaparral yucca (*Yucca whipplei*), Mendocino bushmallow (*Malacothamnus fasciculatus*), Menzies' goldenbush (*Isocoma menziesii*), coyotebrush (*Baccharis pilularis*), and common deerweed (*Acmispon glaber* var. *glaber*) (Sawyer et al. 2009). This vegetation community association occurs in the western portion of the study area, along the boundaries of the existing golf course.

The California buckwheat-California sagebrush association does not have a state rank, meaning it is apparently secure globally and is not vulnerable to extirpation or extinction in the state. This association is not considered a special-status vegetation community per CDFW (2010b).

California Buckwheat-California Sagebrush Disturbance Mapping Unit

The California buckwheat-California sagebrush disturbance mapping unit is not recognized by the Natural Communities List (CDFG 2010). This mapping unit was used to differentiate areas co-dominated by California buckwheat and California sagebrush, but characterized by areas of disturbance particularly within the understory that creates a more open canopy. The California buckwheat scrub-California sagebrush association disturbance mapping unit within the study area is substantially disturbed from previous and ongoing disturbances. This community supports anywhere from 20% to 40% cover of native vegetation dominated by California buckwheat and 60% to 80% cover of non-native annual grasses, other non-native species, and bare ground. Although the California buckwheat-California sagebrush association within the study area is dominated by California buckwheat and California sagebrush, it also contains forbs and grasses dominated by bromes (*Bromus* spp.), wild oat (*Avena fatua*), fescue (*Festuca* sp.), black mustard,

stork's bill, and star-thistle (*Centaurea* sp.). This vegetation community occurs along the northwestern portion of the study area where the slope stabilization is proposed to occur.

The California buckwheat-California sagebrush association disturbance mapping unit does not have a state rank, meaning it is apparently secure globally and is not vulnerable to extirpation or extinction in the state. This association is not considered a special-status vegetation community per CDFW (2010b).

METHODS

The presence/absence focused survey for CAGN was conducted within the study area between August 8, 2018 and October 4, 2018. The survey was conducted in accordance with the schedule provided in Table 2. The specific areas surveyed and the survey route are depicted on Figure 2. Designated Critical Habitat for this species does not occur within the study area. The nearest designated Critical Habitat for CAGN is located approximately 6 miles southwest of the study area on the Palos Verdes peninsula.

Table 2
Survey Dates and Conditions

Date	Personnel	Temperature	Wind	Sky	Time
8/8/2018	Tommy Molioo	77°F–90°F	1–2 mph	0% cc	0824-1205
8/15/2018	Tommy Molioo	74°F–81°F	0–2 mph	10%-90% cc	0815-1132
8/22/2018	Tommy Molioo	75°F–81°F	1–2 mph	0% cc	0830-1208
8/29/2018	Tommy Molioo	76°F–80°F	1–2 mph	100% cc	0913-1200
9/5/2018	Tommy Molioo	72°F–78°F	1–2 mph	10%-20% cc	0800-1030
9/13/2018	Tommy Molioo	71°F–72°F	1–2 mph	0%-10% cc	0834-1044
9/20/2018	Tommy Molioo	71°F–74°F	1-2 mph	10% cc	0830-1045
9/27/2018	Tommy Molioo	72°F–74°F	1-2 mph	0% cc	0820-1134
10/4/2018	Tommy Molioo	68°F–75°F	1-4 mph	0%-50% cc	0909-1052

* Survey Conditions: °F = degrees Fahrenheit; cc = cloud cover; mph = miles per hour

The survey was conducted following the currently accepted protocol of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), *Coastal California Gnatcatcher (Poliptila californica californica) Presence/Absence Survey Protocol* (USFWS 1997). The non-breeding season survey included nine visits at a minimum of 7-day intervals, which is amended from the standard protocol of 14-day intervals as authorized by USFWS (USFWS 2018). In accordance with the protocol, no more than 80-acres of suitable habitat were surveyed by a

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single biologist during each site visit. Survey routes are shown in Figure 2, and allowed for complete audible and visual coverage of all suitable CAGN habitat on site.

A 1:2,400-scale topographic map (1 inch = 200 feet) overlain with vegetation polygons and the study area was utilized during the survey. Additionally, digital mobile maps were used during the surveys to assist in navigating each survey area. Weather conditions, time of day, and season were appropriate for the detection of gnatcatchers and are provided in Table 2. Appropriate binoculars (e.g., 10x50 magnification) were used to aid in detecting and identifying bird species. A recording of gnatcatcher vocalizations was played approximately every 200 feet to induce responses from potentially present gnatcatchers. Vocalization-playback would have been terminated immediately upon detection of any gnatcatchers to minimize the potential for harassment.

RESULTS

There were no CAGN observed or detected within the study area during any of the nine focused surveys. A full list of bird species observed during the surveys and detected within proximity of the study area is provided in Attachment B. No potential nests suitable for CAGN were detected. Additionally, no predatory species for CAGN were observed during the surveys.

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

Sincerely,



Tommy Molioo
Permit # TE-06873C-0.1

*Att: A, Figure 1, Project Location Map
Figure 2, CAGN Survey Route
B, Compendium of Wildlife Species Observed or Detected*

Recovery Permit Coordinator

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ATTACHMENT A
Figures

ATTACHMENT B
*Compendium of Wildlife Species
Observed or Detected*

ATTACHMENT B
Compendium of Wildlife Species Observed or Detected

WILDLIFE

BIRD

BLACKBIRDS, ORIOLES & ALLIES

ICTERIDAE—BLACKBIRDS

Euphagus cyanocephalus—Brewer's blackbird

Sturnella neglecta—western meadowlark

BUSHTITS

AEGITHALIDAE—LONG-TAILED TITS & BUSHTITS

Psaltriparus minimus—bushtit

CARDINALS, GROSBEAKS & ALLIES

CARDINALIDAE—CARDINALS & ALLIES

Piranga ludoviciana—western tanager

FALCONS

FALCONIDAE—CARACARAS & FALCONS

Falco mexicanus—prairie falcon

Falco sparverius—American kestrel

FINCHES

FRINGILLIDAE—FRINGILLINE & CARDUELINE FINCHES & ALLIES

Spinus psaltria—lesser goldfinch

FLYCATCHERS

TYRANNIDAE—TYRANT FLYCATCHERS

Sayornis nigricans—black phoebe

Tyrannus verticalis—western kingbird

Tyrannus vociferans—Cassin's kingbird

ATTACHMENT B (Continued)

HAWKS

ACCIPITRIDAE—HAWKS, KITES, EAGLES, & ALLIES

Buteo jamaicensis—red-tailed hawk

Circus hudsonius—northern harrier

HERONS & BITTERNS

ARDEIDAE—HERONS, BITTERNS, & ALLIES

Egretta thula—snowy egret

HUMMINGBIRDS

TROCHILIDAE—HUMMINGBIRDS

Calypte anna—Anna's hummingbird

Selasphorus sasin—Allen's hummingbird

PIGEONS & DOVES

COLUMBIDAE—PIGEONS & DOVES

Zenaida macroura—mourning dove

SHOREBIRDS

RECURVIROSTRIDAE—STILTS & AVOCETS

Himantopus mexicanus—black-necked stilt

CHARADRIIDAE—LAPWINGS & PLOVERS

Charadrius vociferus—killdeer

SHRIKES

LANIIDAE—SHRIKES

Lanius ludovicianus—loggerhead shrike

STARLINGS & ALLIES

STURNIDAE—STARLINGS

Sturnus vulgaris—European starling*

ATTACHMENT B (Continued)

SWALLOWS

HIRUNDINIDAE—SWALLOWS

Hirundo rustica—barn swallow

Petrochelidon pyrrhonota—cliff swallow

Stelgidopteryx serripennis—northern rough-winged swallow

THRUSHES

TURDIDAE—THRUSHES

Sialia mexicana—western bluebird

WOOD WARBLERS & ALLIES

PARULIDAE—WOOD-WARBLERS

Setophaga coronata—yellow-rumped warbler

NEW WORLD SPARROWS

PASSERELLIDAE—NEW WORLD SPARROWS

Melospiza melodia—song sparrow

Melospiza crissalis—California towhee

MAMMAL

DOMESTIC

CANIDS

CANIDAE—WOLVES & FOXES

Canis latrans—coyote

HARES & RABBITS

LEPORIDAE—HARES & RABBITS

Sylvilagus audubonii—desert cottontail

POCKET GOPHERS

GEOMYIDAE—POCKET GOPHERS

Thomomys bottae—Botta's pocket gopher

ATTACHMENT B (Continued)

SQUIRRELS

SCIURIDAE—SQUIRRELS

Spermophilus (Otospermophilus) beecheyi—California ground squirrel

Sciurus niger—eastern fox squirrel*

REPTILE

LIZARDS

PHRYNOSOMATIDAE—IGUANID LIZARDS

Sceloporus occidentalis—western fence lizard

Uta stansburiana—common side-blotched lizard

* signifies introduced (non-native) species

ATTACHMENT B (Continued)

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