

Cummings Environmental, Inc.

MEMORANDUM

TO: Jim Whalen, Tyler Martin, Ty Sterns, Yolanda Maeder, Kyle Kennedy

FROM: Gretchen Cummings

DATE: 3 January 2018

SUBJ: 2017 Annual Report and 2018 Work Plan for the Lantern Crest Open Space Preserve

Following is a summary of the work performed in 2017 for inclusion in the 2017 Annual Report being prepared by J. Whalen Associates, Inc.:

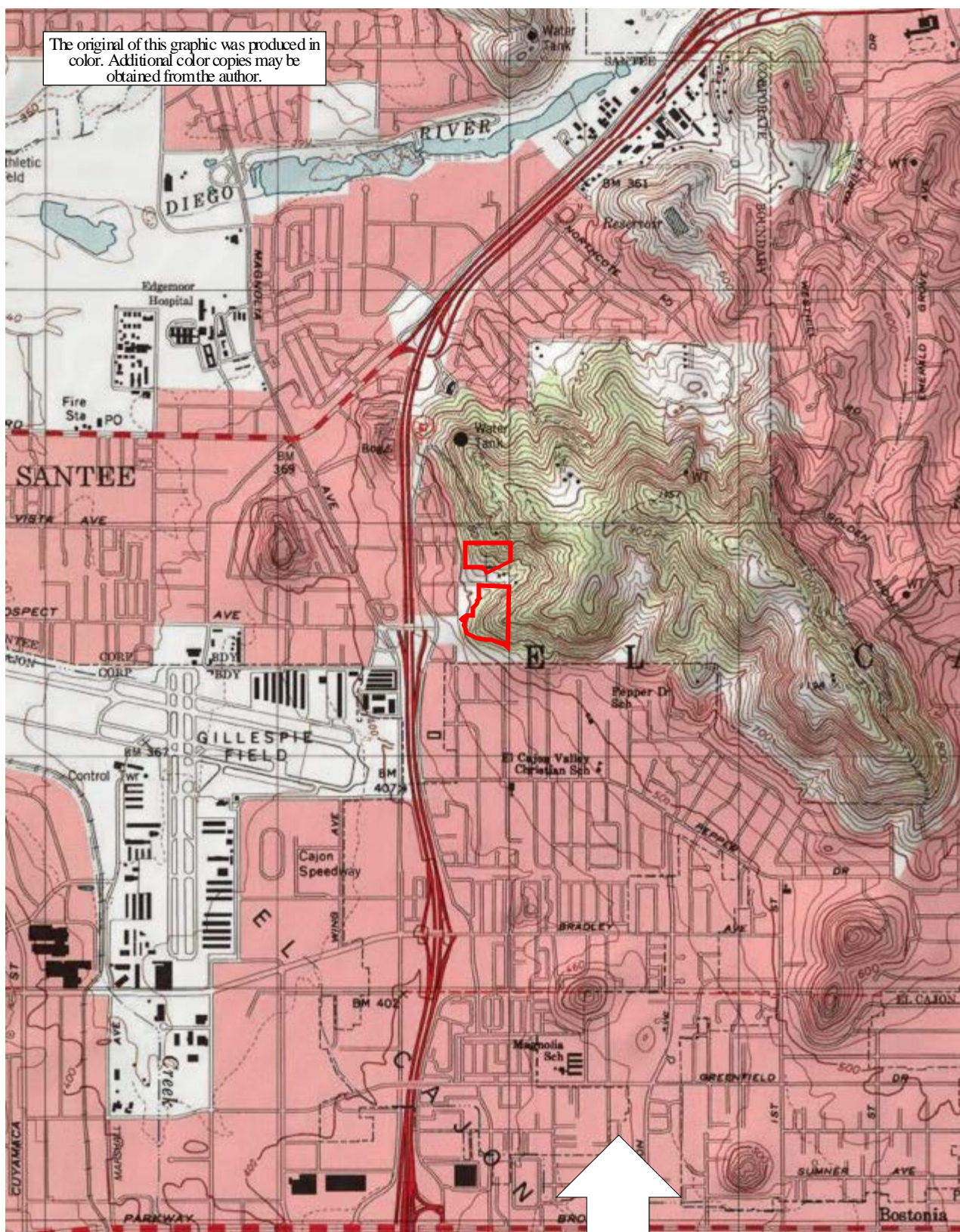
- Monthly site visits were made to the Lantern Crest Open Space Preserve (see Figure 1) during 2017. In order to save money, the visits were often multipurpose, achieving multiple tasks during one visit. The general site patrol visits were conducted by Gretchen Cummings on 25 January, 24 February, 30 March, 26 April, 31 May, 9 June, 28 July, 23 August, 30 September, 31 October, 30 November, and 27 December.
- A federal protocol survey for the California Gnatcatcher was conducted this year on 26 April, 31 May, and 9 June. At least one pair of California Gnatcatcher utilize the site during the breeding season for foraging (see Figure 2 for locations and attached California Gnatcatcher report for specific details). It should also be noted that a pair was seen incidentally on 28 July, as was an individual that the pair chased off-site to the west into the landscaping (see Figure 2). A pair was seen again on 30 November in the vicinity (see Figure 2). The next scheduled protocol survey for the California Gnatcatcher is in 2020.
- The 31 May site visit consisted of the biological monitoring visit. During this visit, Gretchen Cummings noted the quality of the habitats, the extent of invasive plants, and checked on the population of San Diego County *Viguiera* (*Viguiera laciniata*). Special attention was given to locating any “zero tolerance” weed species previously recorded on the site, namely Red Brome (*Bromus madritensis rubens*). More patches of Red Brome were identified this year (most likely due to all the rain in 2016), but had already gone to seed. These locations were mapped for removal in 2018. The native Diegan Coastal Sage Scrub habitat is doing well with numerous California Sage (*Artemisia californica*) seedlings approximately 14 to 18 inches in height. The population of San Diego County *Viguiera* on-site is healthy and stable. It bloomed in late April/early May.
- During the 23 August visit, an Urban Corps crew removed patches of Short-pod Mustard (*Hirschfeldia incana*) in the southern part of the preserve. A Coast Horned Lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*) was found in the area where the Mustard was being removed (see Figure 2 for location).

- Two active homeless encampments were identified within the preserve this year, one in May and one in December, but both at the same location. There is a Laurel Sumac shrub in the southwest portion of the site that gets frequent use by the homeless. It is blocked on two sides by boulders and is not that far up the hill. The Sheriff's Office was contacted about the May encampment, and they will be contacted in January 2018 for the December encampment.
- All wildlife species are noted during every site visit conducted by Gretchen Cummings. Any sensitive wildlife species locations are mapped with a GPS. Four sensitive wildlife species, the California Gnatcatcher, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Coast Horned Lizard, and the Orange-throated Whiptail were recorded on the preserve during 2017 (see Figure 2 for locations).

2018 Work Plan: Based upon the Habitat Management Plan prepared by Helix Environmental Planning, Inc. dated January 11, 2011, the following is a summary of the work to be performed within the preserve in 2018:

- Contact the Sheriff's Office in January to coordinate removal of illegal encampment;
- Conduct monthly site patrols to remove trash and/or debris, follow up on any illegal human activities, such as off-road vehicle use, and encampments;
- Conduct a biological assessment in May to monitor the health of the native vegetation, qualitatively assess the San Diego Viguiera population, and identify non-native plant populations for removal;
- Remove invasive species, such as Red Brome and Short-pod Mustard, in January/February before they set seed.

If there are any questions, please feel free to contact Gretchen Cummings via email or phone.



Cummings Environmental Job Number 1632.21C 3 January 2018

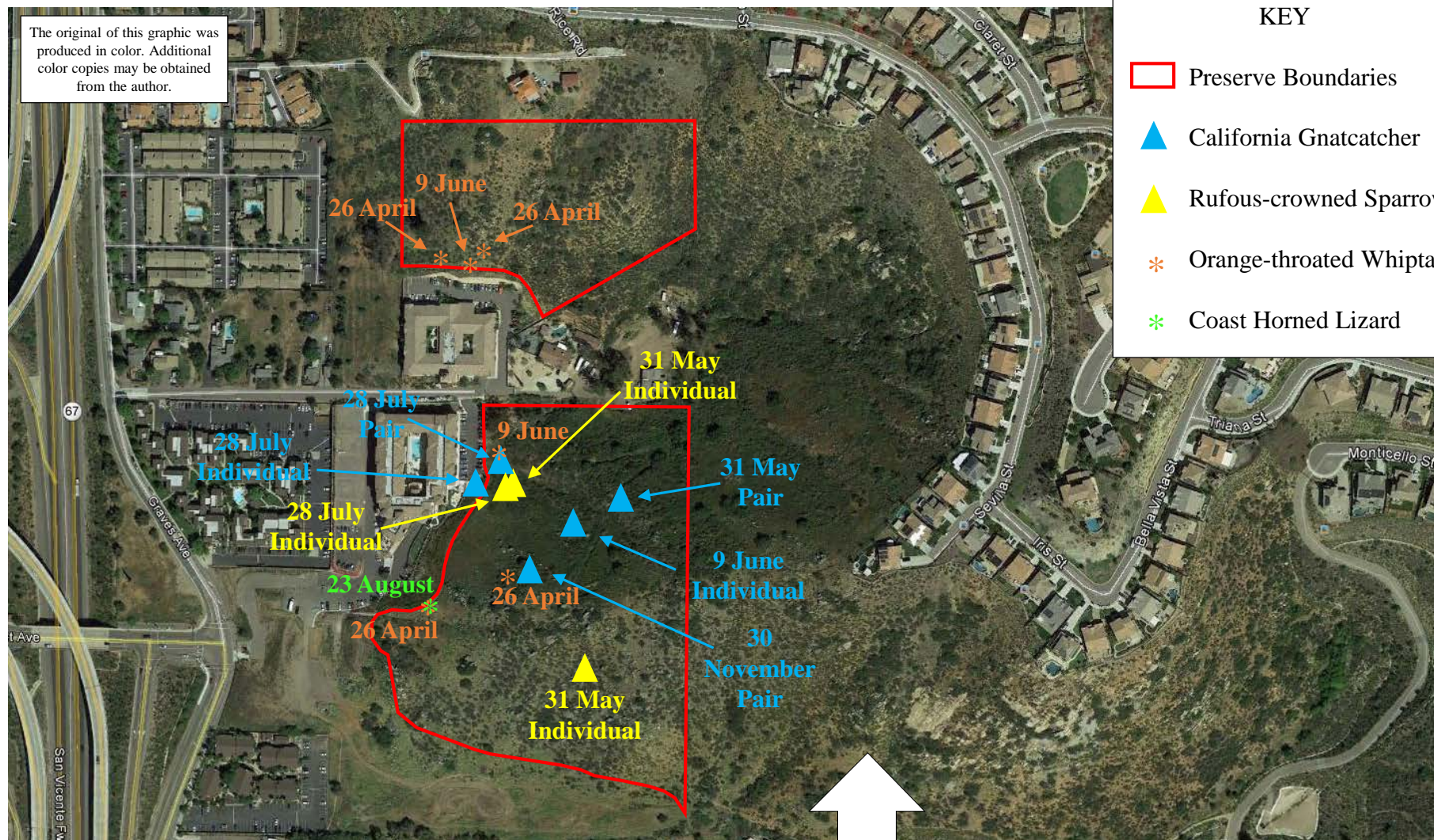
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**Lantern Crest Open Space Shown on the
U.S.G.S. 7 1/2-min El Cajon Quad Map**
[Base Map Created with TOPO!® ©2006 National
Geographic; ©2005 TeleAtlas]

**Figure
1**

The original of this graphic was produced in color. Additional color copies may be obtained from the author.



Cummings Environmental Job Number 1632.21C 3 January 2018

Scale: 1-inch = 400-feet

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**Year 2017 Sensitive Wildlife Species Sightings on the Lantern Crest Open Space
Shown on an Aerial Photo [Base Photo © 2016 Google; Imagery Date 3/22/2016]**

**Figure
2**

An Assessment of the California Gnatcatcher over the 19.3-Acre Lantern Crest Open Space Property City of Santee, California

Prepared For:

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21 July 2017
Job Number 1632.21C

Cummings Environmental, Inc.

An Assessment of the California Gnatcatcher Over the 19.3-Acre Lantern Crest Open Space Property City of Santee, California

SUMMARY

A federal protocol survey for the California Gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila californica*) was conducted over the 19.3-acre Lantern Crest Open Space during the 2017 breeding season under permit TE-031850-5. The Gnatcatcher survey is part of the long-term monitoring of the open space. The survey was conducted within the Sage Scrub habitat on the property (approximately 17.6-acres of the 19.3-acre site). The Lantern Crest Open Space is located in the City of Santee, east of State Route 67 and Graves Avenue on the lower slopes of Rattlesnake Mountain (see Figures 1 and 2). Based on the results of this 2017 federal protocol survey, it appears that California Gnatcatchers presently utilize the survey area during the breeding season, at least for foraging.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The underlying geology of the survey area is mapped as Granitoid Rocks (Todd, 2004). The surficial soils mapped by Bowman (1973) are recorded as Cienega-Fallbrook rocky sandy loams, 30-65% slopes, eroded (CnG2).

The Lantern Crest Open Space is located on the lower slopes of Rattlesnake Mountain (see Figure 1). As can be seen in that figure, the southern portion of the open space is situated on a west-facing slope, and the northern portion of the open space is situated on a south-facing slope.

FLORAL ENVIRONMENT

The majority of the Lantern Crest Open Space (17.6-acres) is occupied by Diegan Coastal Sage Scrub. Shrub species observed within the site that are indicative of this vegetation community included California Sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*) and California Buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*). It should also be noted that the site contains San Diego Viguiera (*Viguiera laciniata*), a sensitive shrub species with a California Native Plant Society's California Rare Plant Rank of 4.3 (CNPS, 2017).

METHODS

The survey was conducted to determine the presence or absence of the California Gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila californica*) in accordance with the current federal protocol (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1997). On each field date, the site was surveyed through a series of random pedestrian

transects. The recorded call of the California Gnatcatcher was utilized as a location technique (calls obtained through the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology; the recording is of a Type I call, in the sense of Atwood (1988)).

The dates, times of survey, and weather conditions for each of the three site visits were as follows:

26 April 2017 — The Gnatcatcher survey was conducted between 1030 and 1205 hours. At the beginning of the visit, the temperature was measured at 73.0°F. By the end of the survey, the temperature had risen to 76.3°F. The winds were blowing from the west at < 1.1 mph at 1030 hours. At 1205, wind speeds were measured at < 2.7 mph from the west. The sky was sunny and clear at the onset of the visit, but by the end of the survey, there was 20% cloud cover (one observer: Gretchen Cummings).

31 May 2017 — This second site visit of the federal protocol survey for the California Gnatcatcher was conducted between 0815 and 1015 hours. At the beginning of the visit, the temperature was measured at 62.7°F. By the end of the survey, the temperature had risen to 70.7°F. The winds were blowing from the west at < 1.6 mph at 0815 hours. At 1015 hours, the wind speeds were recorded at < 4.1 mph from the west. Cloud cover was 100% at the beginning of the survey, but the cloud cover decreased to 75% by the end of the observation period (one observer: Gretchen Cummings).

9 June 2017 — The third and final survey for the California Gnatcatcher was conducted between 0830 and 1030 hours. The sky was 90% cloudy at the beginning of the survey, but clear by the end of the observation period. At the onset of the visit, the temperature was measured at 69.2°F. By the end of the visit, the temperature had risen to 73.9°F. Winds were blowing from the west during the observation period. Wind speeds were measured at < 2.6 mph at 0830 hours and at < 2.8 mph at 1030 hours (one observer: Gretchen Cummings).

All birds heard and/or seen during the course of the survey were noted and that information is presented as Table 1. The reader is directed to that table for information about the avifauna present within the bounds of the property.

RESULTS

The diversity of avifauna observed was typical of Sage Scrub habitats in a suburban environment. A total of twenty-one bird species were observed during the three site visits. Year-round residents, such as Mourning Dove, Anna's Hummingbird, Bushtit, Northern Mockingbird, California Thrasher, California Towhee, House Finch, and Lesser Goldfinch were noted during each of the three site visits. A pair of California Gnatcatchers were observed within the Lantern Crest Open Space during the 31 May visit, and a single individual was heard during the 9 June survey (see Figure 2 for locations, and see the section on the California Gnatcatcher below). The only other sensitive bird species noted during the survey was the Rufous-crowned Sparrow.

California Gnatcatcher. The California Gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila californica*) is a threatened species under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). It is an obligate inhabitant of Sage Scrub vegetation types and is also found in Chaparral habitat where it integrates with Sage Scrub. Preston, et al. (1998), Atwood (1988), and Braden (1998) have demonstrated that the typical breeding territory of the Gnatcatcher is on the order of 20-acres. This is especially true where the habitats are more xeric and less diverse. Where the habitats are more mesic and have a higher shrub diversity, such as coastal San Diego County, the territories may be significantly less than 20-acres in size.

During the 2017 survey, a pair of California Gnatcatchers were observed on 31 May 2017 within the southern preserve area of the Lantern Crest Open Space (see Figure 2 for location). This pair was seen foraging together within the southern preserve area, and then the male flew off to the northern preserve area. The female continued to forage, but then she also flew off to the northern preserve area. On 9 June 2017, an individual California Gnatcatcher was heard only making a single call note and moving unseen through the shrubs (see Figure 2 for location).

Southern California Rufous-crowned Sparrow. The Rufous-crowned Sparrow (*Aimophila ruficeps canescens*) is on the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's Watch List (Fish and Wildlife, 2017a). During the 31 May 2017 visit, one individual was seen on a boulder and another individual was heard singing (see Figure 2 for locations).

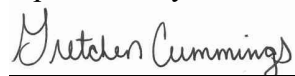
Other Wildlife (Non-Avian) Species. Two mammals and three reptiles were observed within the Lantern Crest Open Space. The two mammalian species were Audubon's Cottontail (*Sylvilagus audubonii*), and California Ground Squirrel (*Spermophilus beecheyi*). The three reptile species seen on-site were the Orange-throated Whiptail (*Aspidoscelis hyperythrus beldingi*), the Granite Spiny Lizard (*Sceloporus orcutti*), and the Side-blotched Lizard (*Uta stansburiana*). Of these five non-avian species, one is considered sensitive: the Orange-throated Whiptail. The Orange-throated Whiptail is considered a California Species of Concern by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (Fish and Wildlife, 2017a). Four individuals were noted during the 26 April 2017 site visit, and two individuals were seen during the 9 June 2017 visit (see Figure 2 for locations).

CONCLUSIONS

The Lantern Crest Open Space in the City of Santee was surveyed during 2017 for the California Gnatcatcher. In accordance with the federal protocol for the species, a total of three site visits were made to the property to determine the presence or absence of the bird species. Based on the results of the protocol survey, it appears that the Lantern Crest Open Space functions as foraging habitat for the California Gnatcatcher.

SURVEYOR CERTIFICATION

I certify that the information in this survey report and attached exhibits fully and accurately represents my work. Any errors or omissions are solely my responsibility.



Gretchen Cummings
Owner/Consulting Biologist
(TE-031850-5)

7/21/17

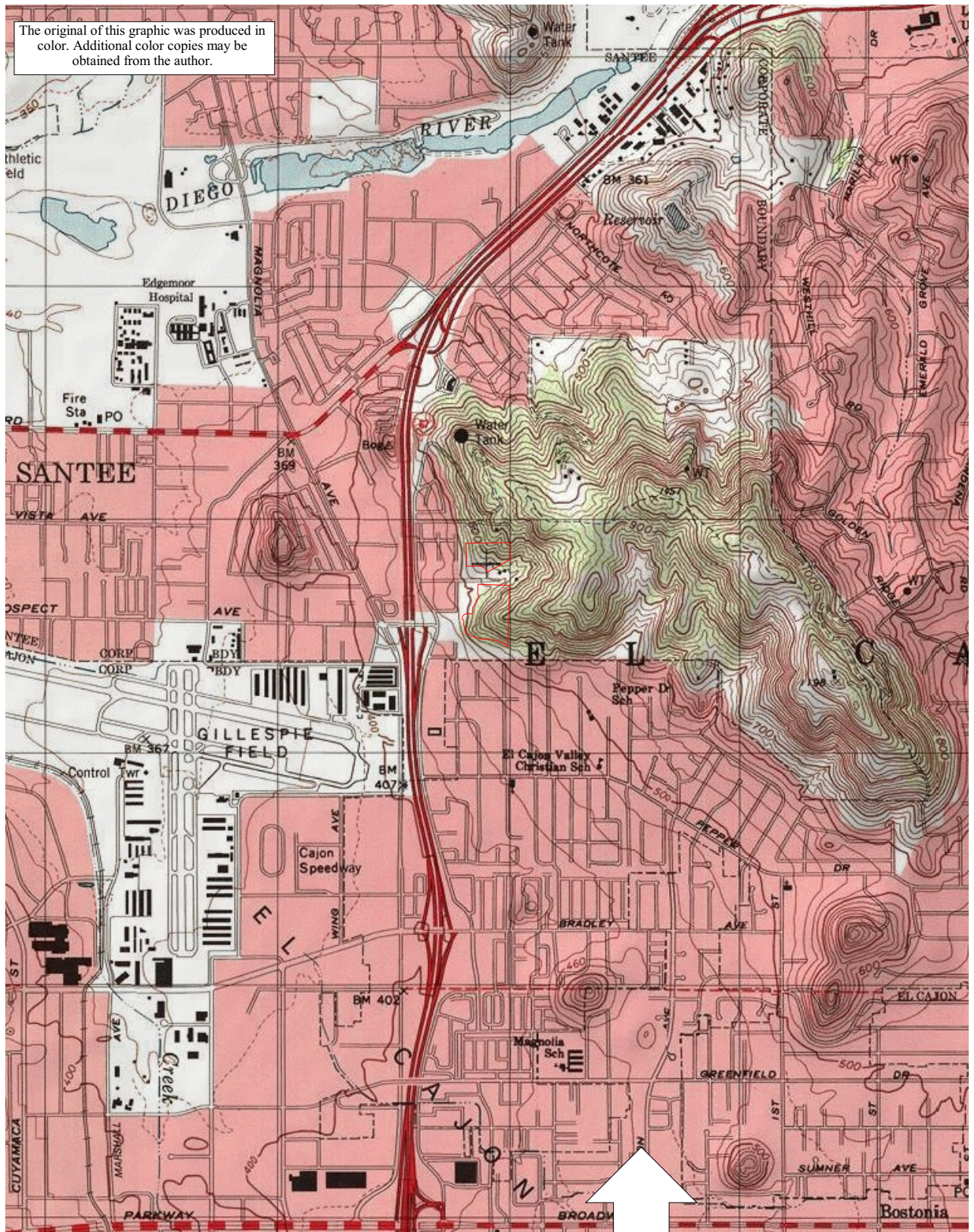
Date

Attachments

1. Figure 1 — Lantern Crest Open Space Shown on the U.S.G.S. 7½-minute El Cajon Quadrangle Map
2. Figure 2 — Locations of Sensitive Species Observations Made During the California Gnatcatcher Survey Over the Lantern Crest Open Space Shown on an Aerial Photo
3. Table 1 — Bird Species Observed During the Protocol California Gnatcatcher Presence/Absence Survey on the Lantern Crest Open Space Property
4. References Cited

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The original of this graphic was produced in color. Additional color copies may be obtained from the author.



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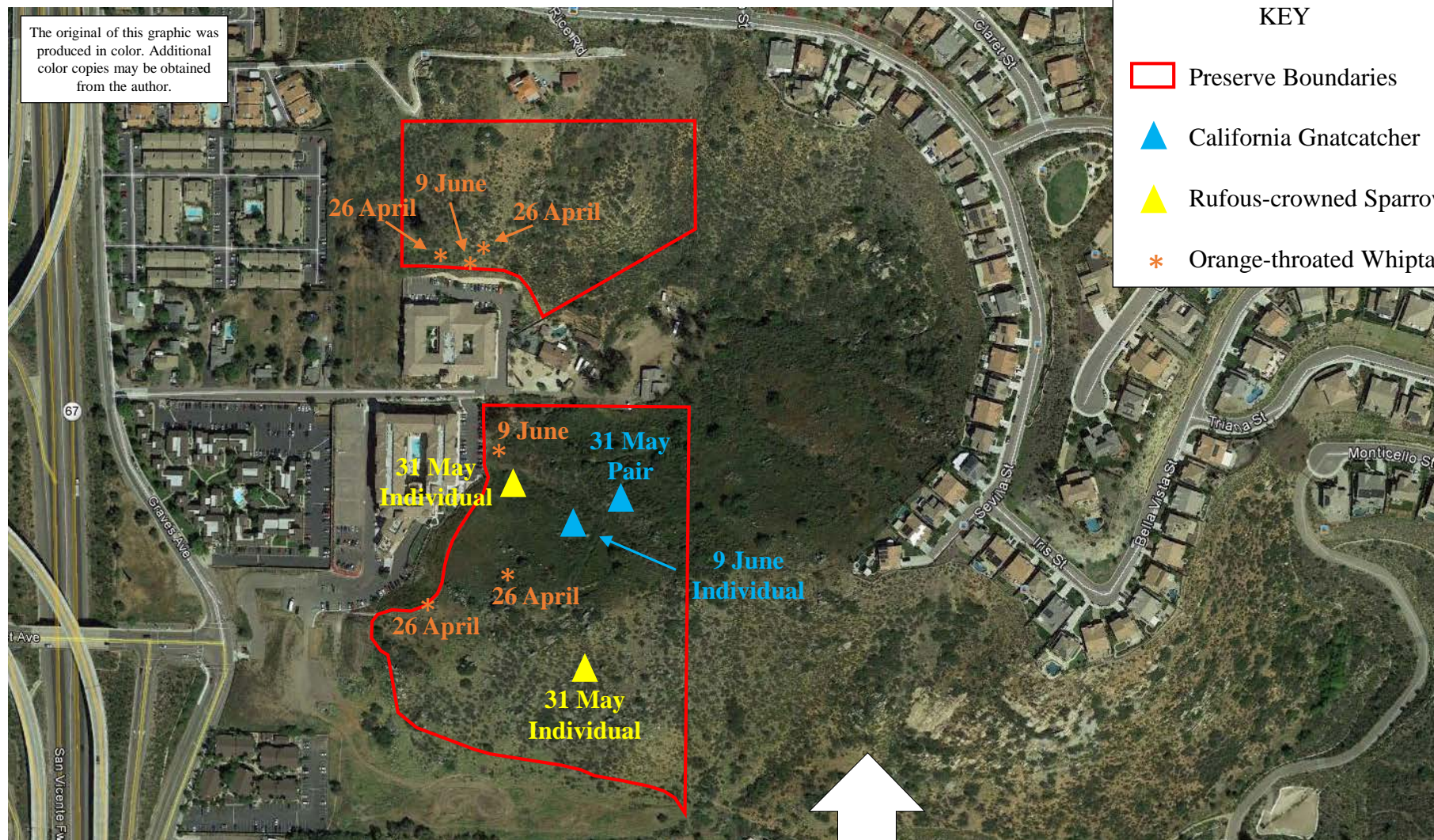
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**Lantern Crest Open Space Shown on the
U.S.G.S. 7½-min El Cajon Quad Map**
[Base Map Created with TOPO!® ©2006 National Geographic;
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**Figure
1**

The original of this graphic was produced in color. Additional color copies may be obtained from the author.



KEY

- Preserve Boundaries
- ▲ California Gnatcatcher
- ▲ Rufous-crowned Sparrow
- ✱ Orange-throated Whiptail

Cummings Environmental Job Number 1632.21C 21 July 2017

Scale: 1-inch = 400-feet

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**Locations of Sensitive Species Observations Made During the California
Gnatcatcher Survey Over the Lantern Crest Open Space Shown on an Aerial
Photo [Base Photo © 2016 Google; Imagery Date 3/22/2016]**

**Figure
2**

Table 1
Bird Species Observed During the Protocol
California Gnatcatcher Presence/Absence Survey
on the Lantern Crest Open Space Property in the
City of Santee, California

Species	26 April 2017	31 May 2017	9 June 2017	Notes
Red-tailed Hawk (<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>)	4	2	2	Confirmed breeding resident in the vicinity. A nest was observed in a Eucalyptus tree off-site in a residential back yard in between the north and south preserve parcels. On 4/26, an adult was seen at the nest with 3 nestlings. On 5/31, one adult was seen flying off-site to the north and one juvenile was seen in a Eucalyptus tree off-site to the northwest. On 6/9, two juveniles were seen flying overhead.
California Quail (<i>Callipepla californica</i>)	—	—	1	The Quail's nesting season is affected by rainfall such that in wetter years, the season is extended. During most years, nesting begins in late March and lasts until late June (Unitt, 2004). On 6/9, a California Qual was heard on-site.
Mourning Dove (<i>Zenaida macroura</i>)	6	10	7	Year-round resident in the vicinity. During each of the three visits, this species was heard or seen as overflights, seen perched on boulders, or flushed from the ground.
White-throated Swift (<i>Aeronautes saxatalis</i>)	—	3	3	Year-round resident in the vicinity. During the last two visits, this species was heard overflying the property.
Anna's Hummingbird (<i>Calypte anna</i>)	4	2	2	Year-round resident. This species was heard and/or seen during each site visit.
Costa's Hummingbird (<i>Calypte costae</i>)	1	—	—	Summer visitor in the vicinity. Along the coastal slope of San Diego County, the Costa's Hummingbird lays eggs from mid-April to mid-June. This species typically remains until July (Unitt, 2004). On 4/26, a male was seen and heard performing an aerial display on-site.

Species	26 April 2017	31 May 2017	9 June 2017	Notes
Cassin's Kingbird (<i>Tyrannus vociferans</i>)	—	1	4	Breeding resident in the vicinity. During the 31 May visit, a single individual was seen flycatching. During the 6/9 visit, a family group of two adults and two fledglings were seen on-site.
California Scrub Jay (<i>Aphelocoma californica</i>)	—	3	—	Year-round resident in the vicinity. On 5/31, three birds were heard off-site to the southeast.
Common Raven (<i>Corvus corax</i>)	—	1	—	Year-round resident in the vicinity. On 5/31, an individual was seen off-site to the north.
Cliff Swallow (<i>Petrochelidon pyrrhonota</i>)	4	3	5	Summer resident. This species was seen and/or heard overflying the property during each of the three visits.
Bushtit (<i>Psaltiriparus minimus</i>)	3	12	2	Year-round resident. This species was seen and/or heard during each of the three visits. On 5/31, a flock of twelve birds were seen foraging together on-site.
Bewick's Wren (<i>Thryomanes bewickii</i>)	2	—	—	Year-round resident. On 4/26, a pair was seen on the northwestern edge of the preserve.
California Gnatcatcher (<i>Polioptila californica</i>)	—	2	1	See text for discussion.
Wrentit (<i>Chamaea fasciata</i>)	1	—	—	Year-round resident in the vicinity. On 4/26, an individual was heard off-site to the east.
Northern Mockingbird (<i>Mimus polyglottos</i>)	3	2	1	Year-round resident. As a well-adapted urban bird (Unitt, 2004), this species most likely does not migrate. On 4/26, a pair was seen in the northern part of the preserve, and one was heard calling off-site to the north. On 5/31, one adult was scolding the juvenile Red-tailed Hawk perched in a Eucalyptus tree off-site to the northwest, and one adult was perched on the phone wires in between the preserve areas. On 6/9, one adult was seen flying from the northern preserve area to the southern preserve area.
California Thrasher (<i>Toxostoma redivivum</i>)	1	1	2	Breeding resident in the vicinity. This species was seen and/or heard during each of the three site visits. On 6/9, two juveniles were seen in the northern preserve area.

Species	26 April 2017	31 May 2017	9 June 2017	Notes
California Towhee (<i>Pipilo crissalis</i>)	8	8	9	Breeding resident on-site. At least four pair of California Towhees occur within the preserve. On 5/31, nestlings were heard in the southern preserve area. On 6/9, one fledgling was seen in the southern preserve area.
Southern California Rufous-crowned Sparrow (<i>Aimophila ruficeps canescens</i>)	—	2	—	Year-round resident in the vicinity. On 5/31, one Rufous-crowned Sparrow was seen perched on a boulder and one was heard singing.
Hooded Oriole (<i>Icterus cucullatus</i>)	2	2	1	Summer visitor in the vicinity. Palm trees are the preferred nest site of the Hooded Oriole and there are several palm trees around the residences in between the two preserve areas. A pair was seen during the first two visits. On 6/9, just the female was seen foraging on-site.
House Finch (<i>Carpodacus mexicanus</i>)	7	12	12	Year-round resident and suspected breeding resident on-site. This species was heard and/or seen during each site visit.
Lesser Goldfinch (<i>Carduelis psaltria</i>)	2	8	3	Breeding resident in the vicinity. During the 4/26 visit, a female of a pair was seen with nesting material.

Total Species: 21

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