

Wildlife Survey

Park Hill Estates
APN 59-290-041
4700 Via Los Santos
Santa Barbara, California

Prepared For: Kathleen Kennedy
Permit Planners Inc.

Introduction

This report evaluates the wildlife resources on the undeveloped 14.36 acres (Apn 59-290-41) at the 4700 Block of Via Los Santos. The area is scheduled for development into 14 one acre lots, with road access to the lots from Via Los Santos and San Antonio Creek Rd. The focus of this report is on the current use of the area by wildlife, the developments effect on these species, and its effect on any sensitive species.

Methods

The site was surveyed several times with particular attention to any roosting or nesting activity, and the possible use of the parcel by any sensitive species. The late fall/early winter timing of the surveys precludes any determination of nesting, however very few trees and shrubs are found onsite. No small mammal trapping was done and no estimates of animal densities was attempted during this survey.

Existing Conditions

The vegetation found on the property was described in the botanical resources report as "primarily comprised of non-native grasses and weed species, with scattered individual native shrubs and sparsely occurring native wildflowers". A follow-up report confirmed the scattered presence of native bunch grass, although not enough to constitute a native grassland. A few non-native trees occur onsite, with a stand of eucalyptus outside the property line to the northwest. The topography of the property slopes gently toward the south with scattered rock outcroppings found throughout. It is located between the San Antonio Creek drainage to the east and the Maria Ignacio drainage to the northwest. The parcel does not abut these large drainage's, with a layer of at least one or more houses between the parcel and the drainage's. A small drainage channel has been documented just to the north of the parcel.

Biological Resources

The parcel supports a colony of ground squirrels, and provides habitat for what appears to be an abundant population of gophers and microtenes. Coyote and raccoon scat was common, with use of the parcel expected for both foraging and travel between the two riparian corridors. Western fence lizard was the only reptile observed during the field visits, but a variety of common reptiles are expected to utilize the area including; gopher snakes, common kingsnake, western skink, and California alligator lizards.

A number of bird species were observed onsite, including; red-tailed hawk, white-tailed kite, turkey

vulture, American kestrel, rock dove, mourning dove, Anna's hummingbird, acorn woodpecker, Say's phoebe, scrub jay, American crow, Bewick's wren, ruby-crowned kinglet, Western bluebird, northern mockingbird, starling, Savannah sparrow, white-crowned sparrow, Western meadowlark, California towhee and house finch. In addition, a variety of other common birds are expected to utilize the property at various times of the year.

No state or federally listed species are expected to reside in or utilize the parcel.

White-tailed kites are federally protected as a bird of prey, and have been listed as a Species of Management Concern by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. They are considered locally sensitive with protection afforded their nesting and roosting sites through the Conservation Element of Santa Barbara Counties Comprehensive Plan. No nesting or roost sites are located on the parcel however kites were observed foraging within the grassland on several site visits. According to Mark Holmgren (Associate Director of the Museum of Systematics and Ecology at UCSE) kites successfully nested in both the San Antonio Creek drainage and in the Maria Ignacio drainage, most likely using the parcel as a complimentary foraging area. Development of this parcel will eliminate this foraging area. A gradual decline in kite numbers is expected within the Goleta Valley due to the loss, fragmentation and more frequent disturbance of their nesting and foraging areas (Paul Lehman, The Birds of Santa Barbara County, CA, 1994).

According to Paul Collins (biologist at the Natural History Museum) the Pallid bat *Antrozous pallidus*, a California Species of Special Concern, could roost in the area and may utilize the grassland parcel as a foraging area. The Pallid bat feeds largely on flightless insects, Jerusalem crickets, scorpions, and June beetles, capturing them by foraging on the ground.

Conclusion

Due to the continuing development throughout Santa Barbara and the Goleta Valley, open grassland areas are decreasing in number and becoming more fragmented. The importance of this parcel for wildlife is as a foraging area. On one site visit three raptors were all foraging within the parcel together, a red-tailed hawk, an American kestrel and the white-tailed kite. The proposed development would remove the grassland supported food base for the birds and mammals currently utilizing the parcel. However, there are no trees for nesting or roosting, there are no native or environmentally sensitive habitats, and the separation of the property from the nearby drainage's, by distance and development, reduces the parcels effectiveness as a wildlife movement corridor. Large mammals such as raccoons and coyotes will still move between the drainage corridors following development.

Prepared By:

Vincent J. Semonsen
Wildlife Biologist