

VINCENT N. SCHEIDT

Biological Consultant

3158 Occidental Street • San Diego, CA • 92122-3205 • 858-457-3873 • 858-457-1650 fax • email: vince@san.rr.com

Summary Biology Report

From: Vince Scheidt, Consulting Biologist 

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SUMMARY/INTRODUCTION

We have completed a biology field study of the 8.38-acre TM 5466 (Sundale) project site located at 1612 Hillsdale Road in the Valle de Oro area of unincorporated San Diego County. The subject property (APN 517-131-05) is located in a developed area of the County, with homes generally surrounding the site. As described below, the site currently supports an older home and nine greenhouse structures. The purpose of this survey (conducted on 7 April 2003 with a follow-up on 14 March 2006) was to identify the site's flora and fauna (Table 1), the onsite habitat-types, potential project-impacts (Table 2), and mitigation if required. As a result of this study, we are able to summarize the following biological issues as they relate to site development as proposed:

HABITATS

The onsite habitats (Figure 1) include the following:

Urban/Developed Habitat (Holland Code 12000) - 6.76 acres

Urban/Developed Habitat covers the vast majority of the property in association with nine greenhouse structures and an older home. This portion of the site also supports ornamental planting around the structures as well as many species of ornamental plants growing in containers in and adjacent to the greenhouses. The biological resource value of this habitat-type is low.

Non-native Grassland (Holland Code 42200) - 1.43 acres

Non-native Grassland occurs in a strip along the eastern edge of the property, on a low berm located at the northern edge, and in small patches behind the home and near the site's southwestern corner. Indicators include various non-native grasses and forbs, including Ripgut Brome (*Bromus diandrus*), Bermuda Grass (*Cynodon dactylon*), Wild Lettuce (*Lactuca serriola*), Wild Oat (*Avena fatua*), and a diversity of other weeds. The biological resource value of this habitat-type is low.

Southern Willow Scrub (Holland Code 63300) - 0.15 acre

Southern Willow Scrub vegetation is found at the site's Southwest corner and partially along the western property line in association with a mostly-offsite drainage feature. This habitat is dominated by large willows, cattails, and other hydrophytes. Southern Willow Scrub is considered a sensitive habitat, and the biological value of this resource is high.

Freshwater Seep (Holland Code 45400) - 0.04 acre

Freshwater Seep vegetation is found in a small strip near the northwestern property corner. Indicators observed include Narrow-leaf Cattails (*Typha angustifolia*), sapling Black and Arroyo Willows (*Salix gooddingii*, *S. lasiolepis*), Tamarisk (*Tamarix*), Curly Dock (*Rumex crispus*), Fireweed (*Epilobium*), Cocklebur (*Xanthium strumarium*), and other hydrophytes. This habitat is poorly developed, although the diversity of

species observed reflects a persistent (albeit minor) state of hydration. This is provided by an existing asphalt culvert that carries water from offsite properties to the north. The seep vegetation is growing mostly on top of an accumulation of soil that has become established above the asphalt. Although artificial in origin, Freshwater Seep is considered a sensitive habitat in the County of San Diego. Because of the very small size of this community, its biological resource value is low.

FLORA AND FAUNA

Forty-two species of vascular plants and fourteen species of animals were detected during the field survey of the property. These are listed in Table 1. This list represents a characteristic flora and fauna associated with this part of San Diego County, in grasslands and oak/riparian habitats. All of the species detected are common to this area.

SENSITIVE SPECIES

No sensitive plants or animals were detected during the site survey. Given the nature of the onsite habitats, none are expected. Sensitive plants and animals known from the vicinity, along with an assessment of the probability of occurrence onsite, are listed in Table 3.

WETLANDS

RPO/CDFG Wetlands

The drainage feature that runs along the southwestern property line supports Resource Protection Ordinance (RPO) and California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG)-defined wetlands. This feature supports dense riparian habitat dominated by willows.

ACoE Wetlands

Although a formal jurisdictional wetland delineation was not completed, portions of the wetlands associated with the aforementioned drainage likely qualify under the Unified Federal Method for Wetland Delineation as federal (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers) wetlands. Federal wetlands must meet stricter standards, including hydrophytes, wetlands hydrology, and hydric soil-types. We anticipate all three of these indicators are present along the bead of the drainage, at a minimum.

PROJECT IMPACTS AND MITIGATION RECOMMENDATIONS

The subdivision and subsequent development of the TM 5466 project site is subject to review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the County's Biological Mitigation Ordinance (BMO). This means that the County requires that project-related impacts to native habitat and species be "less than significant", as defined by CEQA, and consistent with the requirements of the BMO. This usually requires the adoption of mitigation measures intended to reduce "significant" impacts to a level that is "less than significant". Project-related impacts, as we have identified them, are presented in Table 2. Development of the TM 5466 site, as proposed, could result in a loss of up to 6.76 acres of Urban/Developed Habitat, 1.43 acres of Non-native Grassland (NNG), 0.15 acre of Southern Willow Scrub, and 0.04 acre of Freshwater Seep. Impacts to the latter three of these habitat-types are considered potentially "significant", as defined by the County of San Diego's interpretation of CEQA.

At this time, in order to reduce all project impacts (see Table 2) to “less than significant”, as defined by CEQA, and satisfy the BMO requirements for mitigating impacts to Non-native Grassland, Freshwater Seep, and Southern Willow Scrub Habitat, the following measures are recommended:

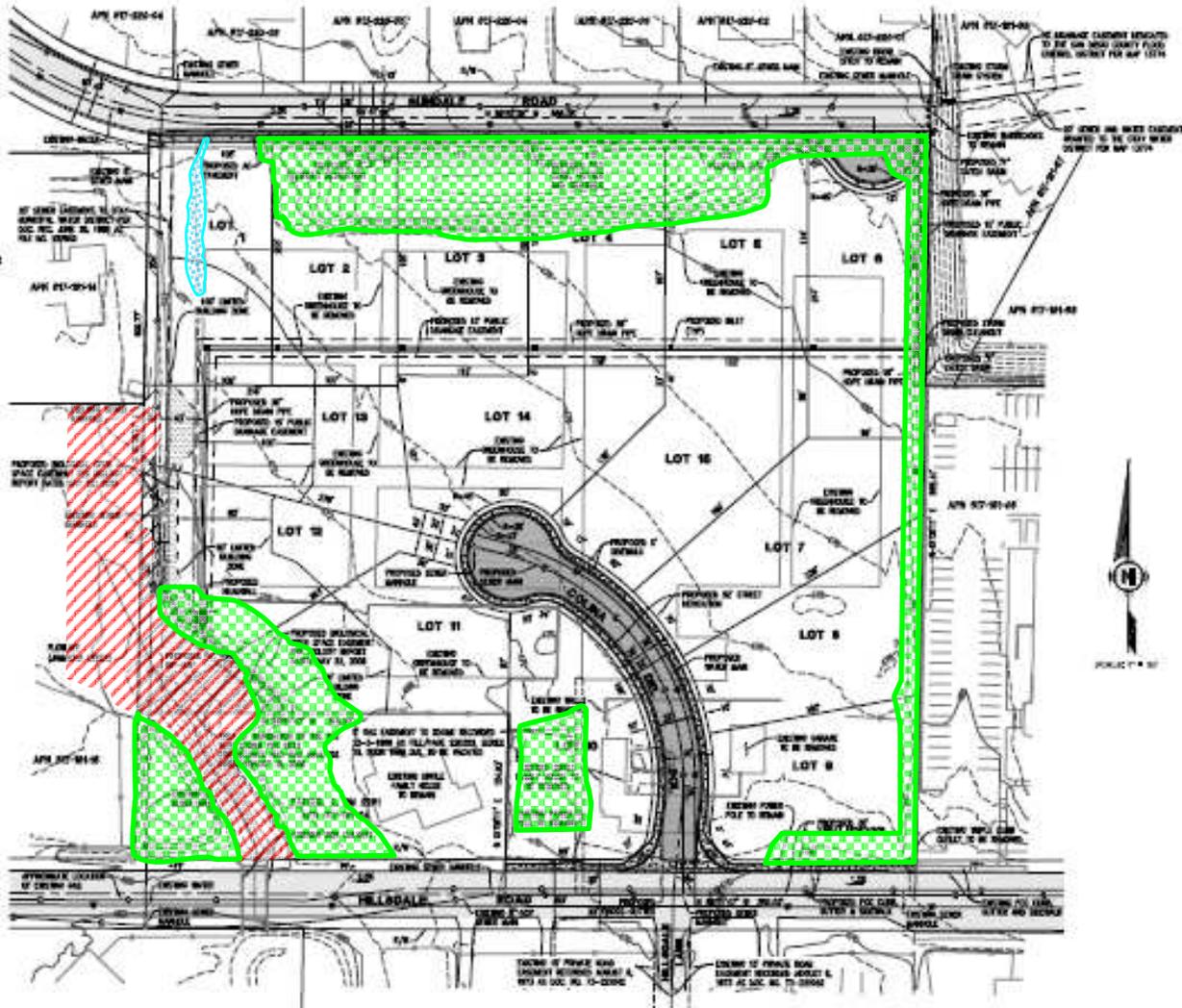
1. In order to avoid jurisdictional wetland impacts and a protracted, multi-agency permitting process, it is recommended that the 100 percent of the Southern Willow Scrub Habitat be avoided and buffered. A biological open space easement should be placed over this area. Figure 1 shows the riparian area which includes a minimum 50-foot wide “wetland buffer” canopy setback from the outer edge of the canopy. In addition, a minimum 80-foot Limited Building Zone (LBZ) easement is recommended to ensure that fire clearing will not be required within the biological open space easement. Recordation of these easements should be made a condition of project approval. Fencing or signage indicating that this area is biologically-sensitive is also recommended.
2. As mentioned above, the BMO requires mitigation for project impacts to Non-native Grassland (NNG) vegetation and other sensitive habitat-types. Said mitigation will need to be provided in the general vicinity of the project site at the same “tier” or higher (“better”). In order to satisfy this policy, the project must provide offsite mitigation at a ½-to-1 ratio for all impacts to NNG vegetation (Tier III), and 3:1 for impacts to Freshwater Seep (Tier I). All areas not in dedicated biological open space are considered “impacted”. This includes 100 percent of the habitat with the exception of the amount within the wetland buffer adjacent to the Southern Willow Scrub, which is considered “impact neutral”. Therefore, in order to provide offsite mitigation, no less than 0.71 acre of NNG (or “better”) and 0.12 acre of Freshwater Seep (or “better”) must be secured in a County-approved location.
3. Site brushing, grading, and/or the removal of native vegetation within 300 feet of any known migratory songbird nesting location should not take place during the spring/summer songbird breeding season, defined as from 15 February to 31 August of each year. This is required in order to ensure compliance with the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act, which prevents the “take” of eggs, nests, feathers, or other parts of most native bird species, and the California Fish and Game Code. Limiting activities to the non-breeding season will minimize chances for the incidental take of migratory songbirds or raptors.

Should it be necessary to conduct brushing, grading, or other construction activities during the songbird breeding season, a preconstruction nesting survey of all areas within 300 feet of the proposed activity will be required. The results of the survey will be provided in a report to the Director, Department of Planning and Land Use and the Wildlife Agencies for concurrence with the conclusions and recommendations.

The current project does not propose any offsite improvements. Should future improvements be required, they may be subject to subsequent environmental review at the discretion of the Director, Department of Planning and Land Use.

No other biological mitigation associated with the TM 5466 project is recommended.

Figure 1. Biological Resources Map - TM 5466 (Sundale) project, Valle de Oro



Legend:



Non-native Grassland



Southern Willow Scrub



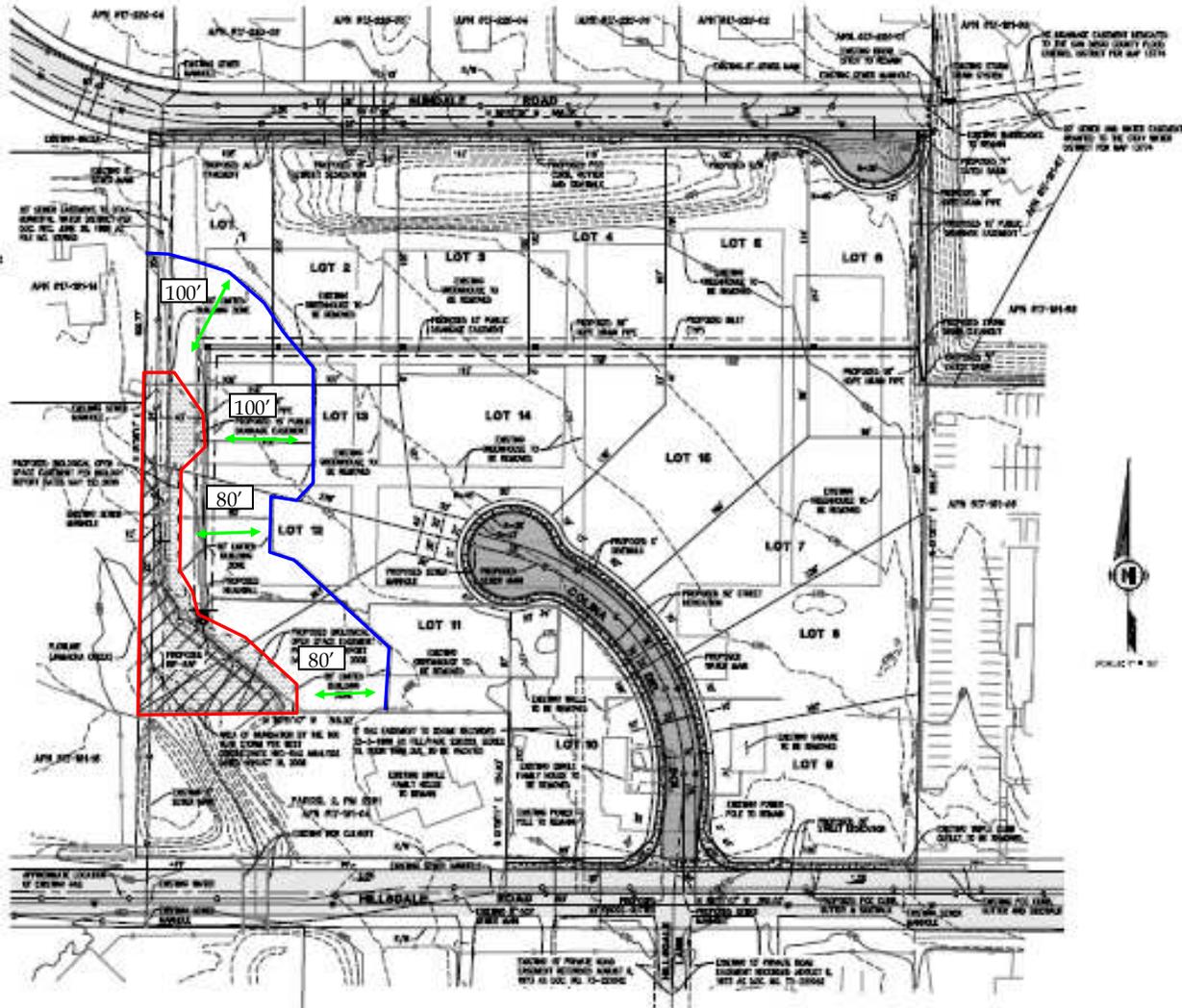
Freshwater Seep

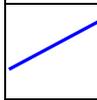


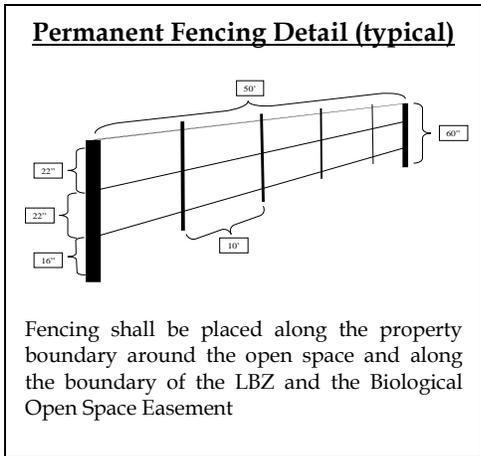
Urban/Developed

Vincent N. Scheidt, MA
Certified Biological Consultant
8/31/07

Figure 2. Biological Open Space and Limited Building Zone Easements - TM 5466 (Sundale) project, Valle de Oro



-  = Limits of Biological Open Space Easement
Includes 50-foot wetland buffer
-  = Limits of Limited Building Zone (LBZ)
Includes minimum 80-foot setback



Signage Detail

Permanent, high visibility metal signs shall be placed at 100-foot intervals along all segments of the permanent fence. These signs shall read:

•
*"Sensitive Environmental Resources
 Disturbance Beyond this Point is Restricted
 by Easement"*

*Information:
 Contact County of San Diego,
 Department of Planning and Land Use
 Ref: 99-02-015"*
 •

Evidence of permanent fencing shall consist of a signed, stamped statement from a California Registered Engineer or licensed surveyor stating that permanent fences or walls have been placed to protect the open space from inadvertent disturbance associated with grading, brushing, or clearing. The permanent fence location shall be identified in the field by a California Registered Engineer or licensed surveyor and positioned just outside of the open space. Photographs and a brief description of design and material used shall be submitted with the statement from the California Registered Engineer. Construction materials and fence and/or wall designs are subject to approval by the Department of Planning and Land Use. Minimum fence height shall be 4 feet.

Table 1. Flora and Fauna Detected - TM 5466 (Sundale) project, Valle de Oro

<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Common Name</u>
<u>Plants</u>	
<i>Acacia</i> sp *	Acacia
<i>Amaranthus albus</i> *	White Tumbleweed
<i>Anagallis arvensis</i> *	Scarlet Pimpernel
<i>Atriplex semibaccata</i> *	Australian Saltbush
<i>Avena fatua</i> *	Wild Oat
<i>Baccharis glutinosa</i>	Mule Fat
<i>Brassica geniculata</i> *	Perennial Mustard
<i>Bromus diandrus</i> *	Ripgut Brome
<i>Centaurea melitensis</i> *	Tocalote
<i>Conyza canadensis</i> *	Common Horseweed
<i>Cortaderia dioica</i> *	Pampas Grass
<i>Cynodon dactylon</i> *	Bermuda Grass
<i>Cyperus</i> sp *	Sedge
<i>Chamaesyce maculata</i> *	Spotted Spurge
<i>Chrysanthemum coronarium</i> *	Chrysanthemum
<i>Datura meteloides</i>	Jimsonweed
<i>Epilobium</i> sp.	Fireweed
<i>Eremocarpus setigerus</i>	Dove Weed
<i>Erodium botrys</i> *	Long-beaked Stork's-bill
<i>Erodium cicutarium</i> *	Red-stem Stork's-bill
<i>Filago gallica</i> *	Narrow-leaf Filago
<i>Heterotheca grandiflora</i> *	Telegraph Weed
<i>Hordeum murinum</i> *	Wild Barley
<i>Lactuca serriola</i> *	Wild Lettuce
<i>Malva parviflora</i> *	Cheeseweed
<i>Medicago polymorpha</i> *	Bur Clover
<i>Nicotiana glauca</i> *	Tree Tobacco
<i>Pennisetum setaceum</i> *	African Fountain Grass
<i>Polypogon monspeliensis</i> *	Rabbitfoot Grass
<i>Ricinus communis</i> *	Castor Bean
<i>Rumex crispus</i> *	Curly Dock
<i>Salix gooddingii</i>	Southwestern Willow
<i>Salix lasiolepis</i>	Arroyo Willow
<i>Salsola pestifer</i> *	Russian Thistle
<i>Schinus molle</i> *	Peruvian Peppertree
<i>Schinus terebinthifolius</i> *	Brazilian Peppertree
<i>Sonchus oleraceus</i> *	Sow Thistle
<i>Tamarix</i> sp. *	Salt Cedar
<i>Typha angustifolia</i>	Cattails
<i>Washingtonia robusta</i> *	Mexican Fan Palm
<i>Xanthium strumarium</i> *	Cocklebur
<u>Mammals</u>	
<i>Spermophilus beecheyi</i>	California Ground Squirrel
<i>Sylvilagus audubonii</i>	Desert Cottontail
<i>Thomomys bottae</i>	Valley Pocket Gopher

Table 1. Flora and Fauna Detected - TM 5466 (Sundale) project, Valle de Oro

<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Common Name</u>
<u>Birds</u>	
<i>Archilochus anna</i>	Anna's Hummingbird
<i>Carduelis psaltria</i>	Lesser Goldfinch
<i>Carpodacus mexicanus</i>	Housefinch
<i>Corvus corax</i>	Raven
<i>Dendroica coronata</i>	Audubon's Warbler
<i>Psaltriparus minimus</i>	Bushtit
<i>Zenaida macroura</i>	Mourning Dove
<u>Reptiles and Amphibians</u>	
<i>Batrachoseps pacificus</i>	Garden Slender Salamander
<i>Gerrhonotus multicarinatus</i>	Southern Alligator Lizard
<i>Sceloporus occidentalis</i>	Western Fence Lizard
<i>Uta stansburiana</i>	Side-blotched Lizard

Total - * - non-native taxon

Table 2. Impact/Mitigation Analysis - TM 5466 (Sundale) project, Valle de Oro

<u>Biological Resource</u>	<u>Onsite Acres (Pre-development)</u>	<u>Acres Preserved (Post-development)</u>	<u>Acres Impacted (Post-development)</u>	<u>Mitigation Required¹</u>
Urban/ Developed	6.76 acres	0.11 acre	6.65 acres	none
Non-native Grassland	1.43 acres	0.01 acre ²	1.42 acres	0.71 acres @ ½ -to-1
Freshwater Seep	0.04 acre	none	0.04 acres	0.12 acres @ 3-to-1
Southern Willow Scrub	0.15 acre	0.15 acre	none	avoidance
<hr/>				
Totals	8.38 acres			

¹ - Assuming that mitigation occurs offsite via the securement of suitable mitigation credits in a County-approved location

² - This small amount of habitat is being avoided as part of the wetland buffer, hence it is "impact neutral".

Table 3. Sensitive Species Known from the Vicinity - TM 5466 (Sundale) project, Valle de Oro

Scientific Name	Common Name	Federally Endangered	Federally Threatened	State Endangered	Coastal Sage Scrub	Mixed Chaparral	Grassland	Riparian	Oak Woodland	Chamise Chaparral	Mixed Conifer	Closed Cone Forest	Piñon-Juniper	Freshwater Marsh	Desert Scrub	Desert Wash	Salt or Alkali Marsh	Vernal Pools	Montane Meadow	Coastal or Desert Dune	Lakes and Bays	Probability of Occurrence
<i>Acanthomintha ilicifolia</i>	San Diego Thornmint		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓							✓					L
<i>Accipiter cooperii</i>	Cooper's hawk					✓	✓	✓														M
<i>Achnantherum diegoense</i>	San Diego needlegrass				✓	✓											✓					L
<i>Ambrosia pumila</i>	San Diego Ambrosia	✓			✓	✓	✓											✓				L
<i>Ammodramus savannarum</i>	Grasshopper sparrow					✓																L
<i>Anniella pulchra pulchra</i>	Silvery legless lizard				✓	✓	✓													✓		L
<i>Antrozous pallidus</i>	Pallid bat				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓			M
<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	Golden eagle				✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓									L
<i>Ardea herodias</i>	Great blue heron					✓								✓						✓		M
<i>Athene cucularia hypugea</i>	Burrowing owl				✓	✓									✓					✓		L
<i>Brodiaea orcuttii</i>	Orcutt's brodiaea					✓	✓	✓	✓								✓					L
<i>Buteo regalis</i>	Ferruginous hawk (Winter)					✓									✓							L
<i>Cathartes aura</i>	Turkey vulture				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓										M
<i>Chaetodipus californicus femoralis</i>	Dulzura California pocket mouse				✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓											L
<i>Circus cyaneus hudsonius</i>	Northern harrier					✓								✓			✓					L
<i>Cnemidophorus hyperythrus</i>	Orange-throated whiptail				✓	✓	✓	✓		✓												M
<i>Corynorhinus townsendii</i>	Townsend's big-eared bat					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓			M
<i>Danaus plexippus</i>	Monarch butterfly					✓		✓											✓			M
<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>	Black-shouldered kite					✓	✓															L
<i>Eremophila alpestris actis</i>	Horned lark					✓														✓		L
<i>Eumops perotis californicus</i>	Greater western mastiff bat				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	M
<i>Euphydryas editha quino</i>	Quino checkerspot butterfly	✓			✓					✓					✓			✓				L
<i>Holocarpha virgata elongata</i>	Graceful tarplant					✓																L
<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>	Loggerhead shrike				✓	✓	✓	✓							✓	✓						M
<i>Lepus californicus bennettii</i>	San Diego black-tailed jackrabbit				✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓										L
<i>Muilla clevelandii</i>	San Diego goldenstar				✓	✓				✓									✓			L
<i>Myotis yumanensis</i>	Yuma myotis				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	M
<i>Nyctinomops macrotis</i>	Big free-tailed bat				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	M
<i>Nyctinomops femorosaccus</i>	Pocketed free-tailed bat				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	M
<i>Odocoileus hemionus</i>	Southern mule deer				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓			L
<i>Onychomys torridus ramona</i>	Southern grasshopper mouse				✓	✓	✓			✓												L
<i>Phrynosoma coronatum blainvillei</i>	San Diego horned lizard				✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓											L
<i>Scaphiopus hammondi</i>	Western spadefoot toad				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓					✓			L
<i>Taxidea taxus</i>	American badger				✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓			L

Probability of Occurrence Codes:

L - Low Probability; rare species in area, and no significant habitat (animals); or distinctive perennial that would not have been missed if present onsite (plants). M - Moderate Probability; could be expected to occur onsite on at least an occasional basis, based on habitat quality (animals); or could occur onsite, but very rare, and/or poorly known (plants). H - High Probability; nearly certain to occur onsite on a regular basis (animals), but cryptic; or ephemeral species known from the immediate vicinity, but seasonal in occurrence (plants). O - Observed; see text for detailed discussion.