

**From:** [Brown, Bronwyn](#)  
**To:** [Prowant, Anna](#)  
**Cc:** [Harris, Susan](#); [Kahler, David](#)  
**Subject:** Fw: Jacumba Valley Ranch Solar Project GPA18-010,MUP18-22 etc.  
**Date:** Monday, January 14, 2019 2:41:46 PM

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Please save to your files. I will forward this to the applicant.

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**From:** eric kallen <erickallen@cox.net>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 14, 2019 10:13:55 AM  
**To:** Brown, Bronwyn  
**Subject:** Jacumba Valley Ranch Solar Project GPA18-010,MUP18-22 etc.

Dear Ms. Brown:

I am writing you regarding the Jacumba Valley Ranch (JVR) solar project. I owned a home within view of the JVR from 2012 to 2017, and lived there from 2013 to 2017. I was also president of the Jacumba Community Service District and a board member for a period while I resided in the town. I went out birding almost every day I lived there, and kept a detailed log of the birds that I saw. Of the 217 species that I found while living in Jacumba, the birds that I found on the JVR or adjacent include these interesting species:

Tricolored Blackbird  
Yellow-headed Blackbird  
Loggerhead Shrike  
American Pipit  
Western Meadowlark  
Horned Lark  
Merlin  
Harrier (2 pair nested)  
Peregrin Falcon  
Prairie Falcon  
Harris' Hawk (breeding species until 2015, up to 6 birds)  
Golden Eagle  
Black Vulture (second county record)  
WT Kite  
Zone-tailed Hawk  
Swainson's Hawk  
Magnificent Frigate Bird! (fly-over after monsoon)  
Painted Bunting  
Indigo Bunting  
Lazuli Bunting  
Summer Tanager  
Brown Thrasher  
Sage Thrasher  
Lark Bunting  
Common Merganser (as many as 12 female-types in the sand pit 12-2016)  
Eastern Phoebe  
Green-tailed Towhee  
Mountain Bluebird

Lincoln's Sparrow  
Chipping Sparrow  
Black-throated Sparrow  
Black-chinned Sparrow  
Vesper Sparrow  
Golden-crowned Sparrow  
Chestnut-sided Warbler  
Dickcissel  
Rose-breasted Grosbeak  
Evening Grosbeak  
Red Crossbill  
Yellow-breasted Chat  
Plumbeous Vireo  
Cassin's Vireo  
American Robin  
Lawrence's Goldfinch  
Townsend's Solitaire  
Hooded, Scott's and Bullock's Oriole (very common)  
Red-breasted Sapsucker  
Red-naped Sapsucker  
Cactus Wren  
Rock Wren

Plus many more common species. I photographed many of these birds. I am a well-known birder regionally and have numerous citations in *North American Birds*. See my Blog [Jacumbabirding.com](http://Jacumbabirding.com) for some photos and notes.

In addition to birds, I observed a Mountain Lion (2015) and several Bobcats on the ranch.

I worked on the older Jacumba Valley Ranch Specific Plan (SP91-003) and the associated Draft EIR (Log#89-22-3) and have in my library a copy of the DEIR and the two-volume technical appendices. It is interesting to note that the JVR, at the time that the SP was being reviewed, had 15 acres of fresh water marsh which ran, roughly, along the westerly portion of the property near the RR tracks and I-8. The SP project was withdrawn, and the property was eventually leased to a farming company, Bornt(?) Farms who proceeded to pump 18,000 acre-feet of water from the aquifer (Flat Creek) onto their organic vegetables. This pumping lowered the water table, and the marsh was gone.

The technical appendices include Biological Resources (Brian Mooney), Sensitive Species Directed Study (Pacific Southwest Biological Services), Quino Checkerspot Butterfly Directed Study (Tierra Madre Consultants), and Hydrological Investigation (Earthtech).

The technical appendices include a chart indicating that there was water running over a weir (again near the I-8) which ran continuously from when it was first measured in 1988 to the time of the earlier JVR project.

My suggestion for the project would be to:

1. Re-establish the fresh water marsh and pond on the site by pumping groundwater into these areas. Since the large-scale agricultural use of the property was stopped in 2012, the

extravagant groundwater pumping of the ranch was stopped, and the water table is expected to rise, and may eventually come up to the levels that were seen in the 1980s which would naturally re-establish the wetlands. This is vital for the protection of Tricolored Blackbird, which I believe is listed under California Guidelines as threatened. The blackbirds, while I resided in Jacumba, nested at the pond at the west end of the town. But the pond has been allowed to deteriorate and the associated marsh likewise had declined. This area, while not a part of the current projects, also was a home to Virginia Rail, American Bittern, and many aquatic species who would use the pond as an oasis or emergency stopover during high winds (after a wind storm the pond would have as many as 10 Black-crowned Night-Herons). As stated above, the pond at the west end of town is pretty much gone, so the re-establishment of the marsh areas on the JVR would go a long way towards creating a new oasis habitat replacing that which has been lost.

2. Create a berm/landscaped buffer along the western edge of the JCR property to mask the industrial use from the town. Also, use trees, cottonwoods, to create a buffer along Old Highway 80. I understand that up to the 60s there were cottonwoods along this section of the roadway.

The proposed use of the disturbed portions of the ranch for solar development are logical. I am concerned about the impact to Mountain Bluebirds, Horned Larks and the raptors who utilize these heavily disturbed areas for foraging.

Thank you

Eric Kallen