

**Coastal California Gnatcatcher Survey Report
2016 for the Devil's Gate Reservoir Sediment Removal
and Management Project
Los Angeles County, California**

**Prepared for:
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October 5, 2016

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

ECORP Consulting, Inc. (ECORP) conducted focused surveys for the purpose of evaluating the presence or absence of coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*) within the Devil's Gate Reservoir Sediment Removal and Management Project (Project) site in Los Angeles County, California. The coastal California gnatcatcher is federally listed as threatened and a California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Species of Special Concern. This report summarizes the results of six breeding season focused surveys conducted in 2016 for coastal California gnatcatchers at the Project site.

2.0 SITE LOCATION

The Project is located northeast of Interstate 210 and south of the Angeles National Forest in the City of Pasadena in Los Angeles County (Figure 1). The Project site is within the upper portion of the Arroyo Seco Watershed within the Hahamongna Watershed Park (Figure 2).

2.1 Survey Area Description

Vegetation communities within the Project site were mapped and described by ECORP Botanists in 2016 using the designations in A Manual of California Vegetation, Second Edition (Sawyer et al. 2009). Limited amounts of California Sagebrush-California Buckwheat Scrub (*Artemisia californica* - *Eriogonum fasciculatum* Shrubland Alliance), which provides suitable nesting and foraging habitat for coastal California gnatcatcher, was mapped in and adjacent to the Project areas (Figure 3). The majority of this habitat is located along the northwest edge of the Project site and a smaller patch is located at the southern end of the site, adjacent to Oak Grove Drive. All suitable habitat, both in and adjacent to the Project area, was surveyed.

3.0 BACKGROUND

The coastal California gnatcatcher was listed as threatened by the federal government in March 1993 (USFWS 1993) and is a California Species of Special Concern (CDFW 2016a). This small gray-blue non-migratory bird is endemic to coastal Southern California. Its known geographic range includes portions of Ventura, Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Riverside, Orange, and San Diego Counties and extends south into northwestern Baja California. This species is associated with low-growing, drought-tolerant sage scrub habitat. Dominant plant types within these sage scrub communities include California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*), buckwheats (*Eriogonum fasciculatum* and *E. cinereum*), encelias (*Encelia californica* and *E. farinosa*), and various sages (*Salvia mellifera*, *S. apiana*, and *S. leucophylla*). Coastal California gnatcatchers have also been documented within chaparral, grassland, and riparian habitats where they occur in proximity to sage scrub. These non-sage scrub habitats are used for dispersal and foraging (Atwood *et al.* 1998; Campbell *et al.* 1998). The breeding season of the coastal California gnatcatcher extends from late February through July with the peak of nest initiations occurring from mid-March through mid-May. Nests are often located in California sagebrush about 1 meter (3 feet) above the ground with an average clutch size of four eggs. The incubation and nestling periods encompass about 14 and 16 days, respectively. Both sexes participate in all phases of the nesting cycle. Contributing factors in the decline of this species include overly frequent fire cycles, non-native plant invasions, brown-headed cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) nest parasitism, predation, and chronic reduction in habitat carrying capacity due to development (Mock 2004).

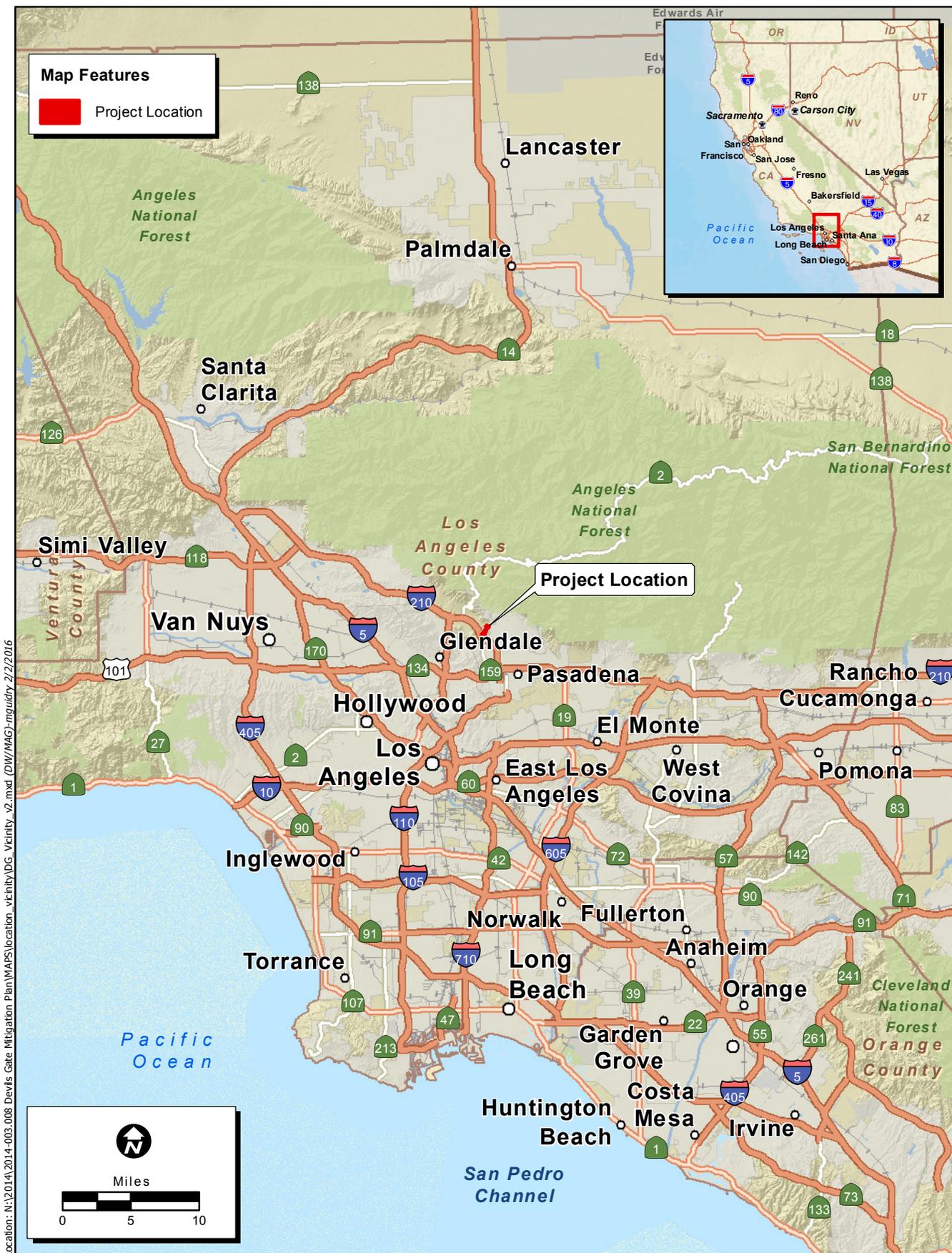
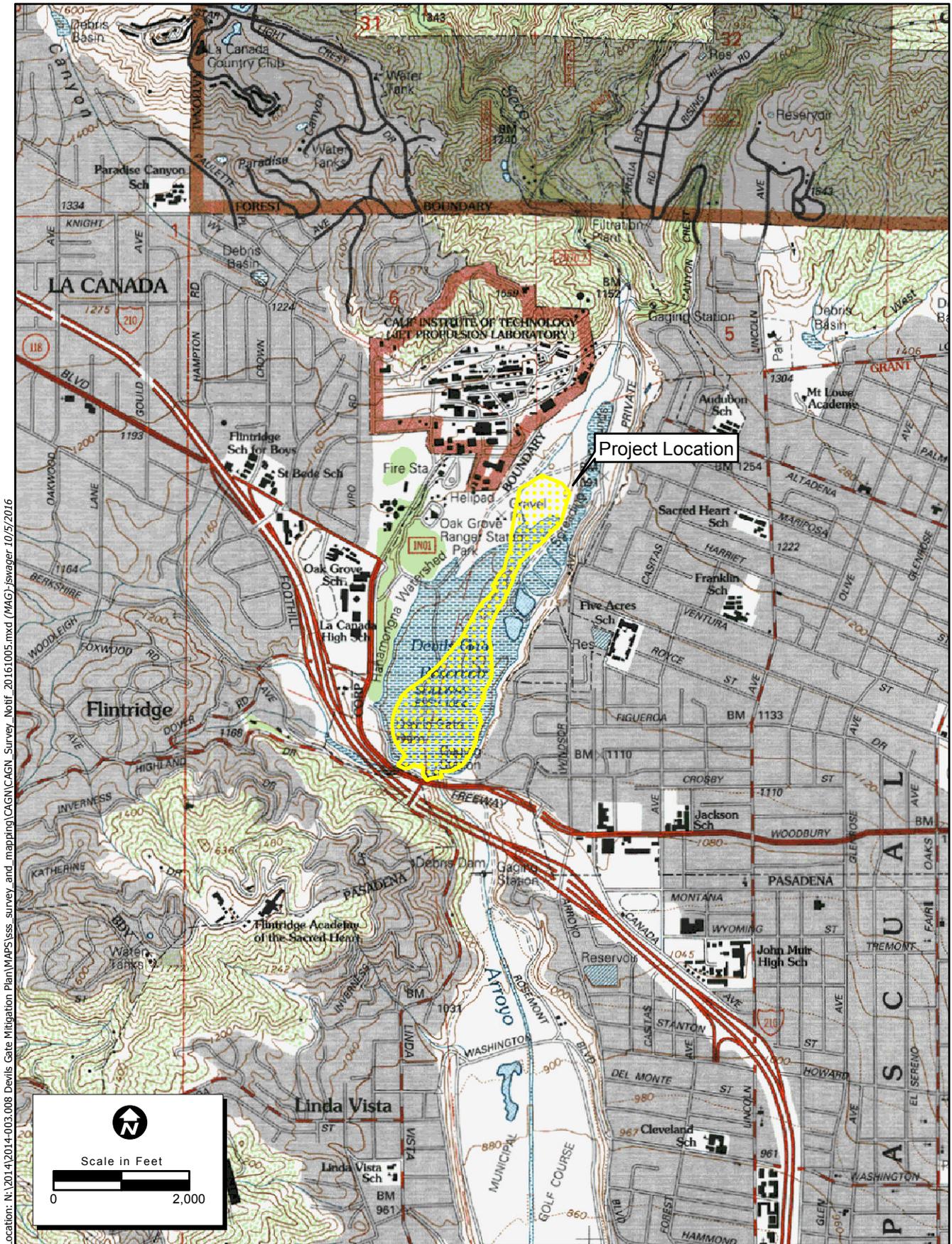


Figure 1. Project Vicinity



Location: N:\2014\2014-003.008 Devils Gate Mitigation Plan\MAPS\less_survey_and_mapping\CAGN\CAGN_Survey_Noif_2016.1005.mxd (MAG)jswager 10/5/2016

Map Date: 10/5/2016
Photo Source: USGS 2009

Figure 2. Project Location
2014-003.008 Devils Gate Mitigation Plan

Figure 3.
Vegetation Communities (2016)

Map Features

-  Initial Project Footprint ¹
-  Annual Maintenance Footprint ¹
-  Side Slopes ¹
-  Access Roads ¹

Vegetation Name

-  Artemisia californica - Eriogonum fasciculatum Shrubland Alliance
-  Baccharis salicifolia Shrubland Alliance
-  Brassica nigra and other mustards Herbaceous Semi-Natural Alliance
-  Conium maculatum Herbaceous Semi-Natural Alliance 30% Lepidium latifolium
-  Depression/Bare ground
-  Disturbed
-  Eucalyptus (globulus, camaldulensis) Woodland Semi-Natural Alliance
-  Fraxinus velutina Forest Alliance
-  Landscaped
-  Lepidium latifolium Herbaceous Semi-Natural Alliance
-  Lepidium latifolium-Conium maculatum Herbaceous Semi-Natural Alliance
-  Lepidospartum squamatum Shrubland Alliance
-  Lepidospartum squamatum Shrubland Alliance - Sparse
-  Platanus racemosa Woodland Alliance Disturbed
-  Quercus agrifolia Woodland Alliance
-  Rumex crispus Herbaceous Semi-Natural Alliance
-  Salix gooddingii Woodland Alliance
-  Salix gooddingii Woodland Alliance - Sparse
-  Xanthium strumarium Herbaceous Alliance



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4.0 SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Prior to conducting the focused survey, a search was conducted of the California Natural Diversity Data Base (CDFW 2016b) for the Pasadena 7.5-minute series quadrangle map (and the surrounding 8 quadrangles) and other references to determine if and to what extent coastal California gnatcatchers are known to occur in the project region.

Focused surveys were conducted by federal 10(a)(1)(A) permitted ECORP biologist Shannon Shaffer (TE67555A-0) during the 2016 breeding season. Focused gnatcatcher surveys were conducted in accordance with 1997 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) protocol guidelines (USFWS 1997). A total of six surveys, at least 7 days apart, were conducted between March 15 and June 30, 2016. Surveys were conducted between dawn and 1200, when weather conditions were favorable (no excessive fog, wind, rain, cold, heat). Survey dates, times, and weather conditions are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Survey Dates, Times, and Weather Conditions

Survey	Date	Time		Temperature (°F)		% Cloud Cover		Wind Speed (mph)	
		Start	End	Start	End	Start	End	Start	End
1	04/26/16	0555	1200	54	66	100	25	0-3	2-5
2	05/09/16	0600	1200	57	66	40	10	0-3	2-4
3	05/16/16	0550	1200	58	66	10	0	0-3	0-3
4	05/24/16	0550	1200	58	71	40	0	2-4	2-4
5	05/31/16	0550	1200	56	72	60	30	0-2	0-2
6	06/07/16	0545	1200	60	82	0	0	0-3	0-3

Surveys consisted of slowly walking various survey routes and playing a taped recording of gnatcatcher vocalizations while scanning all potential habitat with binoculars for the presence of gnatcatchers and listening for vocal responses to the recording. All wildlife species detected during the surveys were documented. A complete list of all wildlife species observed during the surveys is included in Appendix A.

5.0 SURVEY RESULTS

Coastal California gnatcatchers were not detected within or adjacent to the Project site during any of the 2016 focused surveys.

Records of coastal California gnatcatcher were not present in the Pasadena quadrangle in the California Natural Diversity Data Base search (CDFW 2016b). The closest record for California gnatcatcher was documented more than 7 miles southeast of the Project in the Mt. Wilson quadrangle in 1928. Eight other records for coastal California gnatcatchers were found in the nine quadrangle search but they were located even further away.

5.1 Coastal California Gnatcatcher Critical Habitat

Critical habitat was designated by USFWS in 2000 (USFWS 2000) and was re-designated in 2007 (USFWS 2007). The Project site is not located within designated critical habitat for the coastal California gnatcatcher (USFWS 2007).

5.2 Other Sensitive Wildlife

Other federal and/or state endangered species were not observed during the surveys.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

Coastal California gnatcatchers were not detected at the site over the course of the six breeding season surveys. Based on the lack of records for the region and the negative survey results, the coastal California gnatcatcher is likely absent as a breeder at this time. The Project site does not occur within designated critical habitat for this species.

7.0 CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

I hereby certify that the statements furnished above and in the attached exhibits present the data and information required for this biological evaluation, and that the facts, statements, and information presented are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. Field work conducted for this assessment was performed by me or under my direct supervision. I certify that I have not signed a non-disclosure or consultant confidentiality agreement with the project applicant or the applicant's representative and that I have no financial interest in the project.

SIGNED: 
Shannan Shaffer (TE67555A-0)

DATE: October 5, 2016

8.0 LITERATURE CITED

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SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME
Birds	
Accipitridae	Hawks, Kites, & Eagles
<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>	Red-tailed hawk
<i>Buteo lineatus</i>	Red-shouldered hawk
Aegithalidae	Bushtits
<i>Psaltriparus minimus</i>	Bushtit
Columbidae	Pigeons and Doves
<i>Zenaida macroura</i>	Mourning dove
Corvidae	Jays and Crows
<i>Aphelocoma californica</i>	Western scrub-jay
<i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>	American crow
<i>Corvus corax</i>	Common raven
Emberizidae	Towhees and Sparrows
<i>Melospiza melodia</i>	Song sparrow
<i>Pipilo crissalis</i>	California towhee
<i>Pipilo maculatus</i>	Spotted towhee
<i>Zonotrichia leucophrys</i>	White-crowned sparrow
Fringillidae	Finches
<i>Spinus psaltria</i>	Lesser goldfinch
<i>Haemorhous mexicanus</i>	House finch
Hirundinidae	Swallows
<i>Stelgidopteryx serripennis</i>	Northern rough-winged swallow
Icteridae	Blackbirds & Orioles
<i>Eupahngus cyanocephalus</i>	Brewer's blackbird
Mimidae	Mockingbirds and Thrashers
<i>Mimus polyglottos</i>	Northern mockingbird
Odontophoridae	New World Quail
<i>Callipepla californica</i>	California quail
Parulidae	Wood warblers
<i>Geothlypis trichas</i>	Common yellowthroat
Sturnidae	Starlings
<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i> *	European starling
Sylviidae	Wrentits
<i>Chamaea fasciata</i>	Wrentit
Trochilidae	Hummingbirds
<i>Calypte anna</i>	Anna's hummingbird
<i>Selasphorus sasin</i>	Allen's hummingbird
Troglodytidae	Wrens
<i>Thryomanes bewickii</i>	Bewick's wren
Tyrannidae	Tyrant Flycatchers
<i>Sayornis nigricans</i>	Black Phoebe
Mammals	
Canidae	Dogs, Wolves, & Foxes
<i>Canis latrans</i>	Coyote

* Nonnative species