



COOPER ECOLOGICAL MONITORING, INC.
EIN 72-1598095
DANIEL S. COOPER, PRESIDENT
255 SATINWOOD AVE.
OAK PARK, CA 91377
(323) 397-3562
DAN@COOPERECOLOGICAL.COM

MEMO

Client: Friends of the Los Angeles River
Attn: Johanna Hackett
Date: April 18, 2017
Re: Nesting bird and sensitive-species surveys of sites along the Los Angeles River and tributaries: Elysian Valley

Description of work

We are conducted pre-work surveys for nesting birds and sensitive species at several areas along the Los Angeles River and its tributaries in 2017 in preparation for a large, multi-site river cleanup scheduled for three dates in April 2017 (Figure 1). This memo summarizes findings from surveys at in the Elysian Valley on April 19, 2017, which are scheduled for cleanup on April 22, 2017. Conditions were acceptable for surveying, with clear skies, mild temperatures (72 degrees F) and light wind.

The cleanup will involve teams of volunteers at pre-determined sites along the river hauling trash and non-natural debris out of the riverbed and up onto the levee for disposal. Potential impacts to riverine habitats include trampling and disruption of soil and vegetation through trash removal. Noise and general human activity is not felt to be an impact due to the existing high noise level along the river channel (the Los Angeles River runs adjacent to freeways and/or train tracks for most of its length), and because of the high human usage of much of the study area, including unauthorized camping by homeless people.

Pre-work surveys consisted of a biologist walking slowly and deliberately through and adjacent to the habitat targeted for trash cleanup, making note of all visible wildlife encountered. Special attention was paid to species deemed to have special status by regulatory agencies, including Species of Special Concern (CDFW), as well as nesting birds likely to be impacted by river-cleanup activity. Two additional biologists (aside from Daniel S. Cooper, DSC) were used for the surveys: Robert A. Hamilton (RAH; president, Hamilton Biological), and Michael C. Long (MCL; retired Natural Areas Director, County of Los Angeles). All have experience conducting bird surveys in Los Angeles County, and Michael “Mickey” Long is a local plant expert active in the San Gabriel Mountains chapter of the California Native Plant Society.

Here we treat the following areas, each surveyed on April 19, 2017 (all surveyed by Daniel S. Cooper):

1. L.A. River from of Los Feliz Blvd. to Sunnynook footbridge, 2:28 – 3:10 PM; 76° F
2. L.A. River at Bowtie Parcel, 3:15 – 3:34 PM, 75° F
3. L.A. River from Marsh Park south to Oros St, 3:41 – 5:10 PM, 72° F (ending temp.)

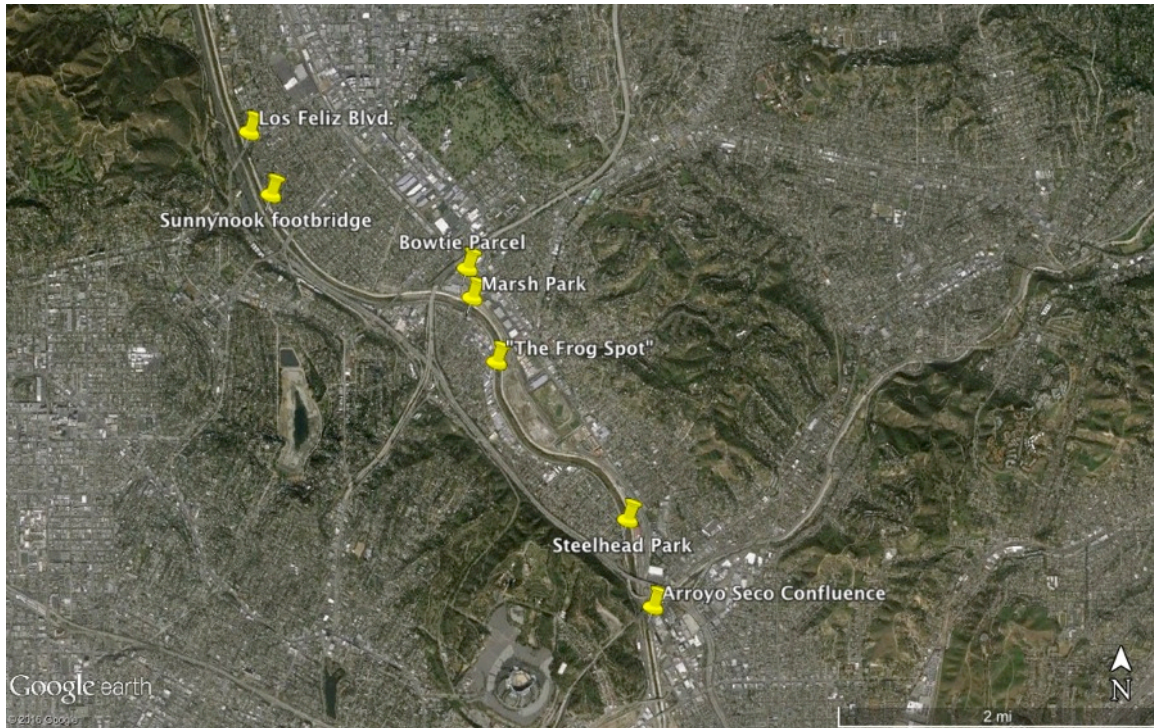


Figure 1. Map showing general locations of area surveyed for 2017.

Survey Results

Nesting birds

In coastal southern California, the bird nesting period typically extends from late February through mid-August, and all active/occupied nests are protected by the State of California under the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act. While we encountered few active nests (probably due to difficulty of accessing islands of habitat within channel), we found several areas likely to hold nesting birds on the day of the cleanup. Most nesting areas will be easily avoided during the proposed cleanup event, and these are described in detail below. Note: we are not addressing birds nesting up under bridges; these require more specialized survey methods than those employed here, and are not likely to be affected by participants on the ground.

Sensitive species

Concurrent to the nesting bird survey, we searched for individuals of several special-status plant and wildlife species known to occur along the Los Angeles River and its tributaries. One special-status species were encountered in the vicinity of the proposed cleanup areas, Yellow Warbler (*Dendroica petechia*; California Bird Species of Special Concern), which was detected widely along the Los Angeles River. The Least Bell's Vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*; Fed. Endangered/State Endangered), found in prior years, was not detected.

No other sensitive wildlife was encountered.

All sites had various types of riparian vegetation and freshwater marsh, most of which are considered by the State of California to be rare habitat types. Mature willow forest, typically a fairly linear “gallery forest”, is present the length of the Los Angeles River surveyed, as are patches of freshwater marsh.

Site detail and recommendations

Note: complete species lists are provided at links below.

L.A. River south of Los Feliz Blvd. to south of Sunnynook Footbridge

Species lists: <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S36110915> and <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S36110887>

The only actively nesting birds noted were Cliff Swallows flying up under the Los Feliz Blvd. bridge where they are presumably nesting. These birds are not typically affected by cleanup or human activity, as their nests, if present are located high above the river and levees. Several nests of Common Raven were observed on high transmission towers. A scan of the channel south of Los Feliz Blvd. revealed a single Black-necked Stilt sitting on a rock in the river, possibly incubating (Figure 2); however, this rock is far out into the channel and would be unlikely to be approached by volunteers.

Recommendations: *Participants should avoid crossing onto islands and rocks in the river channel, entering storm drains/culverts or entering dense reed beds. If alarm cries are heard (e.g., from Black-necked Stilt), the participant should back off and focus on another area.*

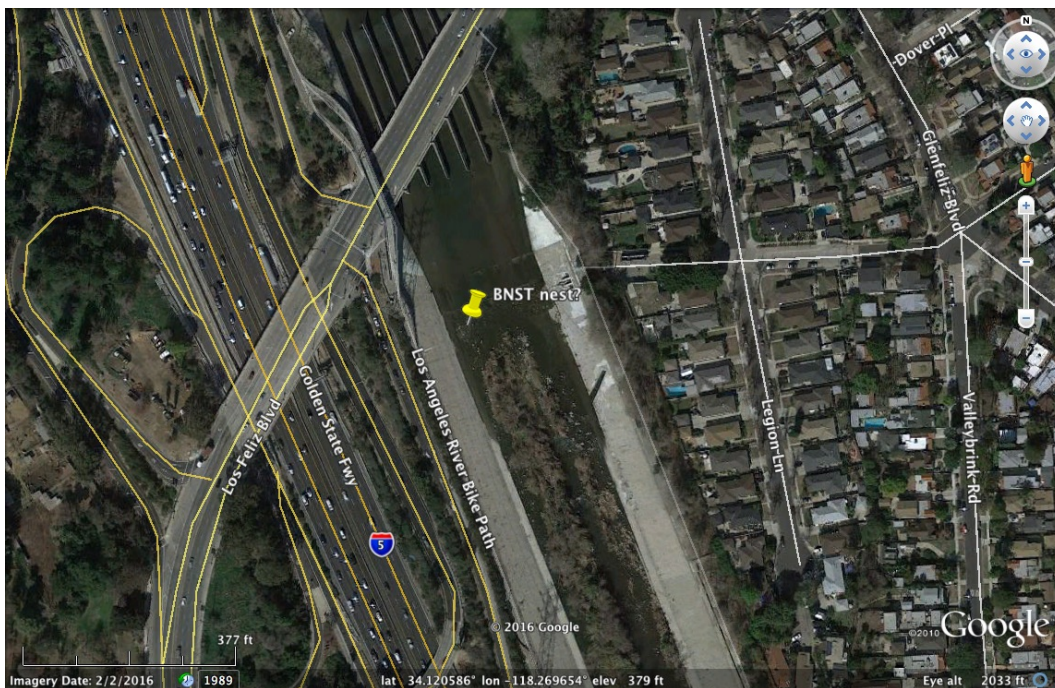


Figure 2. Map of potential Black-necked Stilt nest south of Los Feliz Blvd.

L.A. River @ Bowtie Parcel

Species list: <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S36110934>

No nests were observed.

Recommendations: *Participants should avoid crossing onto islands and rocks in the river channel, entering storm drains/culverts or entering dense reed beds.*

L.A. River @ Marsh Park/ L.A. River @ “The Frog Spot”

Species list: <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S36110965>

A single Black-necked Stilt was apparently sitting on a nest on a mud-covered rock near the middle of the channel, roughly halfway between Marsh St. and Knox St. (Figure 3).

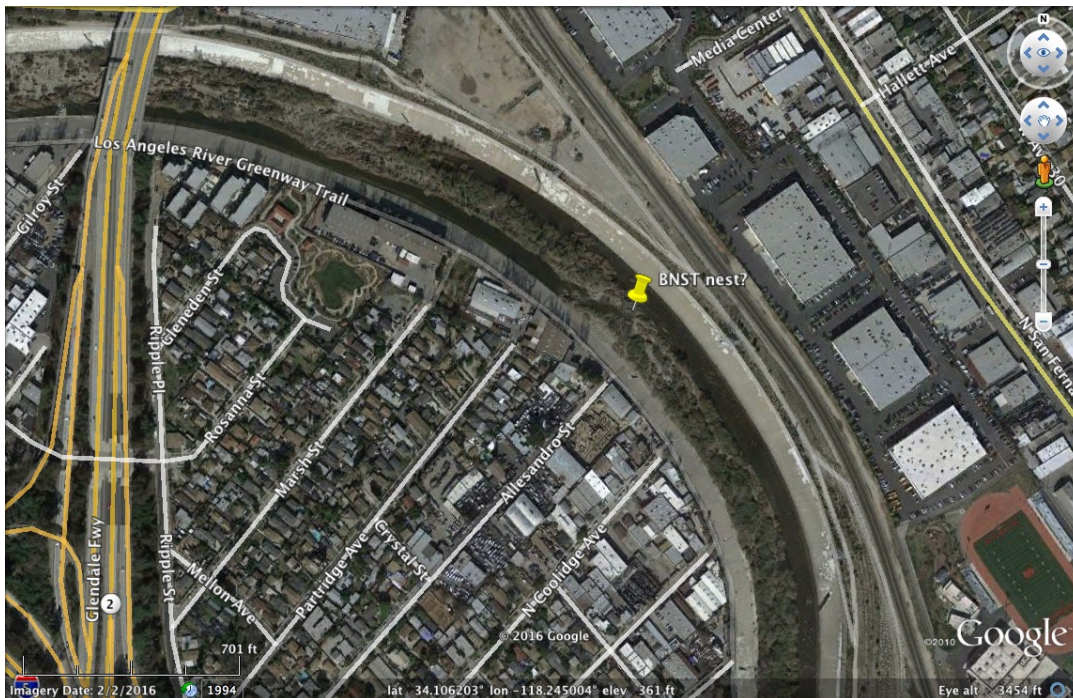


Figure 3. Map of potential Black-necked Stilt nest south of Marsh St.

I noted no nesting birds in the vicinity of “The Frog Spot”.

Recommendations: *Participants should avoid crossing onto islands and rocks in the river channel, entering storm drains/culverts or entering dense reed beds.*

L.A. River @ Steelhead Park (Oros St.)

Species list: <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S36111017>

L.A. River @ Arroyo Seco Confluence

(No riparian habitat/not visited in 2017 or in prior years).