

December 13, 2018
(2018-047.006)

Ms. Veronica Mardis
County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works
Stormwater Engineering Division
Via Email: Vmardis@dpw.lacounty.gov

Subject: Least Bell's Vireo Preconstruction Surveys for the Devil's Gate Reservoir Restoration Project, in the City of Pasadena, California

Dear Ms. Mardis,

This letter report has been prepared to present the results of preconstruction surveys for least Bell's Vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*) conducted by ECORP Consulting, Inc. (ECORP) for Los Angeles County Department of Public Works' (LACDPW) Devil's Gate Reservoir Restoration Project in the City of Pasadena, Los Angeles County, California. The preconstruction surveys for least Bell's vireo were conducted to comply with Condition 7.2 in the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Incidental Take Permit (ITP) No. 2081-2016-031-05 that was issued for the Devil's Gate Reservoir Restoration Project (Project) on July 16, 2018.

Condition 7.2 of the ITP states:

"The Permittee and Designated Biologist(s) shall ensure that Vegetation Removal (initial, routine, and episodic) in Covered Species suitable habitat are conducted outside of the Covered Species breeding season (March 1 to September 15). One week prior to vegetation removal outside the Covered Species breeding season, a minimum of three (3) surveys shall be conducted on separate days with the last survey completed no more than one (1) day prior to proposed vegetation removal. Surveys shall be conducted to determine Covered Species status within 300 feet of the Project Area. If Covered Species observations result in no observations of nest building, completed nest(s), egg laying, incubation, hatchlings, fledglings, or attempted territory establishment activities, then work may commence."

SURVEY METHODS

Preconstruction surveys for least Bell's vireo were conducted in compliance with ITP Condition 7.2 for initial vegetation removal activities that are to occur outside the vireo's breeding season. Surveys were conducted between dawn and 11 a.m. when weather conditions are favorable in accordance with USFWS 2001 protocol (nesting season) guidelines. Meandering transects were walked throughout suitable least Bell's vireo riparian habitat areas to visually and audibly detect the presence of least Bell's vireo. Upland habitat within 300 feet of the Project Area that could

serve as a stopover site for late migrants or overwintering individuals was also surveyed. All bird and wildlife species detected during the survey were recorded on standardized data sheets.

RESULTS

Three preconstruction surveys for least Bell’s vireo were conducted within one week of initial scheduled vegetation removal slated to begin on November, 28th, 2018. Due to a one-day delay of the project, a fourth least Bell’s vireo preconstruction survey was added. Each survey was conducted by a CDFW-approved Designated Biologist for least Bell’s vireo surveys. The dates, personnel, and weather conditions for each survey are presented in Table 1. Representative photographs of the project site during surveys are provided in Attachment A; field survey datasheets are provided in Attachment B.

Table 1. Weather Conditions during Surveys

Date	Surveyors*	Time		Temperature (°F)		Cloud Cover (%)		Wind Speed (mph)	
		start	end	start	end	start	end	start	end
11/20/18	CT	0700	1100	54	73	10	0	0-1	1-2
11/21/18	SS	0615	1045	51	65	80	0	0-2	1-3
11/26/18	TD	0640	1100	54	73	0	0	1-3	0-1
11/27/18	TD	0645	1100	54	73	20	70	0-1	0-1

*CT = Christine Tischer, SS = Shannan Shaffer, TD = Taylor Dee

No least Bell’s vireo were identified during the preconstruction surveys. A complete list of all birds and other wildlife observed during the preconstruction surveys is provided in Attachment C.

DISCUSSION

Eight protocol surveys conducted by ECORP during the 2018 breeding season and two post-breeding season surveys conducted in August, 2018 did not detect this species in the Project Area. Observations of least Bell’s vireo previously documented within the Project area have been irregular and typically coincide with seasonal migrations of least Bell’s vireos through the Project Area¹. As described by the Draft Recovery Plan for the least Bell’s vireo², the least Bell’s vireo is a migratory bird species that overwinters in southern Baja California, Mexico, and breeds in California and northern Baja California, Mexico. It typically returns to its southern California breeding grounds between mid-March and early April and departs between late July and late September. Although this species is not expected to occur in southern California at this time of

¹ ECORP Consulting, Inc (ECORP). 2018. Least Bell’s Vireo 2018 Survey Report, Devil’s Gate Reservoir Sediment Removal and Management Project, Los Angeles County, California. Prepared for the Los Angeles Department of Public Works, Water Resource Division. October 8, 2018.

² U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). 1998. Draft Recovery Plan for the least Bell’s vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*). U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 1, Portland, OR. 139 pp.

year, a few late migrants and overwintering individuals have been documented. The four preconstruction surveys conducted immediately prior to vegetation clearing activities did not detect least Bell's vireo within the Project Area. The negative results of the preconstruction surveys support the findings of the negative 2018 focused surveys and is consistent with the life history and ecology for this species.

If you have any questions regarding the contents of this letter report, please contact me at (714) 648-0630 or lsimpson@ecorpconsulting.com.

SIGNED: 
Lauren Simpson
Staff Biologist
ECORP Consulting, Inc.
1801 Park Court Place, Building B. Ste 103.
Santa Ana, CA 92701

DATE: December 13, 2018

Attachments:

Attachment A: Representative Site Photos
Attachment B: Field Datasheets
Attachment C: Wildlife Compendium

ATTACHMENT A

Representative Site Photos

ATTACHMENT B

Field Datasheets

ATTACHMENT C

Wildlife Compendium