

# HARMSWORTH ASSOCIATES

## Environmental Consultants

13 August, 2014

Ross Geller  
Applied Planning, Inc  
5817 Pine Avenue, Suite A  
Chino Hills, CA 91709

Dear Mr. Geller:

### **Re: Gentain WalMart Project Site Biological Surveys**

This letter report presents the findings a biological survey and site assessment for the Gentain WalMart project site, Riverside County, California. The purpose of the survey is to provide information on the current status of the site. The surveys were conducted under contract to Applied Planning. Surveys were conducted in winter 2013 and spring 2014.

#### **Project location, site description**

The Gentain WalMart project site is located in Moreno Valley, Riverside County, California; and is located within U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) topographic map: Sunnymead quadrangle. The site is bound by Perris Boulevard to the east, Santiago Drive to the south, a storm drain to the north and undeveloped land to the west (Figures 1 and 2).

The approximately 22 acre project site consists of a vacant lot. Site topography is mostly flat and occurs at an elevation of approximately 1,520ft. The soils in the project site consist of sandy loam soils that developed on alluvial fans and terraces, primarily Greenfield sandy loam but also Hanford coarse sandy loam and fine sandy loam.

#### **Survey methods**

The site visit was conducted on 25 October by Harmsworth Associate biologist Paul Galvin. The habitat assessment and survey consisted of a general walk-around to all portions of the site, documenting site vegetation; habitats and evidence of wildlife presence.

The focused burrowing owl surveys were conducted on 11 April, 2 and 30 May and 19 June 2014 by Harmsworth Associate biologist Paul Galvin. Focused burrowing owl surveys were conducted following the MSHCP burrowing owl survey instructions and the Fish and Game methods (County of Riverside 2006 and CDFG 2012). All areas of potential burrowing owl habitat onsite (including area of taller grasses and weeds), and within 150 feet of the sites boundary, were surveyed a total of 4 times.

Surveys were conducted during the morning hours (from 1 hour before sunrise to 2 hours after sunrise). All surveys were conducted during good weather conditions (not too hot and no or only light winds).

The survey methods consisted of scanning all open areas and suitable habitat with binoculars prior to walking through that area. The biologists then conducted pedestrian walking surveys through all suitable habitat. The biologists and the walking transects were spaced to ensure 100% visual coverage of the ground surface. The exact distance between biologists/transect lines varied depending on topography and vegetation but was generally no more than 75 feet. All open areas, banks, rodent burrows and any other area likely to support owl burrows were checked.

### **Site conditions and vegetation communities**

The project site consists of a vacant lot. All areas of the site have been regularly disked and impacted by trails and foot traffic. The entire site consisted of one vegetation cover type, non-native grassland (Photographs 1 through 6; Appendix F).

The vegetation type was classified into vegetation communities described by the Holland (1986)<sup>1</sup> system; with the equivalent category under Sawyer *et al.* 2009<sup>2</sup> also included. The distribution of vegetation communities is shown in Figure 3.

#### Non-native grassland

This vegetation type describes areas dominated by non-native European annual grasses, with a large component of ruderal forbs. It is mapped as California annual grassland series by Sawyer *et al.* 2009. On the project site, the non-native grassland is associated with areas of historic grazing, disking and off-road recreational vehicle use. Soils are generally deep, well-drained sand to fine sandy loam. At the project site most areas were sparsely vegetated with non-native grasses and weeds or completely devoid of vegetation due to recent disking, especially around the edges and adjacent dirt roads. Dominant species included cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*), soft chess (*Bromus hordeaceus*), barley (*Hordeum murinum*) and summer mustard (*Hirschfeldia incana*).

### **Wetlands and Jurisdictional Areas**

No drainages, wetlands, vernal pools or any areas potentially subject to the jurisdiction to the US Army Corps of Engineers 404 program or the California Department of Fish and Wildlife 1600 program occurred onsite.

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<sup>1</sup> Holland, R. F. 1986. Preliminary Descriptions of the Terrestrial Natural Communities of California. Nongame-Heritage Program. California Department of Fish and Game. Sacramento, CA. 156 pp.

<sup>2</sup> Sawyer J.O., T. Keeler-Wolf and J.M. Evens. 2009. A Manual of California Vegetation, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. California Native Plant Society. Sacramento, CA.

## Wildlife

Wildlife was sparse due to the lack of native habitats and the location of the site in a developed area. Species detected were typical of disturbed and built-up areas and included mourning dove (*Zenaida macroura*), house finch (*Carpodacus mexicanus*) and California ground squirrel (*Spermophilus beecheyi*).

## Special Status Species

A few special status plant and wildlife species have been documented in the region but all these records either pre-date the development of the city (pre-1950) or are from currently undeveloped areas in the region (CNDDDB 2014<sup>3</sup>). None of the records are from the project site.

No special status plant<sup>4</sup> species were detected at the site and there are no historic site records for any special status plant species. Focused surveys for rare plants are not required at this site under the MSHCP.

Two special status wildlife species<sup>5</sup>, California horned lark (*Eremophila alpestris actia*) and burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*), do occur onsite.

A small flock of larks occurred in the non-native grassland at the site but nesting was not confirmed. Horned larks are common in disturbed grassland areas.

Burrowing owls (*Athene cunicularia*) occur in shortgrass prairies, grasslands, lowland scrub, agricultural lands (particularly rangelands), prairies, coastal dunes, desert floors, and some artificial, open areas as a yearlong resident. They require large open expanses of sparsely vegetated areas on gently rolling or level terrain with an abundance of active small mammal burrows. As a critical habitat feature, they require the use of rodent or other burrows for roosting and nesting cover. They can also use pipes, culverts, and nest boxes (USFWS 2003, Haug *et al.* 1993, Zeiner *et al.* 1990).

A single burrowing owl was detected during the winter site visit and suitable burrows were present on site. However burrowing owls were absent during the focused surveys conducted in spring. Breeding owls are presumed absent from the site.

There are no historic site records for any other special status wildlife species (CNDDDB 2014).

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<sup>3</sup> Lake Elsinore and Gertain CNDDDB February 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Special status plant species = federal or state listed threatened or endangered species, or proposed endangered, threatened or candidate species, California Native Plant Society Species List (CNPS list 1-4), or otherwise sensitive species.

<sup>5</sup> Special status wildlife species = federal or state listed threatened or endangered species, or proposed endangered, threatened or candidate species, or otherwise sensitive species.

## **MSHCP**

The entire project area is within the western Riverside County multiple species habitat conservation plan (MSHCP) area and therefore requires compliance with the plan.

The project site is not within any conservation area or linkage area under the MSHCP. In addition, no focused surveys are required for this site under the MSHCP, except for burrowing owl which was addressed above (Appendix B). Compliance with the MSHCP can be achieved by payment of the MSHCP development fees.

### **Biological constraints**

The site is disked and has minimal vegetation. The site has no potential to support any special status plant or wildlife species (other than burrowing owl and horned lark) or wildlife movement. The site could support nesting birds and does support non-breeding burrowing owls.

#### Nesting birds

Impacts to nesting birds can be avoided and, compliance with the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (MBTA) can be accomplished by the following:

- If possible, all vegetation removal activities shall be scheduled from August 1 to February 15, which is outside the nesting season. This would ensure that no active nests would be disturbed and that removal could proceed rapidly,
- If vegetation is to be cleared during the nesting season (February 15 – July 31), all suitable habitat will be thoroughly surveyed for the presence of nesting birds by a qualified biologist 72 hours prior to clearing. If any active nests are detected, the area shall be flagged and mapped on the construction plans along with a minimum 50-foot buffer and up to 300 feet for raptors, with the final buffer distance to be determined by the qualified biologist. The buffer area shall be avoided until the nesting cycle is complete or it is determined that the nest has failed. In addition, the biologist will be present on the site to monitor the vegetation removal to ensure that any nests, which were not detected during the initial survey, are not disturbed.

#### MSHCP

A pre-construction burrowing owl survey should be conducted within 30 days prior to any ground disturbance or vegetation clearing as per the MSHCP requirements. A letter report of the survey findings should be submitted to CDFW.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please call me at (714) 389-9527.

Sincerely

**Harmsworth Associates**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Galvin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P" and a long, sweeping underline.

Paul Galvin, M.S.  
Vice President

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Weather data

Public information national weather service San Diego CA; 2013-2014 rainfall season in review, <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/climate>

A drier than normal rainfall season ended on 30 June 2014. During the fall and winter all stations were below average. The late spring was average. All of California ended up below normal for rainfall totals, with an average for the region of approximately 38% the normal rainfall.

Areas	2013-2014 Total	Normal Total	% of Normal
Santa Barbara	6.49	18	37
Lancaster	3.91	5	77
downtown Los Angeles	5.99	15	41
Long Beach Airport	4.43	13	35
John Wayne Airport	3.52	13	28
Fullerton	4.77	15	32
Riverside	2.71	10	27
Oceanside Airport	4.19	11	40
San Diego	5.01	10	50
Palm Springs	0.93	5	17

### ELSINORE, CALIFORNIA (042805)

Period of Record Monthly Climate Summary

Period of Record : 3/10/1897 to 3/31/2013

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual
Average Max. Temperature (F)	65.4	67.5	71.0	76.3	81.8	90.5	98.1	98.1	93.5	83.7	74.1	66.9	80.6
Average Min. Temperature (F)	36.4	38.7	41.2	44.7	49.8	54.1	59.4	59.8	55.8	48.8	41.1	36.5	47.2
Average Total Precipitation (in.)	2.47	2.54	2.03	0.75	0.23	0.02	0.08	0.12	0.26	0.51	0.99	2.01	12.01
Average Total SnowFall (in.)	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.6
Average Snow Depth (in.)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Percent of possible observations for period of record.

Max. Temp.: 92.9% Min. Temp.: 92% Precipitation: 96.8% Snowfall: 97% Snow Depth: 96.9%

Check [Station Metadata](#) or [Metadata graphics](#) for more detail about data completeness.

**Appendix B: Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP)**

**Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP)**

APN	Cell	Cell Group	Acres	Area Plan	Sub Unit
485220041	Not A Part	Independent	22.23	Reche Canyon / Badlands	Not a Part

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**HABITAT ASSESSMENTS**

Habitat assessment shall be required and should address at a minimum potential habitat for the following species:

APN	Amphibia Species	Burrowing Owl	Criteria Area Species	Mammalian Species	Narrow Endemic Plant Species	Special Linkage Area
485220041	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO

**Burrowing Owl**

If potential habitat for these species is determined to be located on the property, focused surveys may be required during the appropriate season.

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**Background**

The final MSHCP was approved by the County Board of Supervisors on June 17, 2003. The federal and state permits were issued on June 22, 2004 and implementation of the MSHCP began on June 23, 2004.

For more information concerning the MSHCP, contact your local city or the County of Riverside for the unincorporated areas. Additionally, the Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority (RCA), which oversees all the cities and County implementation of the MSHCP, can be reached at:

Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority  
 3403 10th Street, Suite 320  
 Riverside, CA 92501

Phone: 951-955-9700  
 Fax: 951-955-8873

[www.wrc-rca.org](http://www.wrc-rca.org)

**Appendix C: Plant species detected at the Gentain project site, 2014.**

<b>SCIENTIFIC NAME (SYNONYM)</b>	<b>COMMON NAME</b>
<b>ANGIOSPERMAE</b>	<b>FLOWERING PLANTS</b>
<b>AMARANTHACEAE</b>	<b>AMARANTH FAMILY</b>
<i>Amaranthus albus</i> *	Tumbling Pigweed
<b>ASTERACEAE</b>	<b>SUNFLOWER FAMILY</b>
<i>Heterotheca grandiflora</i>	Telegraph Weed
<i>Lactuca serriola</i> *	Prickly or Wild Lettuce
<b>BORAGINACEAE</b>	<b>BORAGE FAMILY</b>
<i>Amsinckia intermedia</i> (= <i>A. menziesii</i> var. <i>e.</i> )	Common Fiddleneck
<i>Cryptantha intermedia</i>	Common Cat's-Eyes
<b>BRASSICACEAE</b>	<b>MUSTARD FAMILY</b>
<i>Hirschfeldia incana</i>	Shortpod or Summer Mustard
<b>CHENOPODIACEAE</b>	<b>GOOSEFOOT FAMILY</b>
<i>Chenopodium album</i> * (= <i>C. missouriense</i> )	Lamb's Quarter
<i>Salsola tragus</i> *	Russian Thistle
<b>EUPHORBIACEAE</b>	<b>SPURGE FAMILY</b>
<i>Croton setiger</i> (= <i>Eremocarpus setigerus</i> )	Doveweed, Turkey Mullein
<i>Euphorbia albomarginata</i> (= <i>Chamaesyce a.</i> )	Rattlesnake Spurge
<b>GERANIACEAE</b>	<b>GERANIUM FAMILY</b>
<i>Erodium cicutarium</i> *	Red-Stemmed Filaree
<b>MALVACEAE</b>	<b>MALLOW FAMILY</b>
<i>Malva parviflora</i> *	Cheeseweed
<b>POACEAE</b>	<b>GRASS FAMILY</b>
<i>Avena fatua</i> *	Wild Oat
<i>Bromus hordeaceus</i> *	Soft Chess
<i>Bromus madritensis</i> ssp. <i>rubens</i> *	Foxtail Chess or Red Brome
<i>Hordeum murinum</i> ssp. <i>leporinum</i> *	Hare Barley or Foxtail Barley

KEY: Asterix (\*) = non-native species; + = sensitive species; Sources: Taxonomy - Jepson Flora Project (eds.) 2013. Common names and non-native species designations according to Allen & Roberts (2013), then Jepson Flora Project (eds.) 2013.

## **Appendix D: California Native Plant Society Categories**

CNPS Status based on California Native Plant Society's Inventory of Rare and Endangered Vascular Plants of California (Tibor 2001):

### **List 1A: Plants Presumed Extinct in California**

The plants of List 1A are presumed extinct because they have not been seen or collected in the wild for many years. Although most of them are restricted to California, a few are found in other states as well. There is a difference between "extinct" and "extirpated." A plant is extirpated if it has been locally eliminated. It may be doing quite nicely elsewhere in its range. All of the plants constituting List 1A meet the definitions of Sec. 1901, Chapter 10 (Native Plant Protection) of the California Department of Fish and Game Code and are eligible for state listing.

### **List 1B: Plants Rare, Threatened or Endangered in California and Elsewhere**

The plants of List 1B are rare throughout their range. All but a few are endemic to California. All of them are judged to be vulnerable under present circumstances or to have a high potential for becoming so because of their limited or vulnerable habitat, their low numbers of individuals per population (even through they may be wide ranging), or their limited number of populations. All of the plants constituting List 1B meet the definitions of Sec. 1901, Chapter 10 (Native Plant Protection) of the California Department of Fish and Game Code and are eligible for state listing.

### **List 2: Plants Rare, Threatened or Endangered in California, But More Common Elsewhere**

Except for being common beyond the boundaries of California, the plants of List 2 would have appeared on List 1B. Based on the "Native Plant Protection Act," plants are considered without regard to their distribution outside the state. All of the plants constituting List 2 meet the definitions of Sec. 1901, Chapter 10 (Native Plant Protection) of the California Department of Fish and Game Code and are eligible for state listing.

### **List 3: Plants About Which We Need More Information—A Review List**

The plants that comprise List 3 are an assemblage of taxa that have been transferred from other lists or that have been suggested for consideration. The necessary information that would assign most to a sensitivity category is missing.

### **List 4: Plants of Limited Distribution—A Watch List**

The plants in this category are of limited distribution in California and their vulnerability or susceptibility to threat appears low at this time. While these plants cannot be called "rare" from a statewide perspective, they are uncommon enough that their status should be monitored regularly. Many of them may be significant locally. Should the degree of endangerment or rarity of a plant change, they will be transferred to a more appropriate list.

### **Threat Code Extensions and their meanings:**

- .1- Seriously endangered in California
- .2- Fairly endangered in California
- .3- Not very endangered in California

**Appendix E: Wildlife species detected at the Gentain project site, 2014.**

<b>FAMILY/SPECIES NAME</b>	<b>COMMON NAME</b>
<b>AVES</b>	<b>BIRDS</b>
<b>ACCIPITRIDAE</b>	<b>HAWKS, OLD WORLD VULTURES &amp; HARRIERS</b>
<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>	Red-Tailed Hawk
<b>FALCONIDAE</b>	<b>CARACARAS &amp; FALCONS</b>
<i>Falco sparverius</i>	American Kestrel
<b>COLUMBIDAE</b>	<b>PIGEONS &amp; DOVES</b>
<i>Columba livia</i>	Rock Pigeon
<i>Zenaida macroura</i>	Mourning Dove
<b>STRIGIDAE</b>	<b>TYPICAL OWLS</b>
<i>Athene cunicularia</i> <sup>+</sup>	Burrowing Owl
<b>TYRANNIDAE</b>	<b>TYRANT FLYCATCHERS</b>
<i>Sayornis saya</i>	Say's Phoebe
<i>Tyrannus vociferans</i>	Cassin's Kingbird
<i>Tyrannus verticalis</i>	Western Kingbird
<b>CORVIDAE</b>	<b>JAYS, MAGPIES &amp; CROWS</b>
<i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>	American Crow
<i>Corvus corax</i>	Common Raven
<b>ALAUDIDAE</b>	<b>LARKS</b>
<i>Eremophila alpestris actia</i> <sup>+</sup>	California Horned Lark
<b>HIRUNDINIDAE</b>	<b>SWALLOWS</b>
<i>Stelgidopteryx serripennis</i>	Northern Rough-Winged Swallow
<i>Petrochelidon pyrrhonota</i>	Cliff Swallow
<b>STURNIDAE</b>	<b>STARLINGS &amp; ALLIES</b>
<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	European Starling
<b>ICTERIDAE</b>	<b>BLACKBIRDS, ORIOLES &amp; ALLIES</b>
<i>Sturnella neglecta</i>	Western Meadowlark
<b>FRINGILLIDAE</b>	<b>FRINGILLINE FINCHES</b>
<i>Carpodacus mexicanus</i>	House Finch
<b>LEPORIDAE</b>	<b>RABBITS &amp; HARES</b>
<i>Sylvilagus audubonii</i>	Desert Cottontail
<b>SCIURIDAE</b>	<b>SQUIRRELS, CHIPMUNKS &amp; MARMOTS</b>
<i>Spermophilus beecheyi</i>	California Ground Squirrel

Birds: American Ornithologists' Union Checklist of North American Birds - 7th Edition (2005):

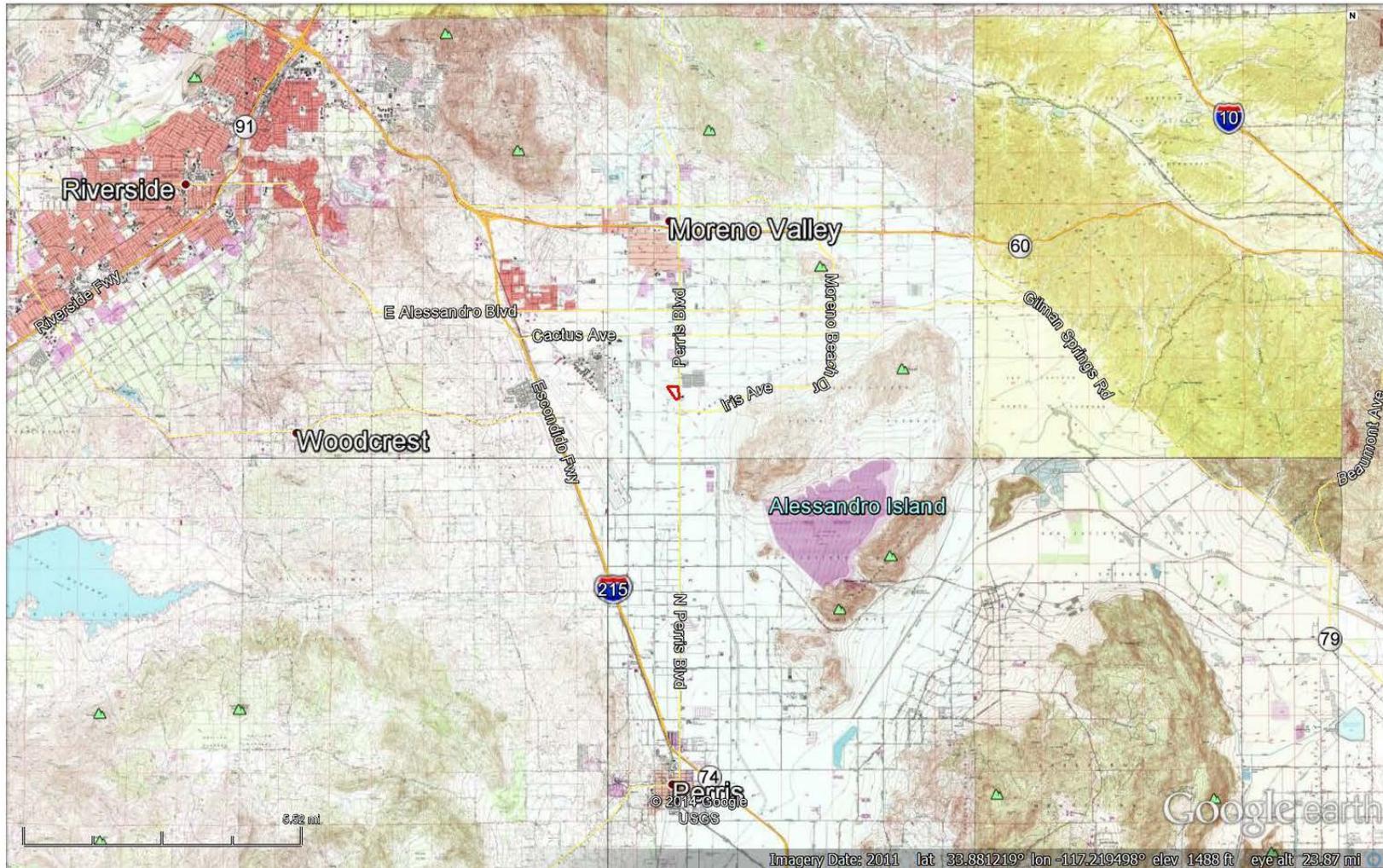
<http://www.aou.org/checklist/index.php3>

Mammals: Baker, R. J., L. C. Bradley, R. D. Bradley, J. W. Dragoo, M. D. Engstrom, R. S. Hoffmann, C. A. Jones, F. Reid, D. W. Rice, and C. Jones. 2003. Revised Checklist of North American Mammals North of Mexico. Museum of Texas Tech University. OP-229. <http://www.nsl.ttu.edu/pubs/opapers.htm>

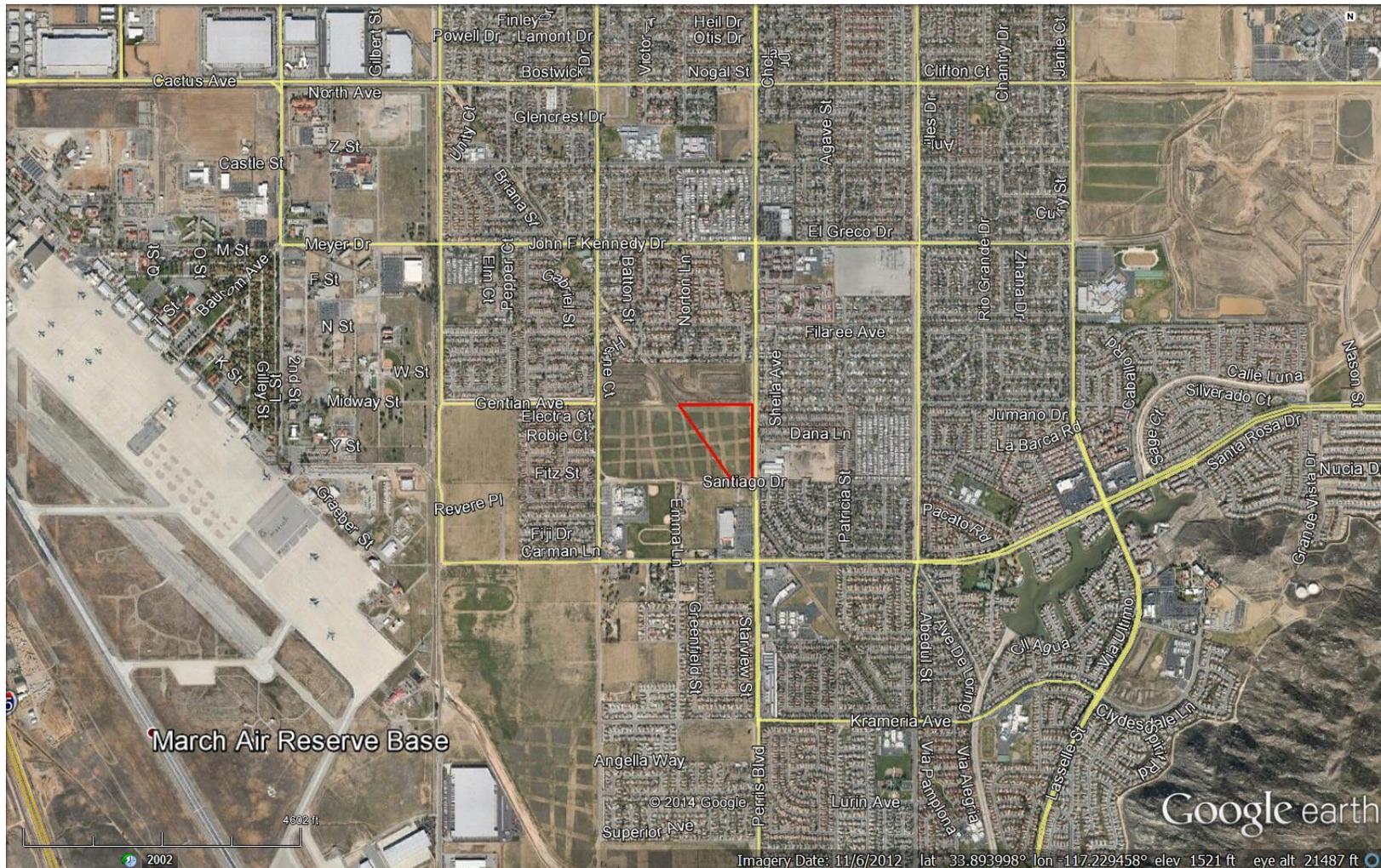
Common names: Grenfell, W. E., M. D. Parisi, and D. McGriff. 2003. Complete List of Amphibians, Reptiles, Birds and Mammals in California. California Department of Fish and Game & California Interagency Wildlife Task Group. [http://www.dfg.ca.gov/whdab/pdfs/species\\_list.pdf](http://www.dfg.ca.gov/whdab/pdfs/species_list.pdf); and Perrins, C. M., and A. L. A. Middleton (Eds.). 1983. The Encyclopedia of Birds. Andromeda Oxford Limited. 463pp.

Special Status Designations + : California Department of Fish and Game, California Natural Diversity Database (July 2014): <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/whdab/html/cnddb.html>

**Appendix F: Maps and sit photographs**



**Figure 1:** Location of Gertain WalMart project site, Riverside County, California. Source: Sunnymead U.S.G.S. quadrangle.



**Figure 2:** Location of Gentain Walmart project site, Riverside County, California. Source: Google Earth, Inc.



**Figure 3:** Vegetation communities at the Gentain Walmart project site, Riverside County, California. Yellow = non-native grassland. Source: Google Earth, Inc.



**Photograph 1:** Project site, looking north from southwest corner.



**Photograph 2:** Project site, looking northeast from southwest corner.



**Photograph 3:** Project site, looking north from southeast corner.



**Photograph 4:** Project site, looking northwest from southeast corner.



**Photograph 5:** Burrowing owl to west of the site in October 2013.



**Photograph 6:** Burrowing owl burrow.