

**EDISON CANAL ACCESS ROAD**  
**BIOLOGICAL REPORT**

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July 12, 2002

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## INTRODUCTION & SCOPE

Reliant Energy Mandalay, LLC is currently pursuing permits required for a potential future project that would involve dredging the Edison canal and clearing and/or blading the gravel access road that parallels the canal. The scope of this biological report entails solely the potential clearing of the existing roadway. The portion of roadway that is the subject of this report is located along the southwest side of the Edison Canal in the City of Oxnard, east of Harbor Blvd. and north of Fifth Street.

## METHODS

A biological survey was conducted on June 20, 2002 by Jacqueline Bowland Worden and Trish Munro of Bowland & Associates. The survey area included the approximately 70 foot wide roadway corridor, from Harbor Blvd. to Fifth Street. The site was thoroughly covered on foot by walking transects of opportunity to obtain visual access to all portions of the site. A species list was compiled of all identifiable flora and fauna. Binoculars (10 x 40) were used to identify birds; fauna was also identified by tracks, scat, burrows, and vocalizations, in addition to direct sightings.

Particular attention was paid to the identification of sensitive biological resources that could occur on the site, given the presence of suitable habitat.<sup>1</sup> A literature search including the State Resources Agency's Natural Diversity Data Base was conducted to identify sensitive species that could occur or had been reported previously in the vicinity.

Only the terrestrial portions of the site were surveyed; no attempt was made to identify flora and fauna in the canal itself. Birds seen flying over or along the banks of the canal, and vegetation on the banks are noted in the attached species list.

## FINDINGS

Flora and fauna identified during the site visit are listed in Attachment A, and include species sighted on the roadway, along the banks of the canal, and flying over the canal and roadway. The study area is comprised of ruderal (disturbed) plant communities, with coastal sage scrub present along the southern side of the roadway. The roadway is compacted gravel that has not been maintained, and vegetation, primarily non-native weedy species, has begun to invade. Vegetation ranges from sparse (particularly in the western portion) to moderately dense, with non-native species dominant. Hottentot fig (iceplant) (*Carpobrotus edulis*) carpets large expanses of the road bed in many areas, and myoporum (*Myoporum laetum*) is abundant. Neither are native, and both are considered invasive plants.

There are no drainages or wetlands present in the study area. In one portion of the roadway, a cluster of arroyo willows (*Salix lasiolepis*) covers about half of the roadway; however, the willow is rooted on the bank above the canal and not in the road.

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<sup>1</sup> The term "sensitive" is used here to indicate plants, animals, and habitats which have legal protection from federal, state or local agencies, or those that do not possess such protection, but are of concern due to threats to their continued existence and/or loss of habitat.

Wildlife activity noted along the access road included a variety of birds, two species of lizard, and evidence of mammal use, including bobcat and coyote scat. Deer are also known to use the vicinity, however, no sign of their use of the site was found. Several great blue herons were seen foraging along both banks of the canal, a cormorant and a western grebe were seen in the water, and one least tern was seen flying over the canal. Homeless activity, including humans and dogs, was noted at the Fifth Street end of the survey area, which would reduce the use of the study area by wildlife in that area.

## SENSITIVE BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

The term sensitive is used herein to describe all plant and wildlife species listed as rare, endangered, or threatened by the state and federal governments, species that are proposed or candidates for such listing, plants listed by the California Native Plant Society (CNPS), and species of local concern. Information regarding possible occurrences within the project vicinity was based on the presence of suitable habitat and reported occurrences in the vicinity, and is summarized below.<sup>2</sup> Bold-faced type indicates species found during the survey.

- **California Least Tern {nesting colony} (*Sterna antillarum browni*)**: Federally and state listed endangered. Suitable coastal nesting habitat is not present. Least terns were seen foraging over the canal.
- **Burrowing Owl {burrow sites} (*Athene cunicularia*)**: CSC. Suitable habitat present adjacent to the roadway, foraging habitat on the roadway. Reported in 2002 from McGrath State Park, nearby.<sup>3</sup> Not found during survey.
- **Southwestern Willow Flycatcher {nesting} (*Empidonax traillii extimus*)**: Federally listed endangered. Suitable dense, contiguous riparian habitat for nesting is not present. (Reported from the Santa Clara River.) Not identified on-site.

**Least Bell's Vireo {nesting} (*Vireo bellii pusillus*)**: Federally and state listed endangered. Suitable undisturbed riparian thicket habitat for nesting is not present. (Reported from the Santa Clara River.) Not identified on-site.

- **Yellow-breasted Chat {nesting} (*Icteria virens*)**: CSC. One male seen singing from the top of a myoporum tree. Breeds from late April through mid-July.
- **San Diego Black-tailed Jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus benettii*)**: FSC; CSC. Suitable habitat present adjacent to the roadway, limited foraging habitat on the roadway. Not found on-site.

**San Diego Desert Woodrat (*Neotoma lepida intermedia*)**: FSC; CSC. Suitable habitat present adjacent to the roadway, limited foraging habitat on the roadway. Not identified on-site.

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<sup>2</sup> FSC = federal species of concern; CSC = California species of concern.

<sup>3</sup> Natural Diversity Data Base, Oxnard quadrangle, May 2002.

- Southwestern Pond Turtle (*Clemmys marmorata pallida*): California protected (full species). Suitable aquatic habitat for southwestern pond turtles, composed of pools and riffles, with adjacent grasslands for nesting, is not present. Turtles are known to be present in the Santa Clara River nearby. None were seen during the survey.
- San Diego Horned Lizard (*Phrynosoma coronatum blainvilliei*): FSC; CSC. Suitable habitat may be present in limited areas of the roadway where the substrate is sandy; suitable habitat is present in adjacent habitats; native ants (primary food source) were present. No horned lizards were seen on-site.

Coastal Western Whiptail (*Cnemidophorus tigris multiscutatus*): FSC. Suitable habitat present in the roadway and in adjacent habitats. Not seen during survey.

Silvery Legless Lizard (*Anniella pulchra pulchra*): FSC; CSC. Suitable habitat may be present in limited portions of the roadway where dense leaf litter and sandy substrate occurs; suitable habitat is present in the adjacent habitats. None were found during the survey.

Several additional species are considered to be regionally rare or declining; none of these species were found during the survey. Mammals include long-tailed weasel and mountain lions. Birds include golden eagle, sharp-shinned hawk, white-tailed kite, red-shouldered hawk, northern harrier, Cooper's hawk, merlin, prairie falcon, mountain quail, barn owl, black swift, purple martin, bank swallow, greater roadrunner, Costa's hummingbird, Bells' sage sparrow, blue grosbeak, loggerhead shrike, rufous-crowned sparrow, willow flycatcher, western bluebird, Swainson's thrush, warbling vireo, yellow warbler, Wilson's warbler, and grasshopper sparrow.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Disturbance should be limited to the previously disturbed areas (i.e., the access road), preserving the coastal sage scrub habitat present along the southern side of the road that could provide habitat for sensitive species of fauna.

Non-native, invasive plant species should be removed from the project vicinity, specifically Hottentot fig and myoporum. Where erosion may be a concern, native plants (either planted or hydroseeded) should be installed after the removal of the non-native plants. Invasive species are noted on the flora list, in Attachment A.

Roadway clearing operations should be avoided from April through July, after nesting bird season is completed and chicks have fledged. To avoid disturbance to yellow-breasted chats, clearing along the roadway should not occur during the nesting period of late April to mid-July. Once the road has been cleared, equipment may use the road at any time of year.

Wildlife (primarily birds) foraging in the canal could be adversely impacted during the dredging operation if large amounts of sediment are stirred up into the water column. If a suction dredge is used, the water typically remains fairly clear, and birds would be expected to continue foraging. If dragline or clamshell equipment is used, the water may get mucky and murky in the immediate

vicinity of the dredge site. Foraging birds may not be able to see their fish prey, and would not continue to forage in the specific area being dredged. However, the area of increased turbidity is expected to be limited to the zone surrounding the equipment, leaving the remainder of the canal undisturbed and available for foraging wildlife. It is also important to note that dredging will be limited to the a 20-foot width in the center of the channel, leaving the mudflats along both sides untouched. Further, the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) permit (Order No. R4-2002-0106; File No. 01-032) requires that “#8. Dredging, excavation or disposal of dredge spoils shall not cause any of the following conditions in the receiving waters: b. Turbidity that would cause substantial visible contrast with the natural appearance of the water outside the immediate area of operation.” The permit requires the operator to record daily observations of discoloration and/or turbidity along with several other factors, and provide these data in a weekly monitoring report to the RWQCB.

### REFERENCES

California Department of Fish and Game (January 2002), Special Plants List. Natural Diversity Data Base, Natural Heritage Division, State of California Resources Agency.

California Department of Fish and Game (January 2002), Special Animals. Natural Diversity Data Base, Natural Heritage Division, State of California Resources Agency.

California Department of Fish and Game (May 2002), Natural Diversity Data Base RareFind: Oxnard USGS quadrangles., Natural Heritage Division, State of California Resources Agency.

Smith, Clifton F. (1998), A Flora of the Santa Barbara Region, California. Second edition. Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History.

Stebbins, R.C. (1985), A Field Guide to Western Reptiles and Amphibians. Peterson Field Guides. Houghton Mifflin Company.

**ATTACHMENT A: SPECIES LISTS**  
**EDISON CANAL ACCESS ROAD**  
**BIOLOGICAL SURVEY RESULTS**  
 June 20, 2002

**FLORA**

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**Class Dicotyledones (Dicots)**

**Aizoaceae - Fig-Marigold Family**

*Carpobrotus edulis* / Hottentot fig

Invasive species

*Carpobrotus chilensis* / sea fig

Invasive species

**Anacardiaceae - Sumac Family**

*Malosma laurina* / laurel sumac

*Rhus integrifolia* / lemonade berry

*Toxicodendron diversilobum* / poison oak

**Apiaceae - Carrot Family**

*Apium graveolens* / celery

Invasive species

*Foeniculum vulgare* / sweet fennel

Invasive species

**Asteraceae - Sunflower Family**

*Ambrosia chamissonis* / beach-bur

*Ambrosia psilostachya* / western ragweed

*Artemisia californica* / coastal sagebrush

*Artemisia douglasiana* / mugwort

*Baccharis pilularis* / coyote brush

*Baccharis salicifolia* / mule fat

*Centaurea melitensis* / tocalote

Invasive species

*Cirsium* sp. / thistle

*Conyza canadensis* / horseweed

*Delairea odorata* / cape ivy; German ivy

Invasive species

*Ericameria ericoides* / mock heather

*Filago californica* / California filago

*Gnaphalium ramosissimum* / pink everlasting

*Gnaphalium* sp. / everlasting

*Hedypnois cretica* / Crete hedypnois

Invasive species

*Hemizonia fasciculata* / tarweed

*Heterotheca grandiflora* / telegraph weed

*Jaumea carnosa* / jaumea

*Lessingia filaginifolia* / California aster

*Sonchus oleraceus* / common sow thistle

**Boraginaceae - Borage Family**

*Heliotropium curassavicum* / heliotrope

**Brassicaceae - Mustard Family**

*Brassica nigra* / black mustard

Invasive speices

**Cactaceae - Cactus Family**

*Opuntia littoralis* / coastal prickly pear

**Caryophyllaceae - Pink Family**

*Spergularia macrotheca* var. *macrotheca* / large-flowered sand spurrey

**Chenopodiaceae - Goosefoot Family**

*Salicornia virginica* / pickle weed

*Salsola tragus* / Russian thistle

*Suaeda taxifolia* / alkali blite

**Crassulaceae - Crassula Family**

*Dudleya lanceolata* / lance-leaved dudleya

**Euphorbiaceae - Euphorbia Family**

*Croton californicus* / California croton

*Euphorbia peplus* / petty spurge

**Fabaceae - Legume Family**

*Lotus scoparius* / deerweed

*Lupinus arboreus* / coastal bush lupine

*Medicago polymorpha* / bur clover

*Melilotus alba* / white sweetclover

*Melilotus sp.* / sweetclover

Invasive species

Invasive species

Invasive species

**Frankeniaceae - Frankenia Family**

*Frankenia salina* / alkali heath

**Geraniaceae - Geranium Family**

*Erodium cicutarium* / redstem filaree

*Erodium sp.* / filaree

**Hydrophylaceae - Waterleaf Family**

*Phacelia ramosissima* / branching phacelia

**Lamiaceae - Mint Family**

*Marrubium vulgare* / horehound

Invasive species

**Myoporaceae - Myoporum Family**

*Myoporum laetum* / myoporum

Invasive species

**Onagraceae - Evening Primrose Family**

*Camissonia cheiranthifolia* / beach evening primrose

**Plantaginaceae - Plantain Family**

*Plantago erecta* / California plantain

*Plantago maritima* / seaside plantain

**Plumbaginaceae - Leadwort Family**

*Limonium californicum* / marsh rosemary

**Salicaceae - Willow Family**

*Salix lasiolepis* / arroyo willow

**Scrophulariaceae - Figwort Family**

*Scrophularia californica* / figwort

**Selaginellaceae – Spike-moss Family**

*Selaginella bigelovii* / Bigelow's spike moss

**Solanaceae - Nightshade Family**

*Nicotiana glauca* / tree tobacco

*Solanum americanum* / American nightshade

**Class Monocotyledones (Monocots)**

**Poaceae - Grass Family**

*Avena fatua* / wild oat



*Bromus diandrus* / ripgut grass  
*Bromus hordeaceus* / soft chess  
*Bromus tectorum* / cheat grass  
*Cortaderia jubata* / pampus grass  
*Distichlis spicata* / coastal saltgrass  
*Lamarckia aurea* / goldentop grass  
*Schismus barbatus* / Arabian grass  
*Vulpia myuros* / rattail fescue

## FAUNA

### COMMON NAME

### SCIENTIFIC NAME

#### BIRDS

Western grebe	<i>Aechmophorus occidentalis</i>
Double-crested cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax auritus</i>
Great blue heron	<i>Ardea herodias</i>
Killdeer	<i>Charadrius vociferus</i>
Western gull	<i>Larus occidentalis</i>
Least tern	<i>Sterna antillarum</i>
Turkey vulture	<i>Cathartes aura</i>
Red-tailed hawk	<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>
American kestrel	<i>Falco sparverius</i>
Band-tailed pigeon	<i>Columba fasciata</i>
Mourning dove	<i>Zenaidura macoura</i>
Anna's hummingbird	<i>Calypte anna</i>
Belted kingfisher	<i>Ceryle alcyon</i>
Black phoebe	<i>Sayornis nigricans</i>
Pacific slope flycatcher	<i>Empidonax difficilis</i>
Barn swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Scrub jay	<i>Aphelcoma coerulescens</i>
American crow	<i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>
Wrentit	<i>Chamaea fasciata</i>
Bushtit	<i>Psaltiriparus minimus</i>
House wren	<i>Troglodytes aedon</i>
American robin	<i>Turdus migratorius</i>
Northern mockingbird	<i>Mimus polyglottos</i>
European starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
Common yellowthroat	<i>Geothlypis trichas</i>
Yellow-breasted chat	<i>Icteria virens</i>
Spotted towhee	<i>Pipilo erythrophthalmus</i>
California towhee	<i>Pipilo fuscus</i>
European song sparrow	<i>Melospiza melodia</i>

House sparrow  
Lesser goldfinch  
House finch

*Passer domesticus*  
*Carduelis psaltria*  
*Carpodacus mexicanus*

## **MAMMALS**

Coyote  
Bobcat  
Striped skunk  
Brush rabbit  
Beechey ground squirrel  
Bottae pocket gopher  
Dusky-footed woodrat

*Canis latrans*  
*Lynx rufus*  
*Mephitis mephitis*  
*Sylvilagus bachmani*  
*Otospermophilus beecheyi*  
*Thomomys bottae*  
*Neotoma fiscipes*

## **REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS**

Western fence lizard  
Southern alligator lizard  
California side-blotched lizard

*Sceloporus occidentalis*  
*Gerrhonotus multicarinatus*  
*Uta stansburiana hesperis*