

Memorandum

To	Kristine Preston	Page	1
CC			
Subject	Summary of 2021 SDMMP Tricolored Blackbird Surveys		
From	AECOM Staff		
Date	December 30, 2021		

Between April 10, 2021 and June 22, 2021 AECOM biologists conducted tricolored blackbird habitat assessments and surveys at 31 survey areas, primarily located in western San Diego County (see GIS data submitted under separate cover). Below is a summary of the results from those surveys.

- Eighteen of the survey areas contained suitable nesting habitat for tricolored blackbirds, three survey areas contained currently unsuitable habitat (e.g., vegetation too short, habitat patch too small or too sparse), and ten survey areas contained no suitable nesting habitat present within the survey area. While many of the survey areas contained vegetation that met the parameters for “suitable nesting habitat”, the lack of nearby suitable foraging habitat precluded site occupancy for most of the survey areas. Many of the survey areas close to the Pacific Ocean contained brackish water and were surrounded by urban development, further making the habitat unsuitable. The most suitable habitat was located in eastern San Diego County on large tracts of relatively flat land with nearby/adjacent grasslands that were maintained at a low height by cattle grazing (Rancho Jamul Ecological Reserve, Ramona Grasslands, and Pamo Valley).
- 3 survey areas were occupied by tricolored blackbirds:
 - a. At Rancho Jamul Ecological Reserve Pond, a nesting colony at the southern pond was documented. The nesting colony consisted of an estimated 400 birds, and they were seen foraging in nearby grasslands and bringing invertebrates (earwigs) back to the nests. The nesting colony was located in a small pond with thick emergent vegetation consisting primarily of bulrushes. Three separate survey rounds (April 19, May 6, and June 22) were conducted at this colony to document the breeding status throughout the spring and summer.
 - b. At Pamo Valley North, a few tricolored blackbirds (approximately 12) were detected in a small pond near a private residence at the north end of Pamo Road. The colony could only be surveyed from a publically accessible road and was surveyed twice (April 16 and May 13). Tricolored blackbirds were detected during the first survey, but were not detected on the second survey. Therefore, the breeding status of tricolored blackbirds at this small colony could not be verified due to the inability to access a closer vantage point of the pond based on land lease limitations.
 - c. At Ramona Grasslands North, a foraging flock of approximately 450 tricolored blackbirds was documented. The birds were nesting to the west in a fenced-in pond on Ramona Municipal Water District property, and flying across Rangleland Road to forage.