

Cactus Wrens of the Puente-Chino Hills: 1998 - 2008



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Background



Puente-Chino Hills: major habitat reserve in coastal southern California

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“Peninsula” of habitat + many islets



Landuse of Puente-Chino Hills



“SoCal Suburbia”: matrix of wildland+urban

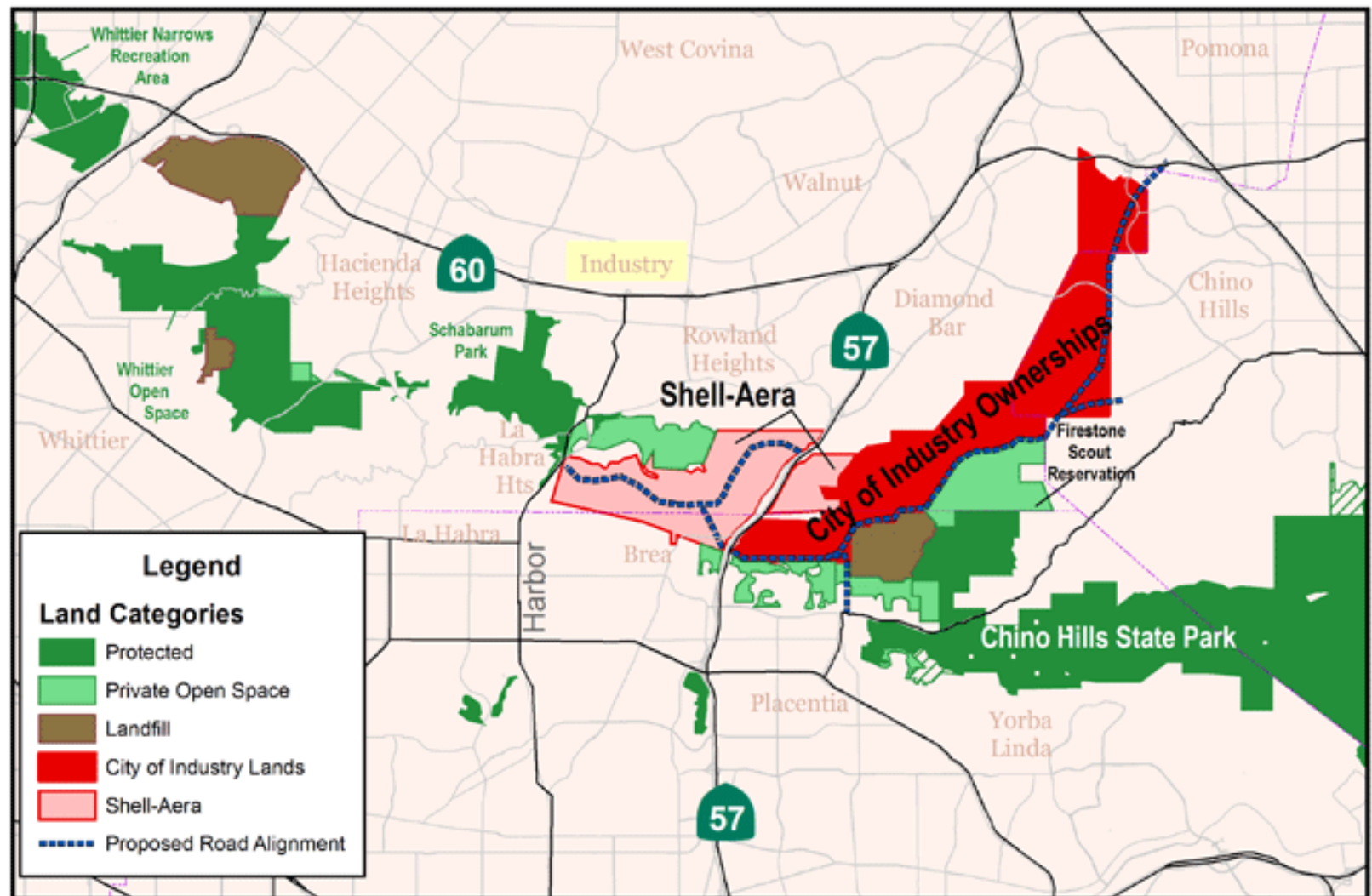
Big patches, little patches



Major landowners of habitat (all):

- California State Parks (Chino Hills State Park)
- Puente Hills “Habitat Authority” (western portion)
- City of Industry (incl. Tonner Cyn.)
- Aera (was Shell Oil)
- County of Los Angeles (Schabarum Park)

Land ownership in Puente-Chino Hills



Biological Importance

Remnant populations of T/E/Sensitive plants and animals:

- Birds (California gnatcatcher)
- Mammals (American badger)
- Amphibians (Western spadefoot)
- Reptiles (Western pond-turtle)
- Rare plants (Mariposa-lilies)

Large population (60 - 80 pr.) of Cactus Wren scattered throughout entire hills.

Bird Surveys of Puente-Chino Hills

D.S. Cooper/T.A. Scott (UCR): 300+ point counts (unlimited distance, single-visit); 46 walking transects; April-May, 1997-98.

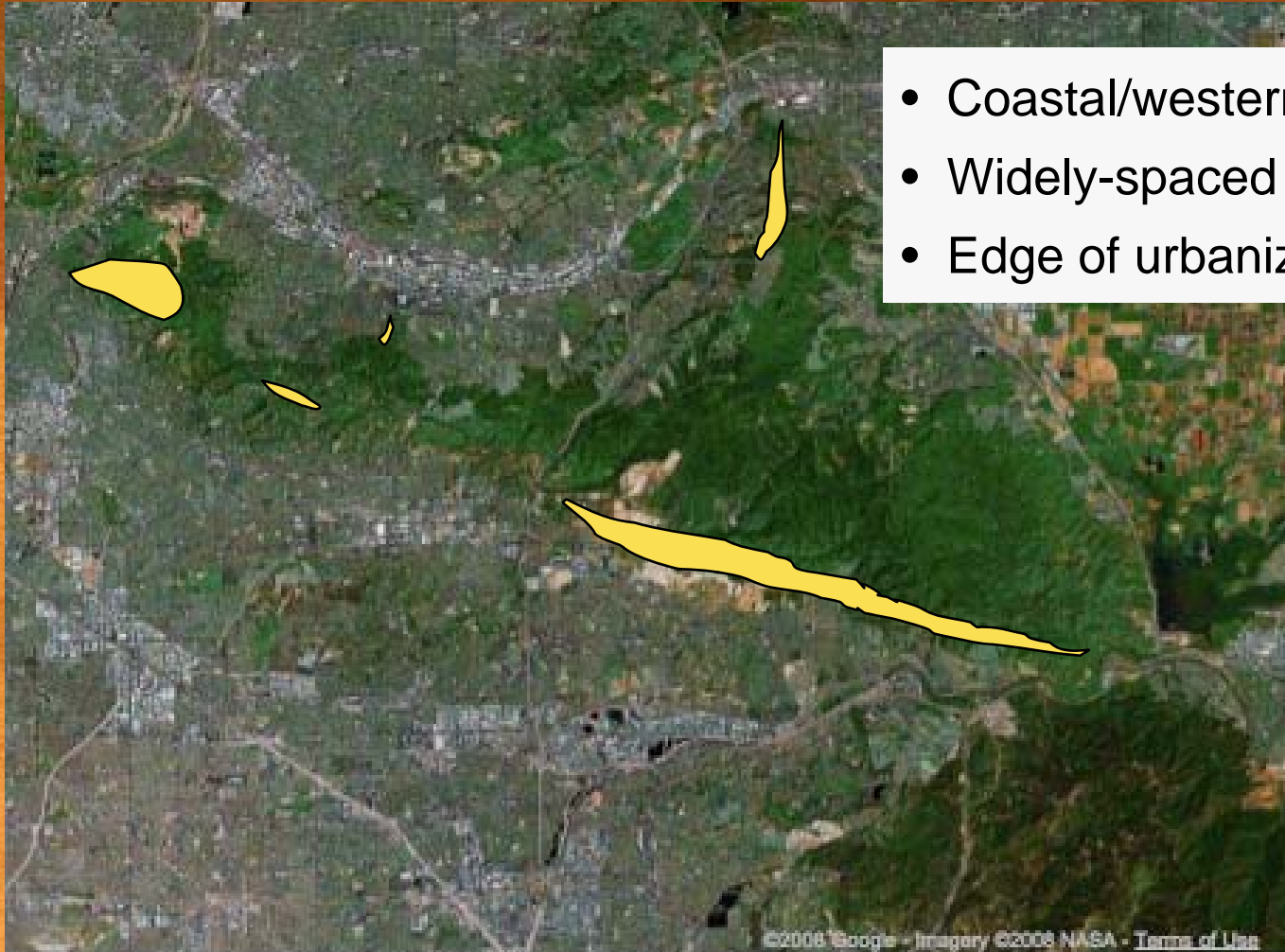
LSA: Resource Mgt. Plan for western Puente Hills, incl. presence/absence surveys of Cactus Wren for all watersheds, 2003-2005.

Numerous EIRs since 1993 (unpublished).

Where'n the hills are the wrens?



Distributional patterns



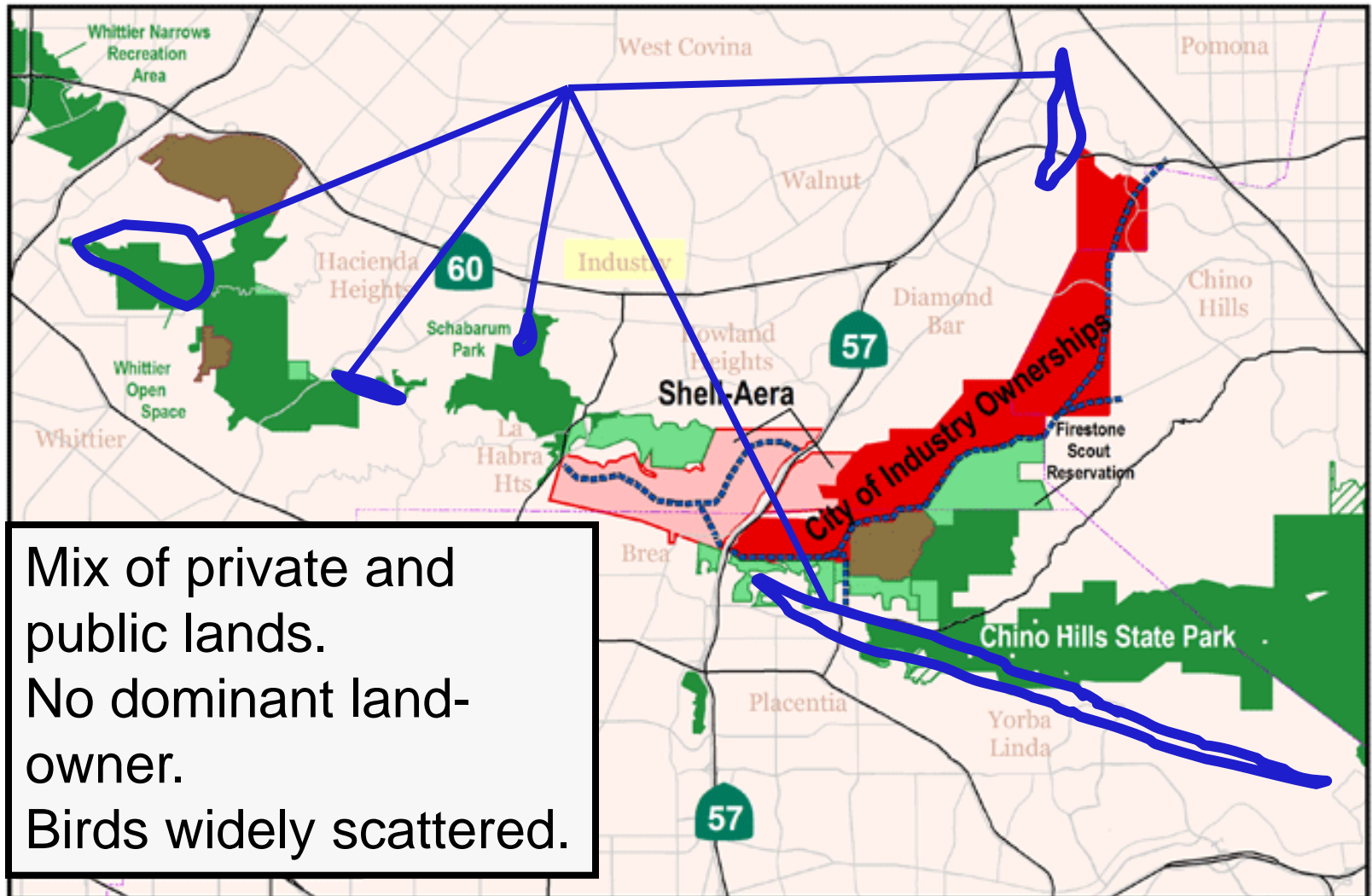
- Coastal/western slopes
- Widely-spaced
- Edge of urbanization

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Land ownership and Cactus Wren distribution



Cactus Wren status in P-C Hills, 1997-1998

- Detected on 7.9% of point counts (n = 331)
- Detected on 15.2% of walking transects (n = 46)
- Significantly associated with presence of cactus (p<0.001 using logistic regression)
- No association with immediate edge, *but*
- Cactus often at lowest elevations, at periphery of hills

Sources: Cooper (1999, 2000)

Cactus Wren status 1997-1998 by county/survey method

	Point Counts (# birds)	Transects (# birds)
LA	12 (16)	6 (17)
ORA	11 (20)	0
SBD	0	0

Cactus Wren status, by land ownership (1997-98, points+transects)

Land Ownership		# Point counts (# birds)	# Transects (# birds)	Total
Public				
	Habitat Authority	6 (10)	2 (6)	8 (16)
	County/City Parks	0	3 (10)	3 (10)
	Chino Hills S.P.	2 (2)	0	2 (2)
TOTAL PUBLIC		8 (12)	5 (16)	13 (28)
PRIVATE		15 (24)	1 (1)	16 (25)

~ even split public vs. private

In early spring 2008, I re-visited all point counts and transects that had Cactus Wrens during the 1997-98 surveys.

I visited each site for 10-15 min., loudly imitated the calls and scanned visually. I checked adjacent patches if birds were not at the patch where originally surveyed.

Not scientifically rigorous (e.g., time of day, season differed; not all points revisited), but results striking.

Summitridge Park, Diamond Bar



Still the same - lots of wrens!



Point # 11 (Bastanchury Rd., Yorba Linda)



Point # 10 (same area)

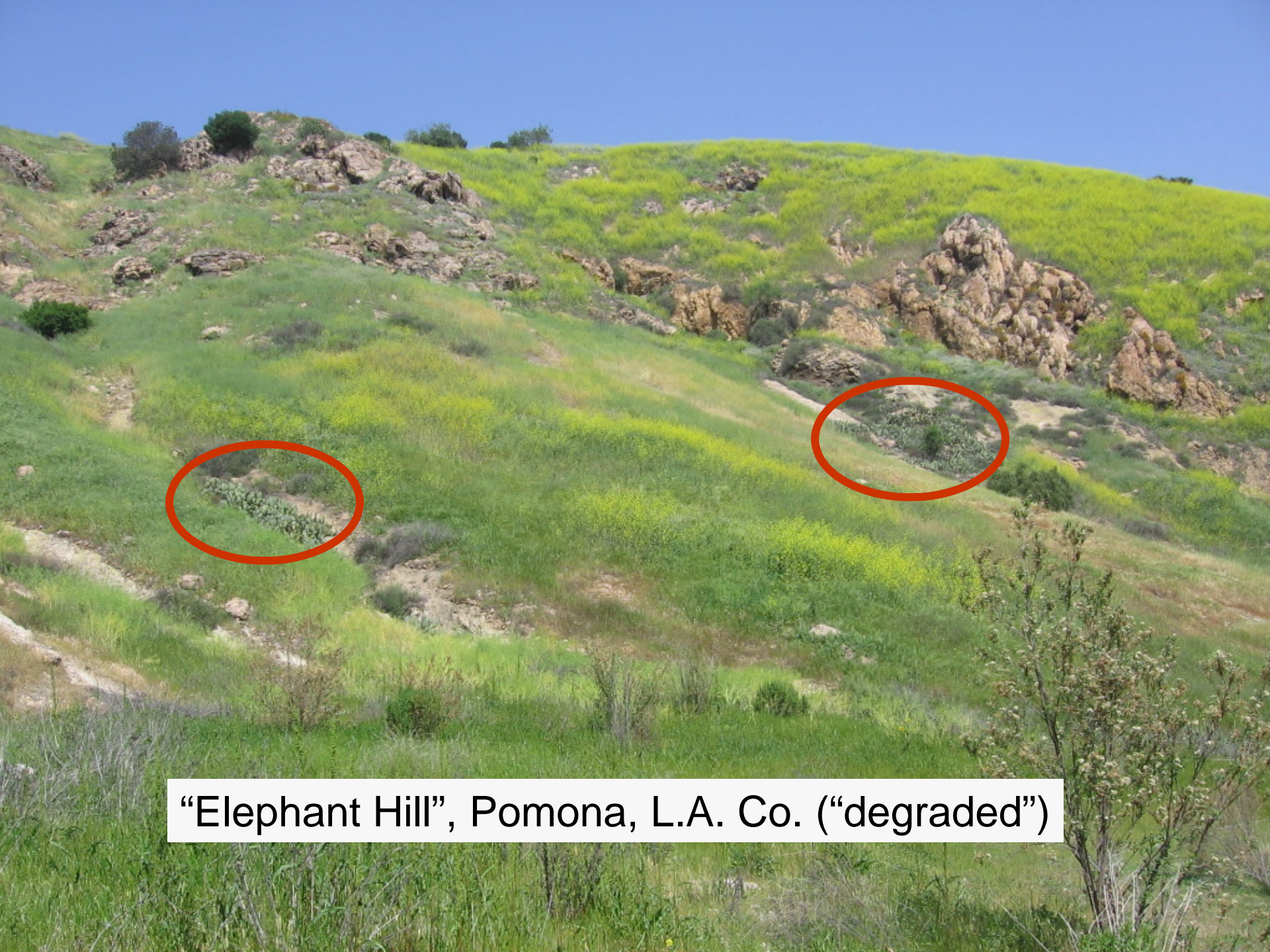


Point # 27 (Avenida del Tren, Yorba Linda)



Point #9 (4 wrens on 21 May 1997); now “Black Gold Country Club”
Yorba Linda.





“Elephant Hill”, Pomona, L.A. Co. (“degraded”)

Change in Cactus Wren status on point counts 1997/8 - 2008

Point	General area	County	Ownership 1998	Extant 2008?	Wrens in 2008?
61	Whittier Hills	LA	PHLNHA	Yes	Yes
62	Whittier Hills	LA	PHLNHA	Yes	Yes
63	Whittier Hills	LA	PHLNHA	Yes	Yes
68	Whittier Hills	LA	PHLNHA	Yes	Yes
299	Whittier Hills	LA	PHLNHA	Yes	Yes
300	Whittier Hills	LA	PHLNHA	Yes	Yes
100	La Habra Hts.	LA	Private	Yes	Yes
156	Diamond Bar	LA	City of D.B.	Yes	No
157	Diamond Bar	LA	Private	Yes	No
228	Phillips Ranch, Pomona	LA	Private	Degraded	No
233	Phillips Ranch, Pomona	LA	Private	Yes	Yes
234	Phillips Ranch, Pomona	LA	Private	Yes	Yes
186	Brea	ORA	Private (Oil)	Yes	?
270	Chino Hills S.P.	ORA	Calif. State Parks	Yes	?
314	Chino Hills S.P.	ORA	Calif. State Parks	Yes	?
8	Yorba Linda	ORA	Private	No	No
9	Yorba Linda	ORA	Private	No	No
10	Yorba Linda	ORA	Private	Degraded	No
11	Yorba Linda	ORA	Private	No	No
13	Yorba Linda	ORA	Private	No	No
26	Yorba Linda	ORA	Private/CHSP	Yes	?
27	Yorba Linda	ORA	Private	Degraded	No
325	Yorba Linda	ORA	Private	Yes	No

Change in Cactus Wren status on transects 1997-98 - 2008

Transect	Location	Ownership	# birds		
			(1997-98)	Extant 2008?	Wrens in 2008
Sycamore Cyn.	Whittier	PHLNHPA	5	Yes	Yes
Hacienda Hills	Hac. Hts.	PHLNHPA	1	Yes	Yes
Schabarum Park-w	Rowland Hts.	LA Co. Parks and Rec.	4	Yes	Yes
"Phillips Hill"	Phillips Ranch	Private	1	?	?
Summitridge Park I	Diamond Bar	City of Diamond Bar (Park)	2	Yes	Yes
Summitridge Park II	Diamond Bar	City of Diamond Bar (Park)	4	Yes	Yes

All transects with wrens in 1997-98 were in Los Angeles Co.

Preliminary conclusions:

Cactus wren appears to be holding its own in Los Angeles Co. portion of Puente-Chino Hills.

Cactus habitat on private lands continues to be lost, particularly in Orange Co. (Yorba Linda).

High-end residential development is driving loss.

Mitigation for these developments = coastal sage scrub restoration or (rarely) land purchase for California Gnatcatcher, which often co-occurs.

Preliminary recommendations:

Survey of Cactus Wren population of entire Puente-Chino Hills, focusing on:

- Whittier Hills
- Diamond Bar/Phillips Ranch
- North Brea/Yorba Linda

Identify ownership of core populations, satellite populations, and relevant agencies.

Work with landowners, municipalities, and agencies to stop degradation (arson, trampling, non-native landscaping) and plan for future impacts (e.g., expansion of Forest Lawn, Whittier).

Ensure that mitigation for California Gnatcatcher installs large, contiguous patches of cactus.

Thanks!

