

The California Natural Diversity Data Base

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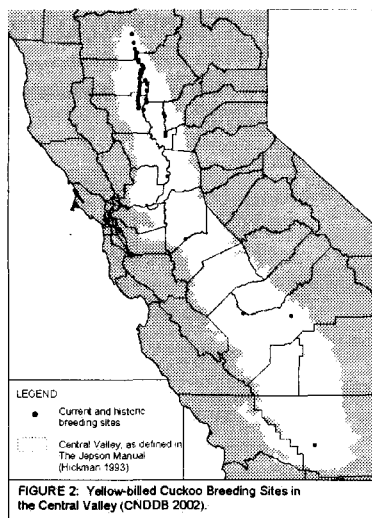
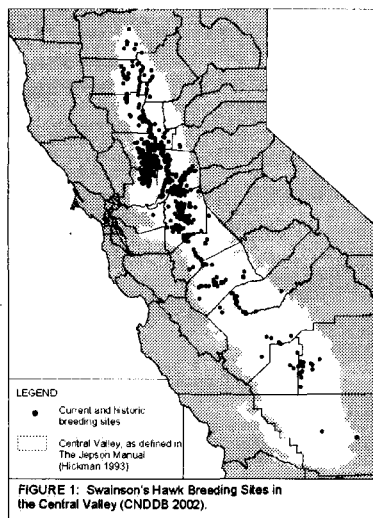
It might come as a surprise to some Central Valley birders to learn that the Wildlife and Habitat Data Analysis Branch of the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) compiles site-specific data for over 100 of California's most threatened and endangered birds (CDFG 2002). Information on what are commonly referred to as special-status birds is stored in the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB). The CNDDDB is a continually refined and updated statewide inventory that includes information on the state's special-status species and natural communities. In total, the CNDDDB contains over 38,000 occurrences for sensitive plants and animal species and sensitive natural communities.

For Central Valley birders, the CNDDDB can be a valuable source of information on recent and historic occurrences of special-status birds in their county or other geographic area of interest. The CNDDDB also provides an opportunity for birders to contribute information that could be important to future local or statewide conservation efforts that might otherwise be confined to the pages of a field notebook.

The information contained in the CNDDDB is available to the public, for a fee, in the form of computer generated text reports and map overlays. The entire inventory, including geographical information system (GIS) coverage, can be purchased for an annual subscription to a PC database application called RareFind 2. RareFind 2 provides flexible query options and text-based reports for any of California's 2,800+, 1:24,000-scale quad maps or United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5 minute maps. RareFind 2 is used as a stand-alone research tool or can be linked with the GIS application ArcView for access to the spatial data set.

The CNDDDB can be searched by a variety of parameters. Figures 1 and 2 show examples of how CNDDDB data can be graphically displayed for a single species. Figure 1 depicts historic and current Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*) nesting sites. Figure 2 depicts historic and current Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus occidentalis*) breeding sites. Each point on the figures is linked to the following information in the database:

- Habitat requirements and associations
- Location information
- Dates observed, including the last date the element was observed and the last date the site was surveyed
- Ecological descriptions, including threats to the population
- Land ownership
- Population information, including trends and reproductive outcome
- Data sources.



If information on all special-status species within a specific geographic region is required, the CNDDDB can be searched by other parameters including USGS quad, county, and natural plant communities.

The CNDDDB is currently soliciting information on occurrences of approximately 40 special-status birds that nest and/or winter in the Central Valley (Table 1). This includes birds that are listed as threatened or endangered, and those that are otherwise considered sensitive by a governmental and non-governmental agencies and organizations (e.g., CDFG, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, Partners in Flight, and the National Audubon Society).

Many of the birds in the CNDDDB are considered by CDFG as Species of Special Concern. The list of Bird Species of Special Concern is currently being revised as part of a collaborative effort between CDFG, the Bird Species of Special Concern Technical Advisory Committee, and Point Reyes Bird Observatory (PRBO). A draft of a revised list has recently been released along with species accounts for all California Species of Special Concern (Shuford and Gardali 2002). The revised list has not been officially adopted by CDFG but its adoption is expected sometime in 2003 (Lyann Comrack pers. comm.). Table 1 includes birds currently designated as Species of Special Concern, as well as those whose addition or removal is expected when the new list is adopted.

It is important to note that the CNDDDB is only as good as the information provided to CDFG. Blank areas on maps such as those shown here may not indicate real gaps in distribution but may simply reflect a lack of survey data for those regions. We would like to encourage Central Valley birders to help improve the CNDDDB by submitting completed California Native Species Field Survey Forms (available online at: <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/whdab/natspec.pdf>) when they detect special-status species in the field. Doing so contributes to one of the most useful tools available for conserving

California's most threatened plants and animals. For more information on CNDDDB products and services, call the CNDDDB Information Services Staff at (916) 324-3812, (916) 324-0475 FAX. More information is also available at: <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/whdab/html/cnddb.html>.

Table 1. Special-status birds (as designated by the California Department of Fish and Game) that occur in the Central Valley.

Species	Status*
Double-crested Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax auritus</i>)	(CSC)
Least Bittern (<i>Ixobrychus exilis</i>)	CSC
White-faced Ibis (<i>Plegadis chihi</i>)	(CSC)
Tule Greater White-fronted Goose (<i>Anser albifrons elgasi</i>)	[CSC]
Bald Eagle (<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>)	E
Northern Harrier (<i>Circus cyaneus</i>)	CSC
Cooper's Hawk (<i>Accipiter cooperi</i>)	(CSC)
Swainson's Hawk (<i>Buteo swainsoni</i>)	T
Ferruginous Hawk (<i>Buteo regalis</i>)	(CSC)
Merlin (<i>Falco columbarius</i>)	(CSC)
American Peregrine Falcon (<i>Falco peregrinus anatum</i>)	E
California Black Rail (<i>Laterallus jamaicensis coturniculus</i>)	T
Greater Sandhill Crane (<i>Grus canadensis tabida</i>)	T
Lesser Sandhill Crane (<i>Grus canadensis canadensis</i>)	[CSC]
Mountain Plover (<i>Charadrius montanus</i>)	CSC
Black Tern (<i>Chlidonias niger</i>)	CSC
Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo (<i>Coccyzus americanus occidentalis</i>)	E
Burrowing Owl (<i>Athene cunicularia</i>)	CSC
Long-eared Owl (<i>Asio otus</i>)	CSC
Short-eared Owl (<i>Asio flammeus</i>)	CSC
Loggerhead Shrike (<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>)	CSC
California Horned Lark (<i>Eremophila alpestris actia</i>)	CSC
Purple Martin (<i>Progne subis arboricola</i>)	CSC
Bank Swallow (<i>Riparia riparia</i>)	T
Yellow Warbler (<i>Dendroica petechia</i>)	CSC
Yellow-breasted Chat (<i>Icteria virens</i>)	CSC
Grasshopper Sparrow (<i>Ammodramus savannarum</i>)	[CSC]
Modesto Song Sparrow (<i>Melospiza melodia mailliardi</i>)	[CSC]
Tricolored Blackbird (<i>Agelaius tricolor</i>)	CSC
Yellow-headed Blackbird (<i>Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus</i>)	[CSC]

*California Department of Fish and Game Status Categories:

E = Endangered

T = Threatened

CSC = California Species of Concern - on current and draft revised lists

(CSC) = California Species of Concern - on current list, but not on draft revised list

[CSC] = California Species of Concern - not on current list, but on draft revised list

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

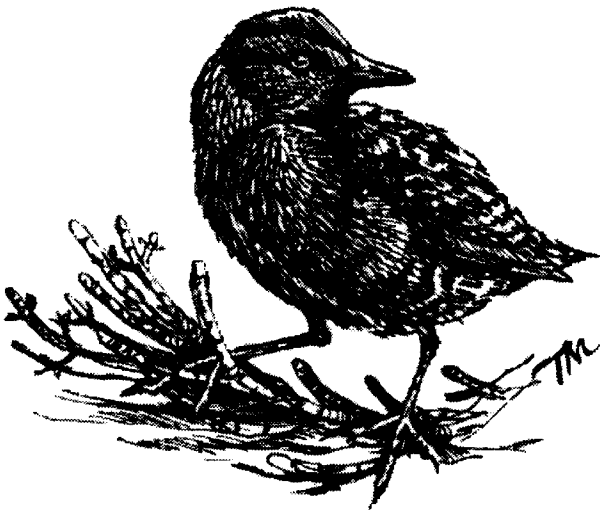
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Shuford, W. D. and T. Gardali. 2002. California Bird Species of Special Concern 2002. A Ranked Assessment of Species, Subspecies, and Distinct Populations of Birds of Immediate Conservation Concern in California. Draft report to California Department of Fish and Game. Point Reyes Bird Observatory, Stinson Beach, CA.



California Black Rail

sketch by Tim Manolis