



Napa Solano Audubon Society
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BIRDING — EDUCATION — CITIZEN SCIENCE — HABITAT CONSERVATION

December 2, 2024

To: Steve Potter, City Manager; Tiffany Carranza, City Clerk - to be distributed to All City Council Members and Planners for Review Prior to City Council Meeting on 12-3-24

Re: Big Ranch Road Annexation

This report is submitted on behalf of Napa-Solano Audubon Society (NSAS) to address the proposed zoning amendment to annex to the city of Napa. The area is located at the northeastern corner of the City of Napa within the Rural Urban Limit ("RUL"), on the west side of Big Ranch Road.

A key component of the mission of Napa-Solano Audubon is to promote conservation and scientific understanding of wild birds and their habitats. This report includes observations and recommendations based on the number, abundance, and status of the bird species noted across various habitats on this site.

The observation was conducted on November 30, 2024 by Mark Stephenson, NSAS Board President, and Pam Condos, NSAS Board Director, both experienced with identifying birds and their habitats. The observation lasted from 8:32 am to 11:32 am. Weather was clear with no wind. Beginning temperature was 36°F; ending temperature was 58°F. Birds were identified visually and by ear. The survey included birds identified and present on the site, foraging within the habitat, as well as a few flying above and/or landing on the site area. **The total number of species recorded was 44 and the total number of birds recorded was 500 over a three hour observation window.**

Habitat at the site included oak woodland, oak savannah, blackberry thickets, open field, redwood groves, and vineyards. Additionally, significant areas of water with reedy plant growth, indicative of wetlands, were present and observed being utilized by several species for feeding and cover. Photos of the habitats and a number of the species observed are included in this report for reference.

It is critical to note that this single observation represents only a snapshot of the birds and wildlife that use this site and surrounding habitats for territory, breeding, nesting, resting, cover, feeding, and raising young. Species observed during this observation include residents and overwintering birds. It does not by any means include all the species that are present and rely on this land during breeding and migratory seasons throughout the year. It is expected that species numbers would increase significantly during migration and nesting seasons and the total number of species that use this area year-round is predictably between 75-100 species based on year-long surveys in similar habitats in our city and county that we have completed.

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This report supports the findings of Dr. S. Smallwood who performed a similar observation October 30, 2024. His report also includes mammals and amphibians and other wildlife that we did not survey that may include other endangered or threatened species such as the Monarch Butterfly. (Refer to his detailed and extensive report regarding Big Ranch Road Annexation submitted to Michael Allen, Senior Planner, Community Development Department on November 20, 2024). Both Dr. Smallwood and NSAS observed approximately 50 species of birds across habitats and we concur with Dr. Smallwood that this is a small sampling of what constitutes a rich wildlife environment.

NSAS contends that annexation will have significant impacts that were not accurately or responsibly analyzed in the General Plan Update EIR (GPU-EIR). Additionally, there are several special-status species and bird endemic only to California that are not addressed in the GPU-EIR.

Therefore, we strongly emphasize and support the need to perform a comprehensive, year-long, on-site Environmental Impact Report (EIR) that covers seasonal migration and nesting months. This will enable a broad, in-depth, and accurate representation of the species that live, feed, breed, overwinter, and migrate on these varied habitats of the proposed annexation land. To ignore this component would result in an irresponsible and permanent loss of wildlife and critical habitat for many wildlife species.

Sincerely,

Mark Stephenson, President
Napa-Solano Audubon Society
President@NapaSolanoBirds.org

Table 1: Species of birds observed during NSAS survey November 30, 2024.

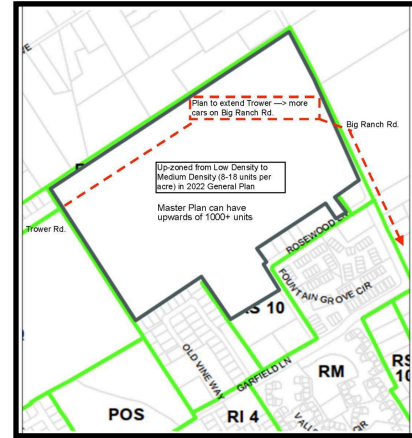
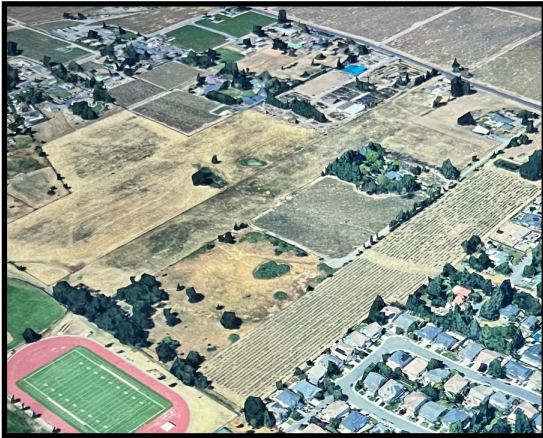
Key: **WL**= 'Watch List' of California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)
FP = 'Fully Protected' by CDFW.
S = Considered 'Sensitive' by Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
BCC = Considered 'Bird of Conservation Concern' by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
BOP = Raptors, also referred to as "birds of prey" (BOP) , are a valuable resource to the State of California, and therefore all raptors are protected under State law (CDFW)

Bird Species (common name/scientific name)	Count	Status	Comments
Canada Goose (<i>Branta canadensis</i>)	35		Overflight, landed in site's northern open field.
California Quail (<i>Callipepla californica</i>)	10		Living in blackberry bushes. Used for cover.
Mourning Dove (<i>Zenaidura macroura</i>)	12		Perched on wire at site. Feeding next to blackberry bushes
Anna's Hummingbird (<i>Calypte anna</i>)	7		Feeding around oak woodlands.
Killdeer (<i>Charadrius vociferus</i>)	2		Overflight, landed in site's northern open field.
California Gull (<i>Larus californicus</i>)	1	WL	Overflight. Landed on property adjacent to site.
Great Blue Heron (<i>Ardea herodias</i>)	1		Overflight, landed in site's northern open field.
Turkey Vulture (<i>Cathartes aura</i>)	4	BOP	Overflight.
White-tailed Kite (<i>Elanus leucurus</i>)	2	FP, S	Observed on site at another date.
Cooper's Hawk (<i>Astur cooperii</i>)	1	WL, BOP	Perched in oak woodland.
Red-shouldered Hawk (<i>Buteo lineatus</i>)	1	BOP	Perched in oak woodland
Red-tailed Hawk (<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>)	5	BOP	Perched in oak woodland and flying overhead.
American Barn Owl (<i>Tyto furcata</i>)	1	BOP	Observed by landowner. Evidence of presence (feather/pellets).
Great Horned Owl (<i>Bubo virginianus</i>)	2	BOP	Observed by landowner. See photo. Evidence of presence (pellets).
Downy Woodpecker (<i>Dryobates pubescens</i>)	2		Feeding in oak woodland.
Nuttall's Woodpecker (<i>Dryobates nuttallii</i>)	4	BCC	Feeding in oak woodland.
Northern Flicker (Red-shafted and Intergrade) (<i>Colaptes auratus</i> [cafer Group])	11		Flying/perching across site.
American Kestrel (<i>Falco sparverius</i>)	1	BOP	Heard on site.
Black Phoebe (<i>Sayornis nigricans</i>)	10		Feeding across site.
California Scrub- Jay (<i>Aphelocoma California</i>)	10		Feeding across site.
American Crow (<i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>)	20		Flying overhead.
Common Raven (<i>Corvus corax</i>)	2		Flying overhead.

Oak Titmouse (<i>Baeolophus inornatus</i>)	15	BCC	Feeding across site, particularly in oak woodland and savannah.
Bushtit (<i>Psaltriparus minimus</i>)	36		Feeding across site.
Ruby-crowned Kinglet (<i>Corthylio calendula</i>)	16		Winter visitor. Feeding across site.
White-breasted Nuthatch (<i>Sitta carolinensis</i>)	8		Feeding in oak woodland.
Bewick's Wren (<i>Thryomanes bewickii</i>)	1		Feeding and using ground cover for hiding.
European Starling (<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>)	2		Perched on wire at site.
Northern Mockingbird (<i>Mimus polyglottos</i>)	6		Feeding across site.
Western Bluebird (<i>Sialia mexicana</i>)	10		Flying overhead. Feeding on ground.
Hermit Thrush (<i>Catharus guttatus</i>)	1		Feeding and taking cover at western creekside border.
American Robin (<i>Turdus migratorius</i>)	18		Feeding in trees across site.
Cedar Waxwing (<i>Bombycilla cedrorum</i>)	2		Feeding.
House Sparrow (<i>Passer domesticus</i>)	7		Feeding.
House Finch (<i>Haemorhous mexicanus</i>)	40		Feeding.
Lesser Goldfinch (<i>Spinus psaltria</i>)	16		Feeding.
American Goldfinch (<i>Spinus tristis</i>)	8		Feeding.
Fox Sparrow (Sooty) (<i>Passerella iliaca</i> [unalaschcensis Group])	3		Feeding in blackberry bushes.
White-crowned Sparrow (<i>Zonotrichia leucophrys</i>)	62		Winter visitor. Feeding across site.
Golden-crowned Sparrow (<i>Zonotrichia leucophrys</i>)	10		Winter visitor. Feeding across site.
Lincoln's Sparrow (<i>Melospiza lincolnii</i>)	2		Feeding in water patch reed area.
California Towhee (<i>Melospiza crissalis</i>)	6		Across site.
Spotted Towhee (<i>Pipilo maculatus</i>)	1		Flying into blackberry bushes.
Yellow-rumped Warbler (<i>Setophaga coronata</i>)	86		Feeding across site.

Total number of birds observed during (1) three-hour period = 500

Photos of habitats: NSAS survey November 30, 2024.



Aerial view of site and outline of observation area



Oak Woodland (with seasonal creek) and Oak Savannah



Potential Wetlands with Sedges and Reed Species

Photos of some of the bird species observed on site:
All photos taken by Pam Condos and Mark Stephenson





Northern Flicker
(Rare Intergrade Subspecies)



California Quail



Oak Titmouse



Yellow-Rumped Warbler



Fox Sparrow



White-Crowned Sparrows



Golden-Crowned Sparrow



Lincoln's Sparrow



White-Tailed Kite



Barn Owl



Great Horned Owl



Evidence of Barn Owl (feather/pellets) and Great Horned Owl (pellets)



Red-Shouldered Hawk



Red-Tailed Hawk



American Kestrel



Cooper's Hawk