

The Coastal Cactus Wren In Los Angeles County



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Los Angeles County

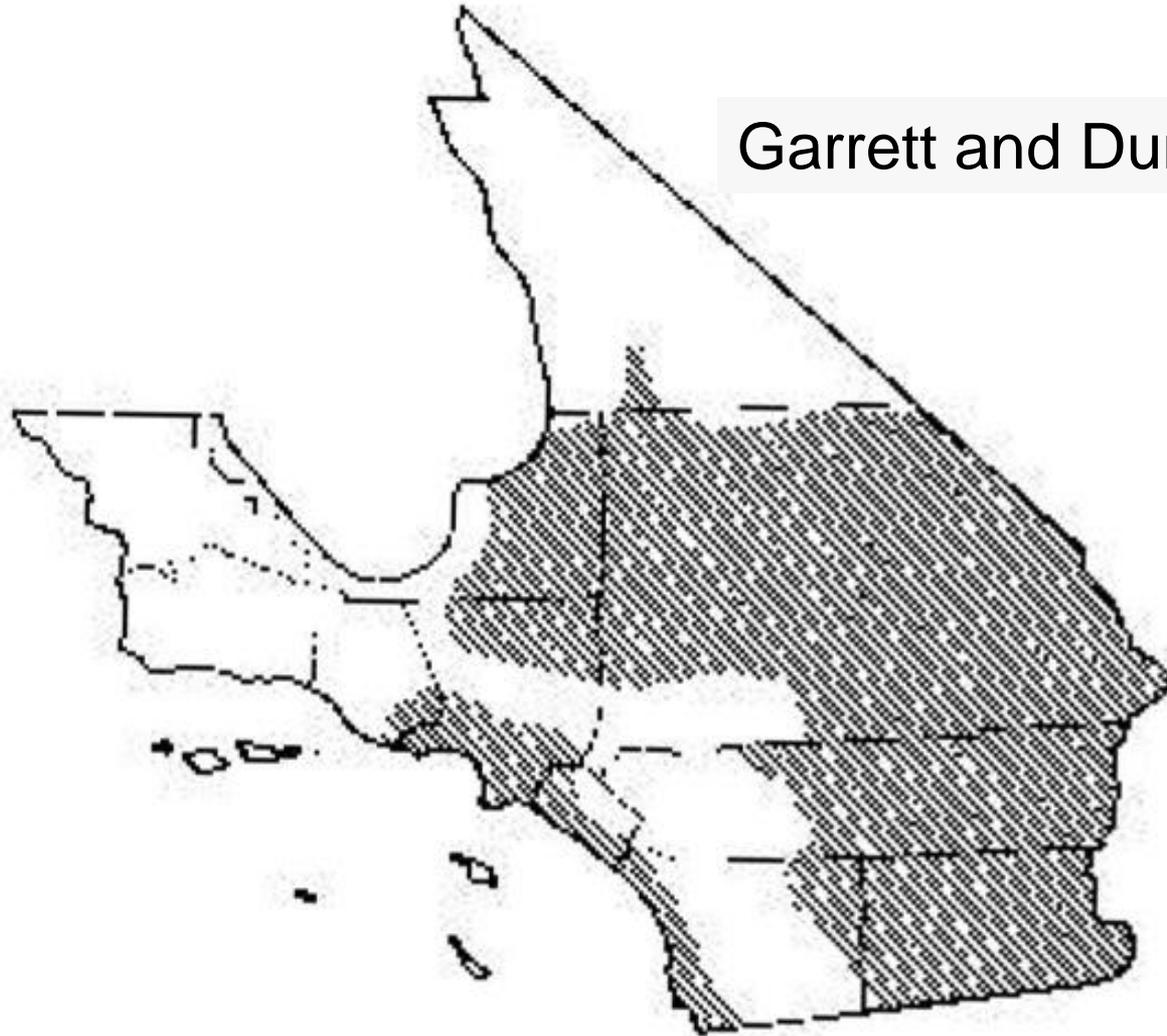


Lowlands largely urbanized, with undeveloped hills and mountains



Distribution of coastal cactus wrens in L.A. Co.

Garrett and Dunn 1981

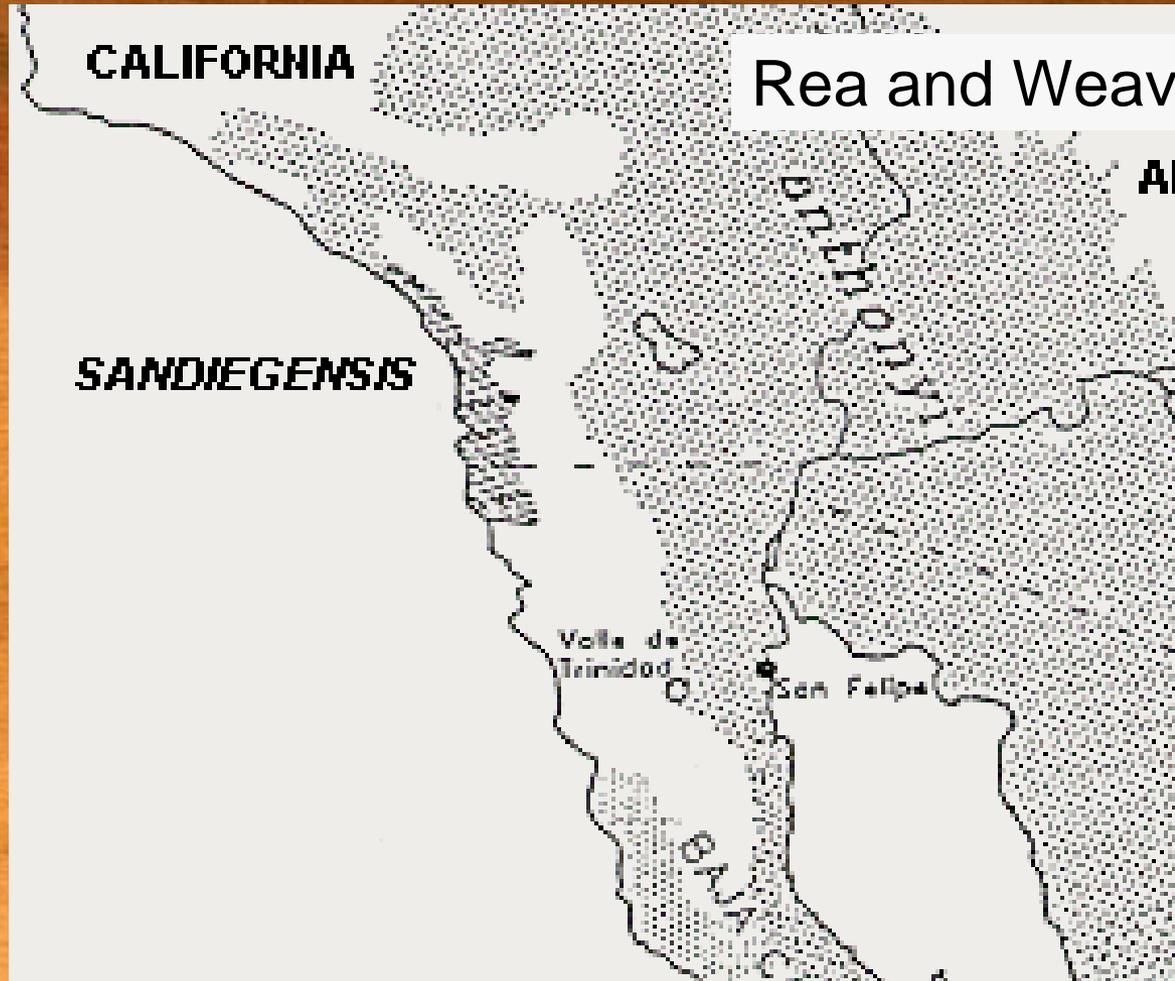


Distribution of coastal cactus wrens in L.A. Co.

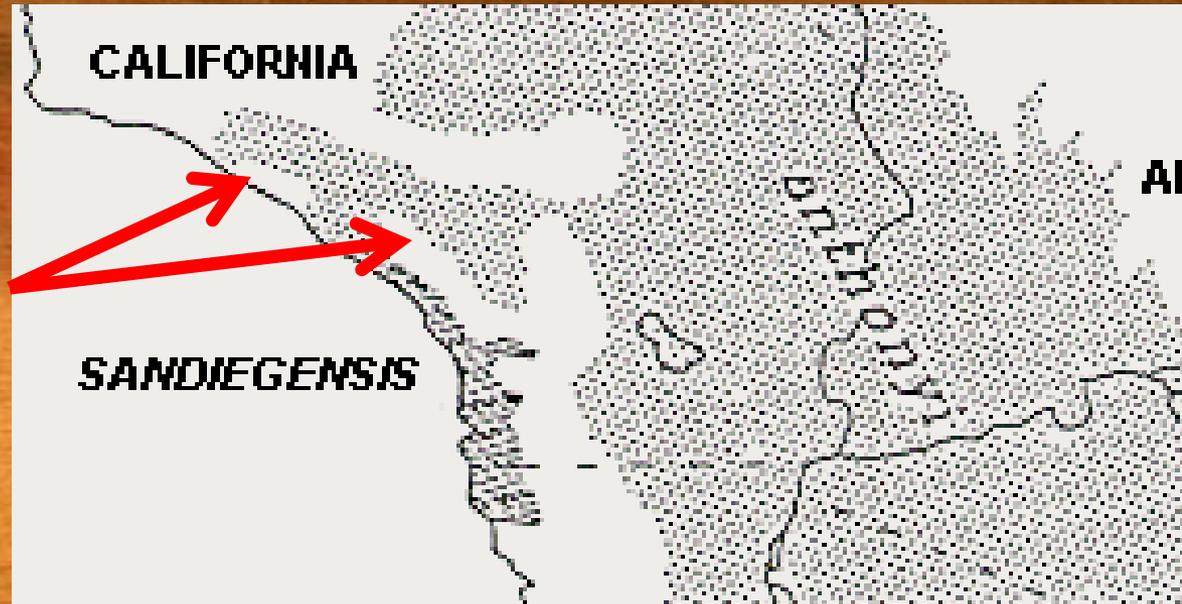
- Occurs on entire coastal slope from e. Ventura Co. south.
- No “desert connection”.
- No birds (of any type) in SW San Bernardino/W Riv. Co. (arrow)



Distribution of coastal cactus wrens in L.A. Co.



Distribution of coastal cactus wrens in L.A. Co.

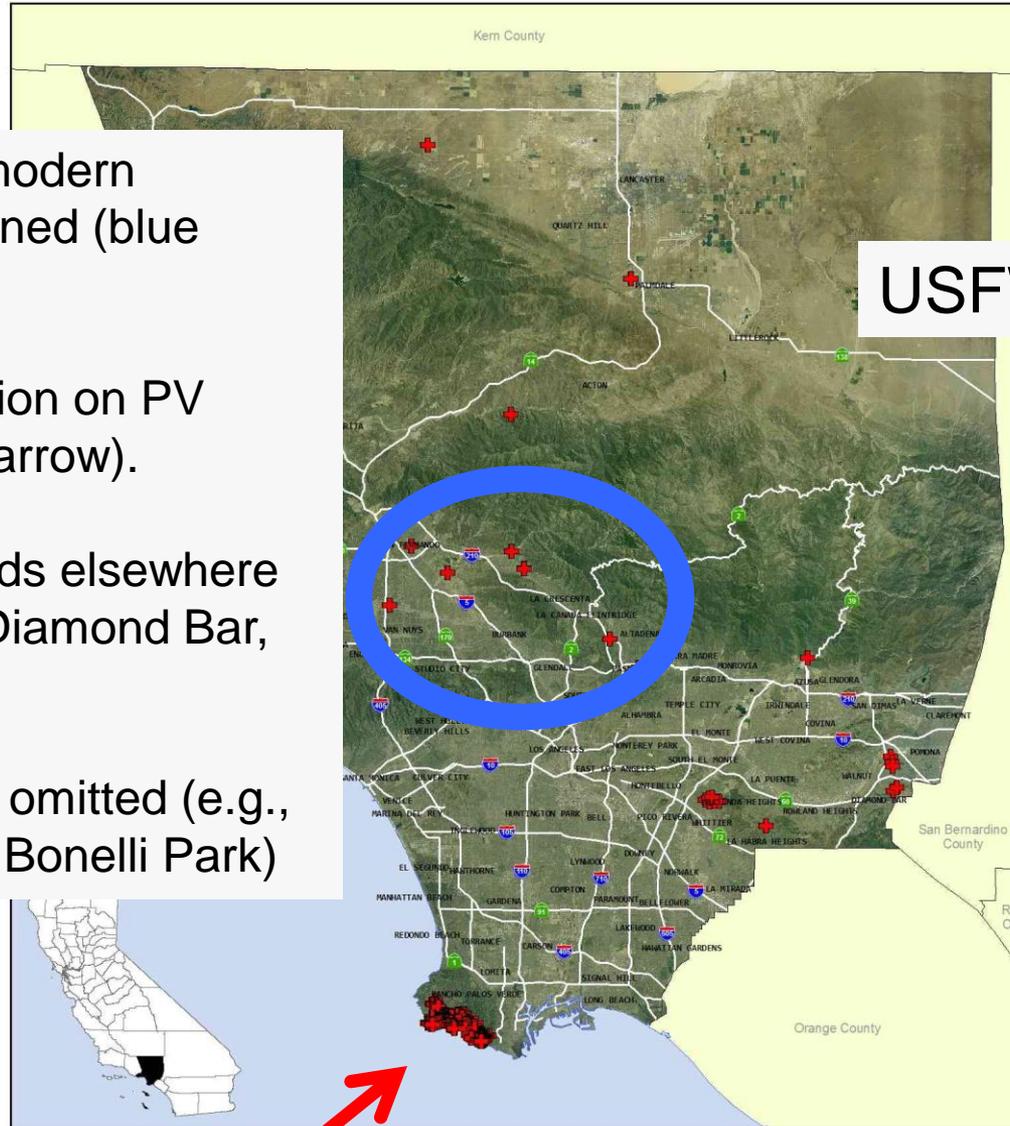


- Occurs in valleys from e. Ventura Co. east, into Sonoran Desert.
- Not in Santa Monica Mtns., Santa Ana Mtns. (arrows)
- Separate subspecies in so. Orange Co., coastal San Diego Co.



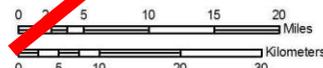
- Historical and modern locations combined (blue circle).
- Most of population on PV Peninsula (red arrow).
- Scattered records elsewhere (Whittier Hills, Diamond Bar, Azusa).
- Big populations omitted (e.g., Santa Fe Dam, Bonelli Park)

USFWS 2008



Produced by GIS Services
 Carlsbad Field Office
 GIS contact: Randy Nagel
 Biology contact: Will Miller

Map date: 05/22/08
 Data source: UCB Mapper, RPV HCP, Dan Cooper
 Image source: USGS NADP 2003
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+ Coastal Cactus Wren

Main Questions: (2008)

Where does the coastal cactus wren actually live in Los Angeles Co.?

Is it isolated (or was it) from desert populations?

What landowner(s) are most responsible for the most birds?

2009 Survey (funded by TNC)

(Protocol developed with R.A. Hamilton, based on 10 yrs of surveys of "NROC")

1. Locate cactus patches of >1 acre.
2. Sketch boundaries of cactus onto acetate/aerials.
3. Classify Type I and II (based on cactus height).
4. Map locations of birds/nests.
5. Revisit 3-7 times during spring.

METHODS

1. Volunteers (50+ birders).
2. 13 teams responsible for up to 20 territories each.
3. Three main areas of County with CACW:
 - San Gabriel Valley/Puente Hills
 - Palos Verdes Peninsula
 - San Fernando Valley (Big Tujunga Wash)
4. Coyote Hills (Orange Co.) also surveyed.
5. Access denied to Montebello, Industry Hills.

METHODS

1. *Territory* = Nest(s) used by at most 1 pr.
2. *Site* = Territory
3. Also noted: dominant plant spp., presence of Calif. Gnatcatcher/Brown-headed Cowbird.

Occasionally found cactus patches with nests but no birds; as CACW is extremely sedentary and almost never found away from large cactus patches with nests, these were visited 3x before stopping.

RESULTS

155 territories mapped by volunteers, *all from public roads and trails.*

7 territories accessible, but not mapped (d/t time constraints and rough terrain).

49 (est.) unmapped territories, inaccessible due to terrain, private property, etc.

= 211 likely territories, as of 2009.

Big Tujunga Wash



6 pr.

San Gabriel Valley

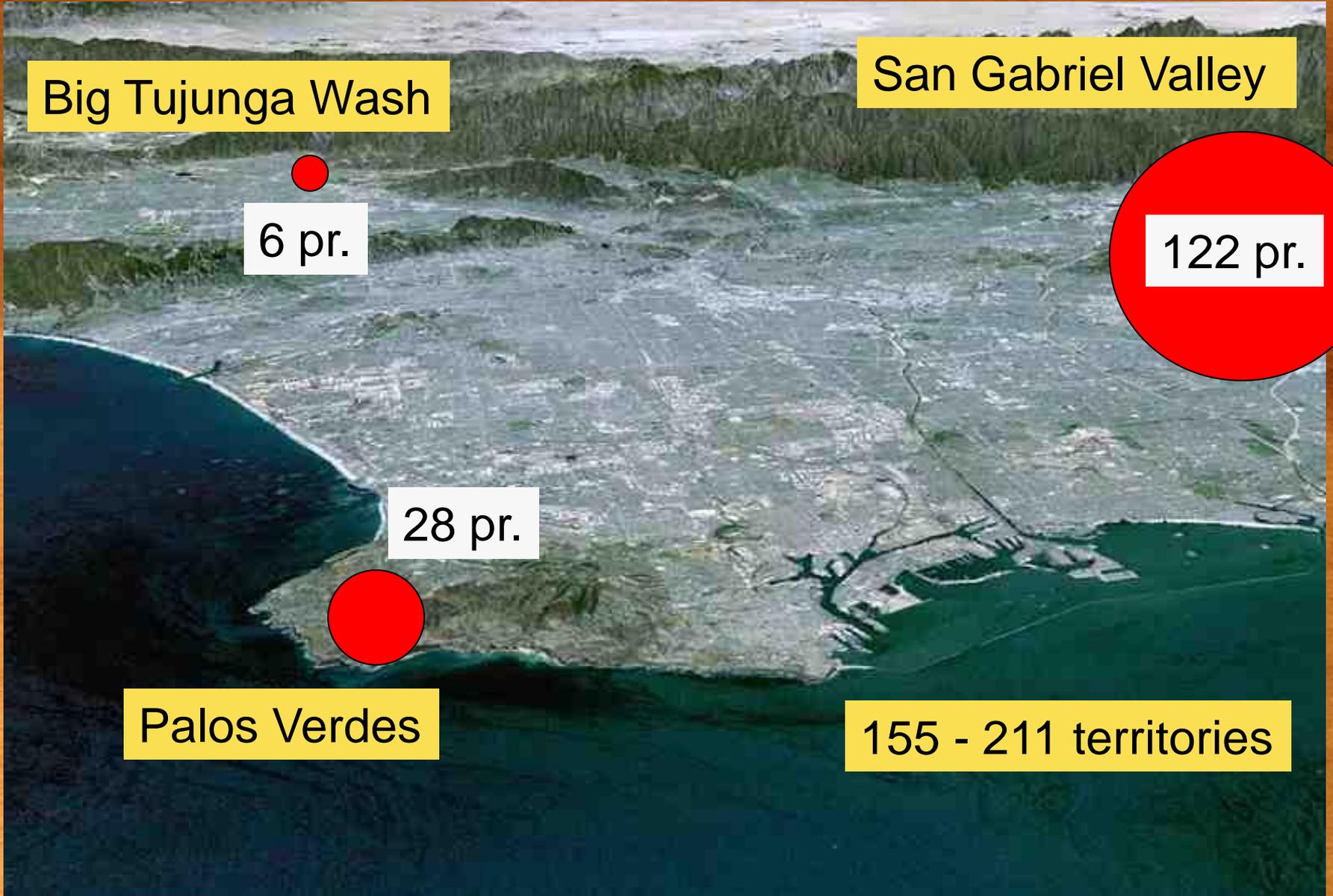
122 pr.

28 pr.



Palos Verdes

155 - 211 territories



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

San Gabriel Valley/Puente Hills by far the largest # of territories (n=122), including:

Puente Hills (n=61)

(Whittier, Hacienda Heights, Rowland Heights, Diamond Bar, Phillips Ranch/Pomona).

Large protected areas: Sycamore Cyn./Hellman Park (Whittier); also Summitridge Park (Diamond Bar).

Typical San Gabriel Valley habitat



Hellman Park (left), Phillips Ranch, Pomona (right)

Summitridge Park, Diamond Bar

Calif. gnatcatcher (several pairs, breeding); Mariposa-lilies, 10+ Cactus Wren territories.



RESULTS

San Gabriel Valley/Puente Hills by far the largest # territories (n=122), including:

San Gabriel Foothills (n=34)

Azusa east through Glendora, north San Dimas.

Large protected areas: Santa Fe Dam (County of L.A./USACE), South Hills Park (Glendora), San Dimas Cyn. Park. (County of L.A.)

RESULTS

San Gabriel Valley/Puente Hills by far the largest # territories (n=122), including:

San Jose Hills (n=27)

Incl.: Walnut and south San Dimas; large protected area: Bonelli Reg. Park (County of L.A.)

Montebello Hills (unsurveyed, c. 20 terr.?) and misc. inaccessible sites, incl. gated communities, could push San Gabriel Valley to c. 180 territories.

RESULTS...

Big Tujunga Wash (n=6)

Located mainly downstream of 210 Fwy., within Hansen Dam Recreation Area (City of Los Angeles).

No formal protection; threatened by fire/homeless encampments, etc.

Last vestige of large east San Fernando Valley population (many historical specimens, egg sets).

Big Tujunga Wash (and golf course)



RESULTS...

Palos Verdes Peninsula (n=28)

Scattered in groups of up to 5 pairs each, *all on southwestern corner of peninsula, in “old-growth” cactus.*

All but one population protected by PVP Land Conservancy (Ocean Trails/Trump Nat'l Golf Course).

Portuguese Bend Reserve (PVPLC)



Recent news...

2009: Altadena resident Lori Paul sends photograph of cactus wren nest from lower Millard Cyn. taken in 2008; describes a birds occasionally present “in coastal sage scrub” near house.

2009: Birder Dany Sloan reports single bird in cactus scrub at Pt. Dume (Malibu) on 23 Aug. 2010.

2011: Surveys (DSC) on private property in April near La Puente (“Industry Hills”) finds 2-4 pr, apparently a westward extension of San Jose Hills.



Ph. 25 May 2008 nr. Chaney Tr. (Altadena)

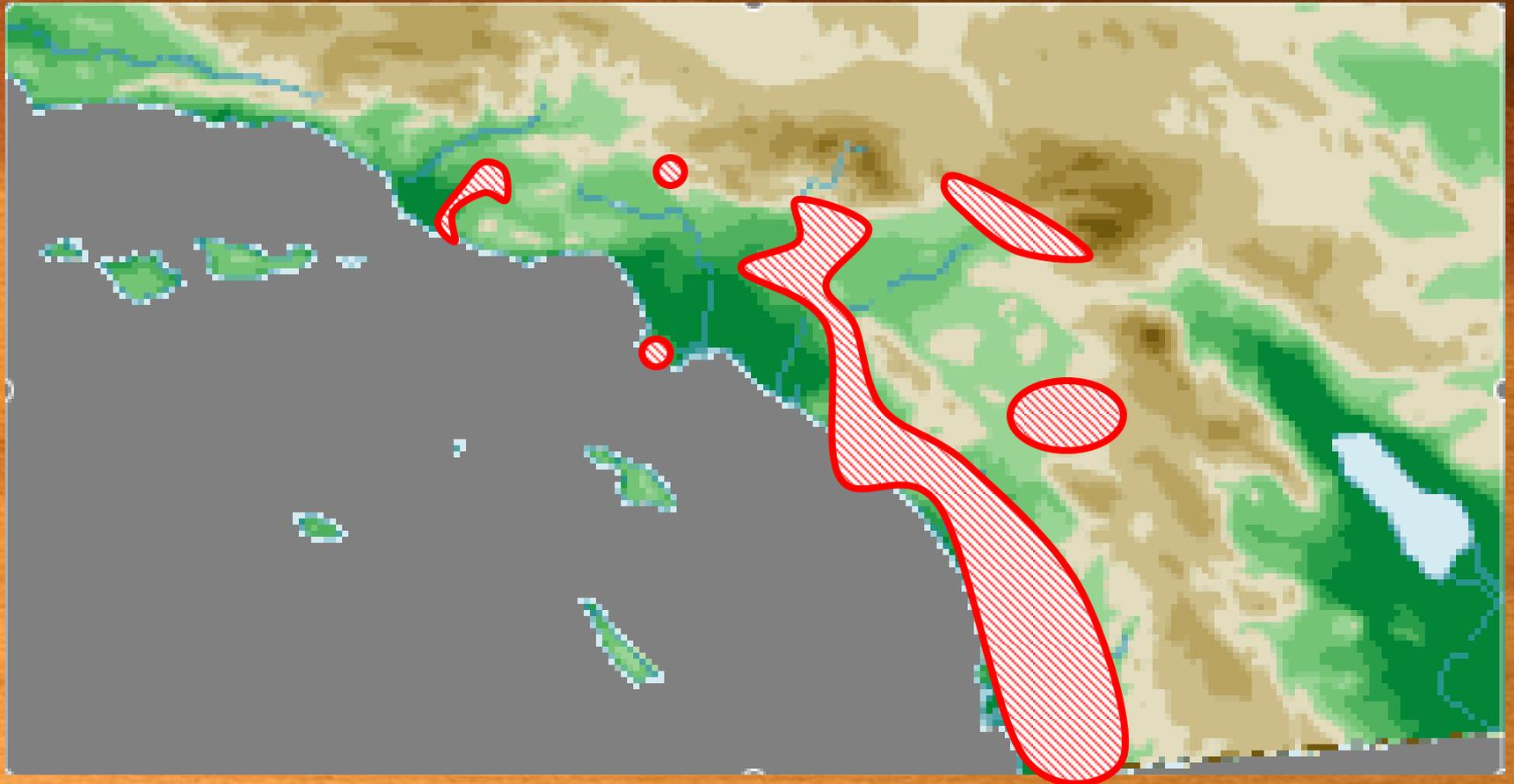
Are these birds isolated?

San Gabriel Valley/Foothills “meta-population” is linked to populations in Orange Co. via the Chino Hills, Coyote Hills.

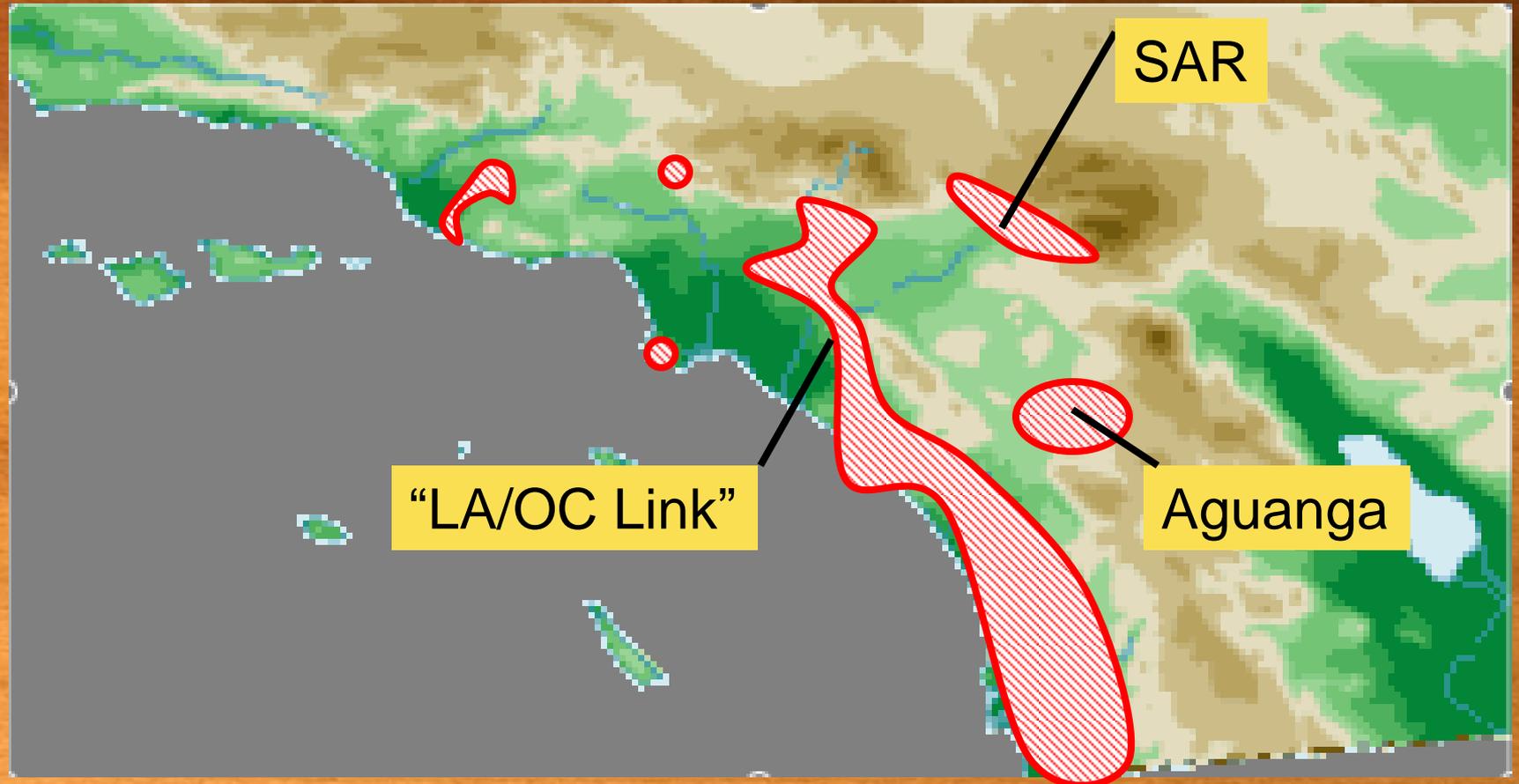
“Eastern link” (via Claremont to Cajon Pass) was degraded through 1990s, and lost c. 2003 (Grand Prix fire).

PV Peninsula, Big Tujunga Wash (and Ventura Co.) birds appear *very* isolated.

Current distribution (Cooper and Hamilton, *in prep.*)

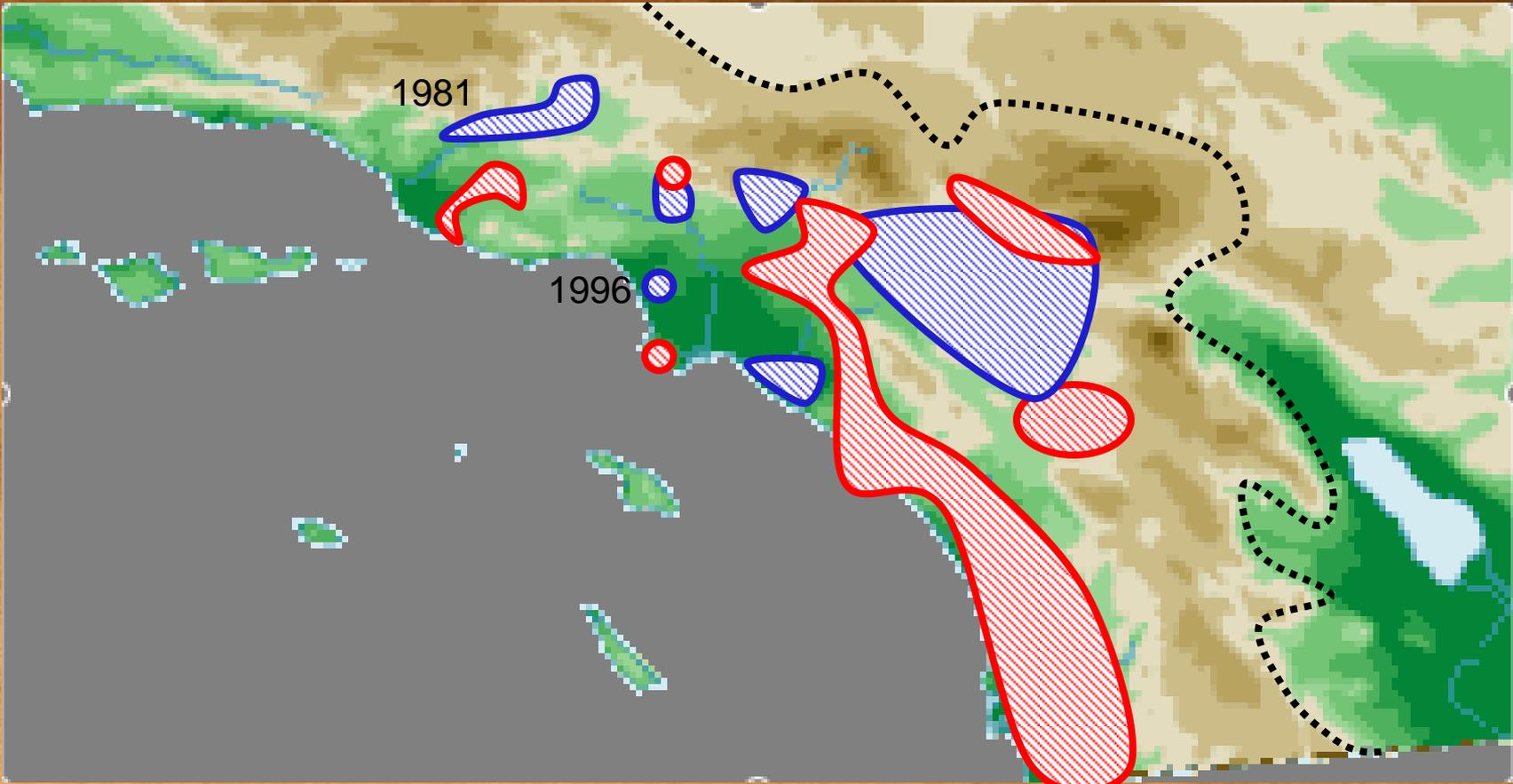


Current distribution (Cooper and Hamilton, in prep.)



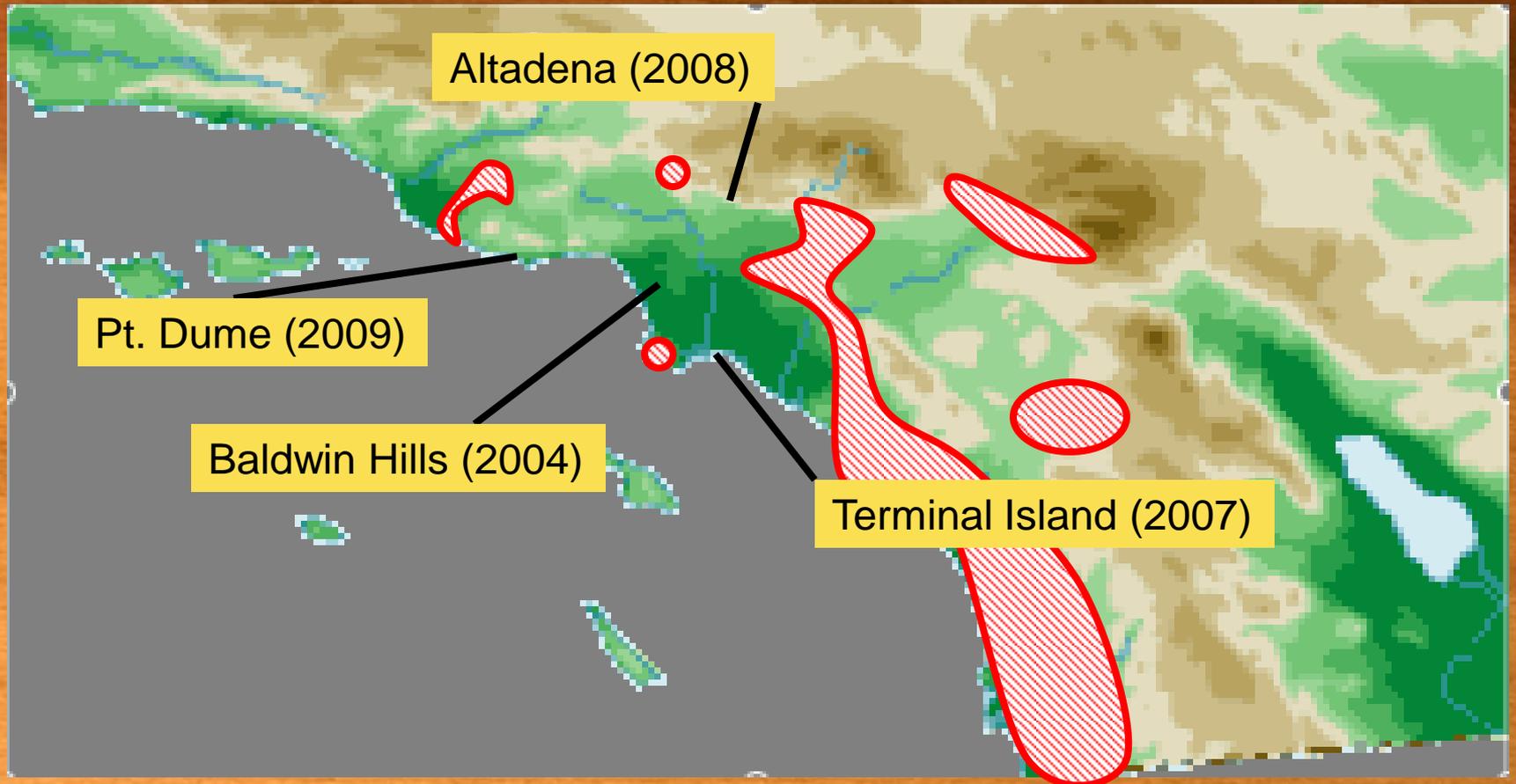
Lost populations (in blue)

Sources: WFVZ, LACM

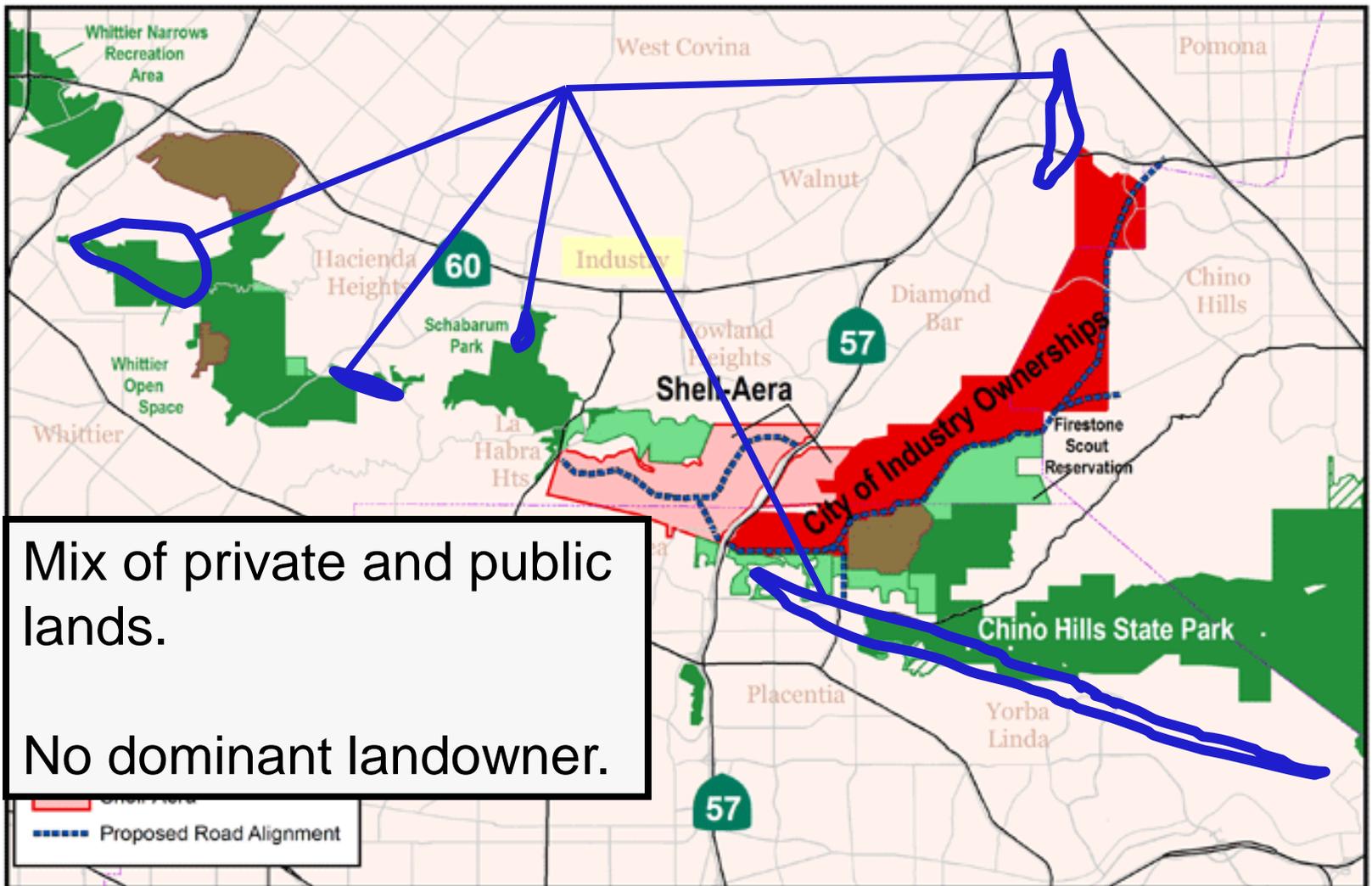


L.A. Co.: Santa Clara River Valley, Baldwin Hills, west SGV, Claremont

Recent long-distance dispersal (L.A. Co. only)?



Land ownership and Cactus Wren distribution, Puente Hills



Mix of private and public lands.

No dominant landowner.

Research/conservation needs, L.A./Ventura Co. (2009)

Map Ventura County populations (immediately)

Formalize protection of Big Tujunga Wash population

Determine status of birds in Montebello Hills

Confirm loss of extirpated populations (e.g, Claremont)

Begin analysis of L.A. Co. demographic data (2009)

Survey “difficult”/overlooked sites missed in 2009

Add'l recommendations:

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

Work with landowners, municipalities, and agencies to stop degradation of habitats through brush-clearing, discing, etc.

Ensure that mitigation for California Gnatcatcher install large (1 acre+), contiguous patches of cactus.

A photograph of a person standing in a field of tall grass and cacti, looking at a clipboard. The background shows rolling hills under a clear blue sky. The person is wearing a green shirt, a cap, and shorts. The field is filled with various types of cacti and dry grasses. The hills in the background are covered in similar vegetation. The sky is a clear, bright blue.

Thanks

Irvine Ranch Water District, Trish Smith (TNC), Robb Hamilton, Kimball Garrett (LACM), Danielle LaFer, and **volunteers:** Lance Benner, Diane Bonanno, Karlene Campos, Bill Cullen, Ron Cyger, Anne Dalkey, Kathi Ellsworth, Frank and Susan Gilliland, Gerry Hans, Rod Higbie, Andrew Lee, Mickey Long, Shannon Lucas, Cathi McFadden, Craig Olsson, Jonathan Rowley, Stephen Tabor.