

DANIEL EDELSTEIN, AVIAN BIOLOGIST

April 19, 2015
Project #1402

Ms. Kelly Davidson
District Biologist
Mt. View Sanitary District (MVSD)

Subject: Summary of Results for Ridgway's Rail (formerly California Clapper Rail) and California Black Rail Surveys

Dear Kelly:

As agreed, I am providing you, below, a summary of my results for Ridgway's Rail (RIRA) and California Black Rail (BLRA) surveys conducted for eight point count stations, from January through April, at McNabney Marsh (see Figure 1 below). If present, other detected common, non-special-status species in the rail family and other notable marsh avian species are also noted for the following eight survey dates at each of the eight point count stations. A list of all species seen during the surveys—both common bird species in addition to special-status bird species appears in Table 1 below.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The Mt View Sanitary District (District) requested protocol level rail surveys with the purpose of determining whether Ridgway's Rail or California Black Rail may be using McNabney Marsh for all or a portion of their natural history needs. The District hopes to use the information gathered by this survey to assist with long-term management of the marsh, and to include the findings in day-to-day maintenance and operations activities that may occur within occupied habitat.

METHODOLOGY

Surveys were conducted by a single permitted avian biologist visiting all or selected point count stations, which were established prior to the beginning of survey efforts. At each point count site the avian biologist listened and watched for 10 minutes during survey #1, #3, #5, and #7. The avian biologist then moved on to the next point count station and repeated the process. For the concentrated surveys #2, #4, #6, and #8, the avian biologist focused one hour each at point #4 and #5. Given no RIRA or BLRA were heard at any of the eight points during the initial four surveys, recordings of rail vocalizations of these species were played during the final four survey visits.



RESULTS

Observations included direct visual observations of various bird species, as well as acoustic detection through recognizable calls. Numerous bird species were detected during survey efforts (Table 1). RIRA and BLRA were not detected during surveys at any of the eight survey stations. Common rail family member species Virginia Rail (VIRA) and Sora (SORA) were detected on some of the eight surveys (see below). The following summarizes survey efforts at each of the eight survey dates.

Survey #1

1/15/15; Round #1: (all 8 stations) PM survey
(16:13 – 18:13)
Neither RIRA or BLRA detected.

VIRA heard (ki call) at 17:08 at point #5 (83 degrees, 120 meters)
SORA heard (whinny call) at 17:08 at point #5 (70 degrees, 200 meters)
SORA heard (whinny call) at 17:08 at point #5 (42 degrees, 140 meters)

Survey #2

1/22/15; Concentrated Surveys at stations 5 and 6 - AM Survey
(6:21 – 8:21)
Neither RIRA or BLRA detected.

VIRA heard (grunt call) at 6:48 at point #4 (90 degrees, 200 meters)
SORA heard (whinny call) at 6:59 at point #4 (68 degrees, 160 meters)
VIRA heard (grunt call) at 7:22 at point #5 (115 degrees, 220 meters)
SORA heard (whinny call) at 7:50 at point #5 (140 degrees, 100 meters)

Survey #3

2/3/15; Round #2: (all 8 stations) AM Survey
(6:12 – 8:12)
Neither RIRA or BLRA detected.

Survey #4

2/13/15; Concentrated Surveys at stations 5 and 6 - PM Survey
(16:44 – 18:44)
Neither RIRA or BLRA detected.

VIRA heard (grunt call) at 17:19 at point #6 (101 degrees, 130 meters)
VIRA heard (grunt call) at 17:30 at point #6 (101 degrees, 130 meters)
2nd individual VIRA heard (grunt call) at 17:34 at point #6 (112 degrees, 150 meters)

SORA heard (per-weep call) at 17:46 (7 degrees, 70 meters)
2nd individual SORA (whinny call) heard at 17:50 (74 degrees, 190 meters)



Survey #5

3/2/15; Round #3: (all 8 stations) PM Survey
(17:05 – 19:05)

Neither RIRA or BLRA detected.

VIRA heard (tick-it call) at 18:12 at point #3 (225 degrees, 120 meters)

Survey #6

3/17/14; Concentrated Surveys at stations 5 and 6 - AM Survey
(6:17 – 8:17)

Neither RIRA or BLRA detected.

VIRA detected (kicker call) at 6:36 at point #6 (22 degrees, 80 meters)

Survey #7

4/7/14; Round #4 (all 8 stations) AM Survey
(5:45 – 7:45)

Neither RIRA or BLRA detected.

VIRA heard (ticker call) at 6:04 at point #7 (196 degrees, 140 meters)

2nd individual VIRA heard (ticker call) at 6:05 at point #7 (137 degrees, 130 meters)

3rd individual VIRA heard (grunt call) at 7:26 at point #1 (127 degrees, 170 meters)

Survey #8

4/15/14; Concentrated Surveys at stations 5 and 6 - PM Survey
(18:45 – 20:45)

Neither RIRA or BLRA detected.

VIRA heard (ticker call) at 19:50 at point #5 (248 degrees, 100 meters)

MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Management recommendations from a 2014 report submittal following the initial year of rail surveys in McNabney Marsh remain important conclusions. They include noting that the presence of any special-status bird species (including special-status rail species) may effect management options for McNabney Marsh on both a day-to-day basis, as well as long-term strategies for its management. Results of the 2014 surveys indicated that McNabney Marsh has the potential to attract California Black Rail based on the detection of one individual.

BLRA, a threatened species as listed by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, use of McNabney Marsh and the potential presence of RIRA in the marsh is significant.

The latter species is listed by the US Fish & Wildlife Service (federal) and California Department of Fish & Wildlife (state) as endangered. Equally important, both species are considered “Fully Protected” by the State, and no conditions exist for “take” of these species.



Given neither RIRA or BLRA were detected during the 2015 surveys, the previously submitted rail management plan is worth reviewing because it features several short- and long-term management options that could be executed to attract these two species to McNabney Marsh. These options primarily relate to habitat altering activities, including, but not limited, to the following:

- Water level management;
- Vegetation control;
- Exotic plant species control;
- Public access;
- Construction activity.

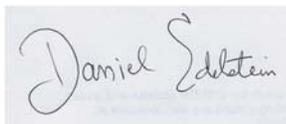
Habitat alteration is also discussed in the 2014 marsh management report, with emphasis on the importance of adding plots of cordgrass (*Spartinia foliosa*), pickleweed (*Salicornia virginica*), and gum plant (*Grindelia stricta*) to improve suitable foraging and nesting conditions for RIRA and BLRA.

In this regard, two likely reasons for the absence of RIRA and BLRA in McNabney Marsh during the 2015 surveys:

1. The absence of vegetation species such as cordgrass, pickleweed, and gumplant, and dense concentrations of them. Instead, emergent vegetation in the marsh is dominated by cattail (*Typha latifolia*), *Fragmites*, and, at higher levels, pepperweed (*Lepidium latifolium*), especially near points #5 and #6.
2. The absence of meandering sloughs and mudflats, especially at lower tide levels. RIRA and BLRA forage and nest amid growths of cordgrass, pickleweed and gumplant, all of which thrive with changing water levels and within geomorphic regimes where mudflats ascend gradually to moist ground and land masses that host vegetation (such as pickleweed and gumplant).

Changes in the marsh vegetation components and general topography may be required to increase the likelihood that rails will use the site with regularity.

Regards,

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Daniel Edelstein".

Daniel Edelstein
Avian Biologist



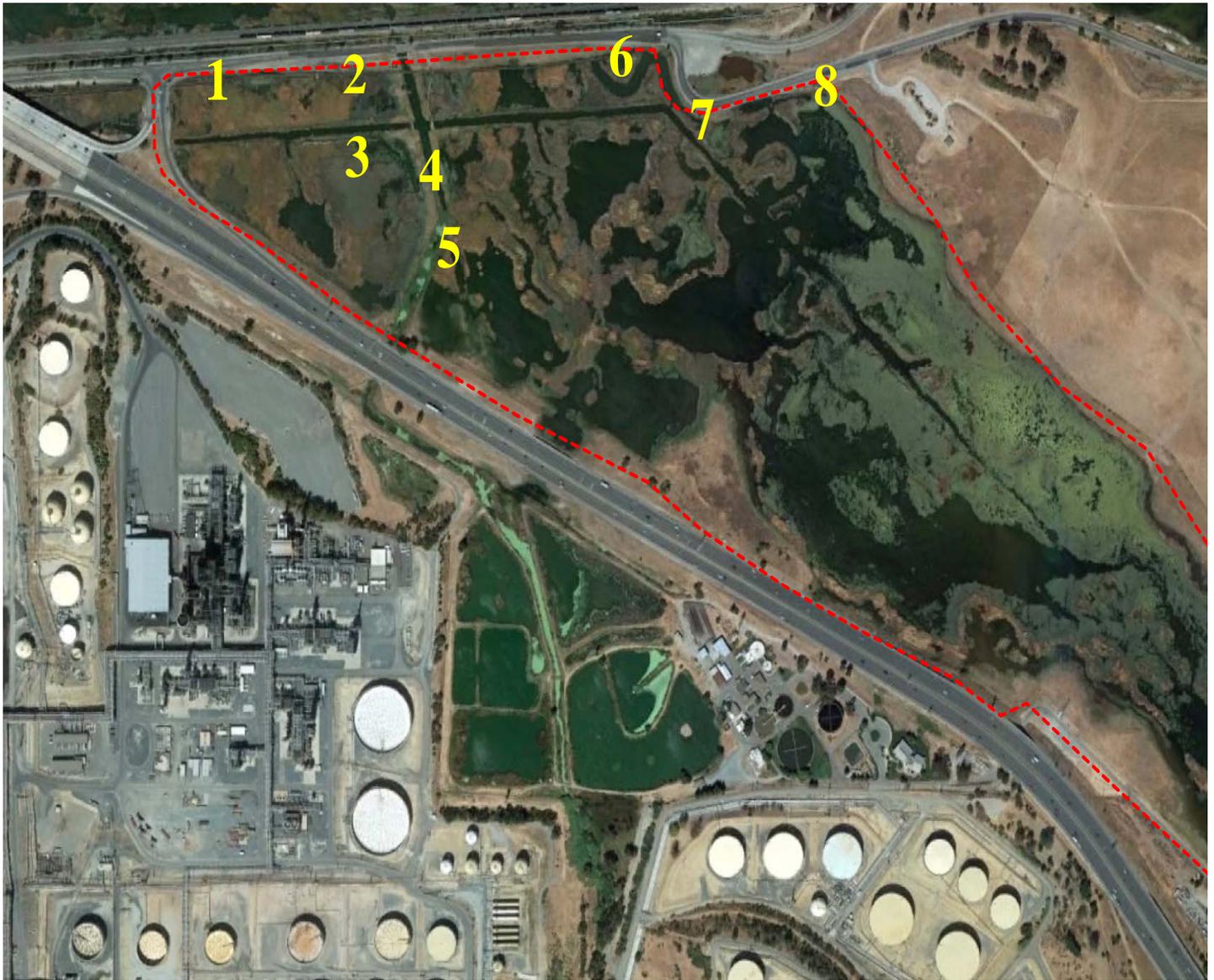


Figure 1 –Map of McNabney Marsh Showing Eight Point Count Stations For Ridgway’s and Black Rail Surveys Conducted from January 15 – April 15, 2015.



Table 1 — Bird species detected on surveys at McNabney Marsh among eight point count stations (see Figure 1 for map of eight point count stations) from January 15 – April 15, 2015.

Bird Species Detected	Survey Number(s) During Which Species Was Detected
Canada Goose <i>Branta canadensis moffiti</i>	3, 4, 5, 7, 8
California Gull <i>Larus californicus</i>	1
American White Pelican <i>Pelecanus erythrorhynchos</i>	6
Ring-billed Gull <i>Larus delawarensis</i>	2
Bonaparte's Gull <i>Larus Chroicocephalus philadelphia</i>	2
Double Crested Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax auritus</i>	1, 2, 3, 4, 6
Greater Yellowlegs <i>Tringa melanoleuca</i>	1
Black-necked Stilt <i>Himantopus mexicanus</i>	5, 7, 8
American Avocet <i>Recurvirostra americana</i>	8



Long-billed Dowitcher <i>Limnodromus scolopaceus</i>	8
American Coot <i>Fulica americana</i>	1, 2, 4, 6, 7
Snowy Egret <i>Egretta thula</i>	1
Great Egret <i>Ardea alba</i>	1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8
Black-crowned Night Heron <i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	2, 7, 8
Great-blue Heron <i>Ardea herodias</i>	5
American Wigeon <i>Anas americana</i>	5,
Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i>	3, 5, 8
Mallard <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8
Northern Shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i>	5, 7
Cinnamon Teal <i>Anas cyanoptera</i>	7, 8



Green-winged Teal <i>Anas carolinensis</i>	2, 3, 6
Wilson's Snipe <i>Gallinago delicata</i>	8
Pied-billed Grebe <i>Podilymbus podiceps</i>	1, 7
Killdeer <i>Charadrius vociferus</i>	2
Red-tailed Hawk <i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>	4
White-tailed Kite <i>Elanus leucurus</i>	2
American Kestrel <i>Falco sparverius</i>	1
Marsh Wren <i>Cistothorus palustris</i>	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
Belted Kingfisher <i>Megaceryle alcyon</i>	2, 3
Black Phoebe <i>Sayornis</i>	2,
Mourning Dove <i>Zenaida macroura</i>	3
Belted Kingfisher <i>Megaceryle alcyon</i>	4, 5
American Crow <i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>	8
Barn Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>	6, 8



Violet-green Swallow <i>Tachycineta thalassina</i>	8
Cliff Swallow <i>Petrochelidon pyrrhonota</i>	7
Tree Swallow <i>Tachycineta bicolor</i>	6, 7, 8
Northern Rough-winged Swallow <i>Stelgidopteryx serripennis</i>	8

Great-tailed Grackle <i>Quiscalus mexicanus</i>	2, 4, 5, 6
Red-winged Blackbird <i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
Song Sparrow <i>Melospiza melodia maxillaris</i>	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7
Common Yellowthroat <u><i>Geothlypis trichas sinuosa</i></u>	1, 4, 6, 7, 8

