

DRAFT

Tri-Colored Blackbird Habitat Model

Nesting Habitat: Specific nesting habitat features are not included in this model because tri-colored blackbirds nest in marshes, thickets, and other habitats that could be smaller than the minimum HCP/NCCP land cover type mapping unit. Six known colony sites, and one potential colony site, which are known from the planning area, are demarcated on the map- only one of these is thought to be active.

Breeding and Foraging Habitat: Breeding and foraging habitat includes grasslands, grasslands with vernal swale complex, vernal pool, altered vernal pool, managed wetlands, emergent wetlands, irrigated cropland, irrigated pasture, and rice with a minimum patch size of 40 acres within the planning area.

Assumptions: Preferred foraging habitats include agricultural crops such as rice, alfalfa, irrigated pastures, and ripening or cut grain fields (e.g., oats wheat, silage, and rice), as well as annual grasslands, cattle feedlots, and dairies (Beedy and Hamilton 1999). Tri-colors also forage in remnant native habitats, including wet and dry vernal pools and other seasonal wetlands, riparian scrub habitats, and open marsh borders (Tricolor Blackbird Working Group 2007). Tri-colored blackbirds have three basic requirements for selecting their breeding colony sites: 1) open, accessible water; 2) a protected nesting substrate, including either flooded, thorny, or spiny vegetation; and 3) a suitable space providing adequate insect prey within a few miles of the nesting colony (Hamilton et al. 1995; Beedy and Hamilton 1999). Proximity to suitable foraging habitat appears to be extremely important for the establishment of colony sites (Tricolor Blackbird Working Group 2007). In the planning areas, suitable habitats with these attributes are found within the land cover types mentioned above.

Following breeding, there is a significant post-breeding movement into the Sacramento Valley from other breeding locales, where large post-breeding roosts are established from late summer into the fall. It is assumed that these post-breeding roosts and post-breeding individuals could occur in the identified land cover types above the minimum patch size anywhere within the planning area.

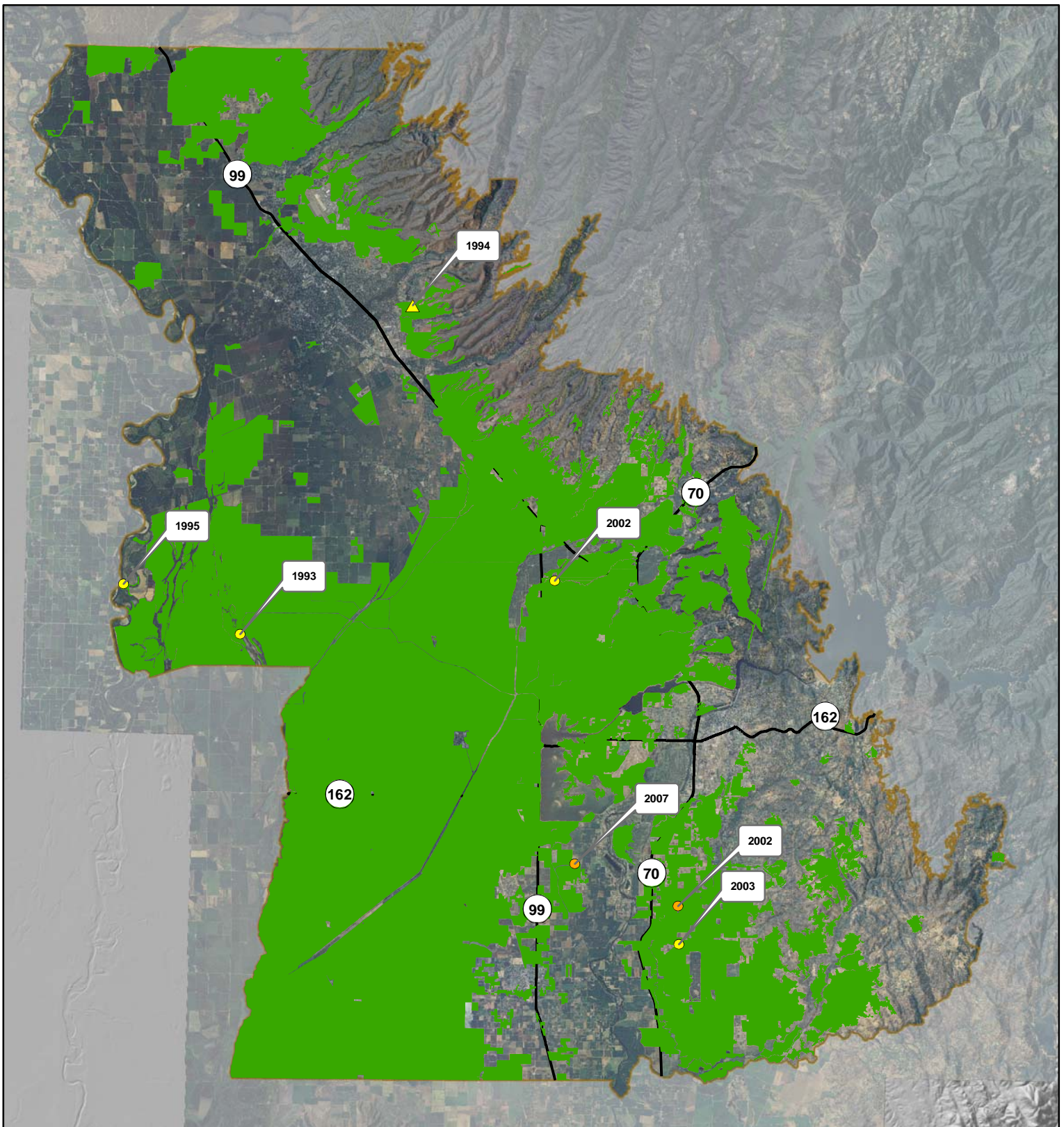
The selection of a 40-acre minimum patch size is arbitrary and designed primarily to eliminate small open grassland and pasture patches at the higher elevations where tri-colored blackbirds are not expected to occur in the breeding and post-breeding season. This patch size is assumed to be below the actual minimum patch size for this species during winter (for which there is limited data available) to avoid underestimating available habitat. At some point during the fall (September-November), post-breeding roosts are vacated as birds migrate back to traditional wintering locales in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and along the Central California coast (Beedy and Hamilton 1999).

References

Beedy, E. C. and Hamilton. 1999. Tricolored Blackbird (*Agelaius tricolor*). The birds of North America, No. 423. American Ornithologists' Union. 24pp.

Hamilton, W.J. III, L. Cook, and K. Hunting. 1995. Tricolored Blackbird 1999 status report. Report prepared for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Portland, Oregon and California Department of Fish and Game, Sacramento, CA.

Tricolored Blackbird Working Group. 2007. Conservation Plan for the Tricolored Blackbird (*Agelaius tricolor*). Susan Kester (ed.). Sustainable Conservation. San Francisco, CA.



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Figure A.23: Tri-Colored Blackbird Habitat Model

Legend

- Colony Site: Other Sources
- Colony Site: CNDDB
- ▲ Potential Colony Site: CNDDB
- Breeding and Foraging Habitat
- Planning Area Boundary

This map presents outcomes of a draft habitat model that is described in the Covered Species Accounts of the HCP/NCCP. The purpose of the model is to identify areas within the planning area where the species occurs or could occur based on known habitat requirements. Please note occurrence data recorded here is based on available data and not representative of all occurrences.

Sources: CNDDB: California Department of Fish and Game, 2007.
 Other Sources: Altacal Audubon Society, personal communication, 2002.
 Gary Nielson, personal communication, 2007.

