
3.7 ADDITIONAL NON-COVERED SPECIAL-STATUS OR LOCAL CONCERN SPECIES

[Note to reviewers: This list is presented as “a working list.” Currently, this list only includes bird species. Additional species may be added as additional information is developed through the Butte Regional HCP/NCCP process.]

In addition to the proposed covered species, there are numerous other species known to occur in the planning area that are rare, declining, or potentially threatened by land use changes in the planning area. While many of these species have special-status designations, they do not meet one or more of the criteria used in the covered species selection process. While these and other species will be addressed during the environmental review process pursuant to the National Environmental Protection Policy (NEPA) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the conservation measures for covered species and NCCP communities will also be designed to consider the habitat needs of these additional non-covered special-status or local concern species.

3.7.1 Greater Roadrunner (*Geococcyx californianus*)

Status. No federal or state status. No other special status.

Description. The greater roadrunner is a medium-sized bird (50-60 cm) with relatively short broad wings (43-61 cm). The head, neck, back, and wings are dark brown-black and heavily streaked with white, and the breast is mostly white. The legs and beak are blue. The eyes are bright yellow and there is a postocular streak of blue and red skin. Other notable features include the crest of black feathers, which can be raised or lowered, and a long tail that may be carried at an upward angle (Famolaro 2002).

Distribution. The current distribution in California extends the length of the Central Valley and Sierra foothills, Coast Ranges and valleys, and throughout Southern California. Few confirmed breeding locations have been reported in California, all of which are in Southern California (Famolaro 2002). The species is considered rare in northern California and in Butte County (Snowden 2001).

Habitat Associations. Greater roadrunner is found in arid, semi-open scrub habitat, primarily chaparral and coastal scrub communities. In northern California, it is associated with a mix of open grasslands and chaparral, and occasionally with oak savannah habitats with patches of shrubs and thickets. It is generally found in flat to semi-flat terrain.

Habitat Availability in the Planning Area. The grassland and chaparral communities on the east side of the planning area provide suitable habitat conditions for the greater roadrunner. While the species could potentially occur further westward onto the valley floor, the intensive agricultural and increasing development-related fragmentation preclude regular use of this area.

Occurrence/Distribution in the Planning Area. There are no recent records of breeding greater roadrunners in Butte County; however, Snowden (2001) considers it a potentially breeding bird.

1 Reportedly fairly common during the first half of the 20th century, it is currently considered rare
2 and declining. While there are insufficient records to establish a current distribution of the
3 species in the planning area, the grassland and chaparral communities and the oak
4 woodland/grassland communities on the east side of the planning area are considered potential
5 habitat.

6 **3.7.2 Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*)**

7 **Status.** The northern harrier is designated by the California Department of Fish and Game
8 (DFG) as a state species of special concern (Remsen 1978).

9 **Description.** The northern harrier is a medium-sized hawk (46-50 cm) with a slight build and
10 relatively long tail and wings (102-118 cm). Adult males are pale gray, while juveniles and
11 females are brown. All plumages show a distinctive white rump patch in flight (Sibley 2003).

12 **Distribution.** In California, this species is a permanent resident of the northeastern plateau,
13 coastal areas, and the Central Valley. It is also a widespread winter visitor and migrant in
14 suitable habitat. While declines in the California population have been noted for many years
15 (Grinnell and Miller 1944, Remsen 1978), the species can be locally abundant where suitable
16 habitat remains free of disturbance, especially from intensive agriculture. Breeding populations
17 have declined from destruction of wetland habitats, native grasslands, and moist meadows, and
18 in agricultural areas from burning and plowing of nest sites during early stages of the breeding
19 cycle (MacWhirter and Bildstein. 1996).

20 **Habitat Associations.** Throughout its range, northern harriers occur primarily in open
21 wetland, grassland, and agricultural habitats. The northern harrier is a ground-nesting raptor,
22 constructing rudimentary nest sites on the ground in marsh, grassland, and some agricultural
23 habitats, particularly grain fields. They forage in seasonal wetland, grassland, and agricultural
24 habitats for voles and other small mammals, birds, frogs, and small reptiles, crustaceans, and
25 insects. They also roost on the ground, using tall grasses and forbs in wetlands, or along
26 wetland/field borders for cover (MacWhirter and Bildstein. 1996).

27 **Habitat Availability in the Planning Area.** Nesting and foraging habitat for northern harriers
28 occurs throughout most of the planning area. The large wetland habitats in the western and
29 southwestern portions of the planning area, such as Llano Seco and wetlands associated with
30 Gray Lodge Wildlife Area, probably represent the most intact, least disturbed, and highest
31 value nesting and foraging habitat. Also, the row- and grain-crop agricultural lands throughout
32 the western and central portions of the planning area provide suitable foraging habitat and can
33 provide suitable nesting habitat; however, as noted above agricultural practices in these habitats
34 can result in the destruction of active nests. Finally, the grasslands, grassland/vernal pool
35 complexes, and grassland meadows in the eastern portion of the planning area also provide
36 suitable foraging habitat and occasional nesting opportunities.

37 **Occurrence/Distribution in the Planning Area.** Nesting records of northern harrier are not
38 well documented, due in part to the difficulty locating and confirming nests. The species likely
39 breeds in all suitable habitat areas noted above, but the largest and most secure nesting areas
40 are those with a marsh component and are relatively undisturbed, such as the Gray Lodge and
41 Llano Seco wetland areas. The species is considered an uncommon breeder (Snowden 2001)

1 and has likely declined in Butte County as a result of agricultural conversion, particularly
2 incompatible crop types such as orchards. Foraging activity occurs throughout all suitable
3 habitats and is particularly important during the winter season when northern migrants are
4 present in the planning area (Snowden 2001).

5 3.7.3 Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*)

6 **Status.** Currently designated by DFG as a species of special concern, the golden eagle is
7 apparently not included on the revised list of California species of special concern
8 (www.prbo.org/cms/index). The golden eagle is protected under the federal Bald and Golden
9 Eagle Protection Act.

10 **Description.** The golden eagle is a large bird of prey (70-84 cm in height) with very long and
11 broad wings (185-220 cm). They are light brown in color with dark brown eyes, and a faintly
12 banded tail. Adults have a golden mantle. Females are somewhat larger, but otherwise the
13 sexes are similar (Kochert et al. 2002).

14 **Distribution.** In North America, golden eagles breed from Alaska to Mexico and from the west
15 coast east to Texas. In California, the species breeds throughout the mid- to higher elevation
16 portions of the state and throughout the southern California deserts (Kochert et al. 2002).

17 **Habitat Associations.** In California, golden eagles are generally found in open country,
18 including open woodlands and coniferous forests, grasslands, chaparral habitats, and deserts.
19 They forage primarily on lagomorphs and ground squirrels (Olendorff 1976). They nest on cliff
20 ledges, large outcrops, and where these habitats are limited they will readily nest in a variety of
21 trees (Bruce et al. 1982).

22 **Habitat Availability in the Planning Area.** Available nesting habitat is found in the far eastern
23 portion of the planning area. Cliff faces associated with steep canyons provide potential nesting
24 substrates. Large oak trees, foothill pine, and other conifers also provide potential nesting
25 habitat. Suitable foraging habitat includes grassland and chaparral areas in the eastern portion
26 of the planning area, and cultivated farmland and pasturelands in the interior and western
27 portions of the planning area.

28 **Occurrence/Distribution in the Planning Area.** There are no recent records of nesting golden
29 eagles from the planning area. A south-facing cliff-site nest has been recorded just west of
30 Table Mountain, but there has been no recently recorded activity at this site. Golden eagles are
31 known to nest on the Sutter Buttes, just south of the planning area. Golden eagles are
32 occasionally observed in the planning area including a recent sighting near Chico
33 (<http://chicobirding.com>).

34 3.7.4 Prairie Falcon (*Falco mexicanus*)

35 **Status.** The prairie falcon is designated by DFG as a state species of special concern.

36 **Description.** The prairie falcon is large falcon (37 to 47 cm) with long, pointed wings (90 to 113
37 cm) (Steenhof (1998). It has a pale brown back, whitish chest with brown spots and bars, and

1 brown head and facial markings, including a distinctive dark “mustache” mark on the face. The
2 female is larger than the male but otherwise the sexes are similar.

3 **Distribution.** The prairie falcon is distributed throughout the arid west, ranging from southern
4 Canada to northern Mexico and east to Texas. In California, the species is found primarily in
5 the coastal ranges, Great Basin deserts of northeastern California and east of the Sierra Nevada,
6 and the southern California deserts. Prairie falcons are also found, although rarely, along the
7 western slope of the Sierra Nevada and is considered a rare breeding bird in Butte County
8 (Snowden 2001).

9 **Habitat Associations.** The Prairie falcon nests almost exclusively on cliff ledges and protected
10 large rock outcrops. They forage in grasslands, prairies, and in cultivated fields and pasture
11 habitats.

12 **Habitat Availability in the Planning Area.** Available nesting habitat is restricted to the cliff
13 faces associated with steep canyons on the eastern edge of the planning area. Available
14 foraging habitat includes the grassland and open chaparral and woodland habitats on the east
15 side and to a lesser extent cultivated habitats in the interior and western portions of the
16 planning area.

17 **Occurrence/Distribution in the Planning Area.** There are no recent records of nesting prairie
18 falcons in the planning area. Snowden (2001) considers the species a rare breeder along the
19 eastern edge of the planning area. The species is more frequently observed during the winter,
20 when it can be found hunting in agricultural, grassland, and scrub habitats throughout the
21 planning area.

22 3.7.5 Long-eared Owl (*Asio otus*)

23 **Status.** The long-eared owl is designated by DFG as a state species of special concern.

24 **Description.** The long-eared owl is a medium-sized owl (35-40 cm) with long rounded wings
25 (90-100 cm). It is mostly brown, but is cryptically marked with brown and black, streaking and
26 barring on the breast and belly, which makes it difficult to detect in dense vegetation. It has
27 large conspicuous “ear” tufts and an orange facial disk and distinctive white markings on the
28 face that form an “x” between the eyes. It has fully feathered legs and feet. The sexes are
29 similar; however, males are somewhat smaller and often slightly paler than females (Marks et
30 al. 1994).

31 **Distribution.** The breeding distribution extends throughout most of southern Canada,
32 northern eastern U.S., the Great Lakes region, and throughout much of the northern prairie and
33 western U.S. In California, the species occurs throughout much of the state with reported
34 historic concentrations in the Sacramento Valley, San Joaquin Valley, and in the San Diego area,
35 where it is now rare, and more current concentration areas at various locations on the east side
36 of the Sierra, such as the Susan River, and in desert oases in southern California deserts (Marks
37 et al. 1994). While thought to be extirpated in many locations, including the Sacramento Valley,
38 the species is very secretive and potentially more common than recorded observations would
39 suggest.

1 **Habitat Associations.** The long-eared owl requires dense wooded areas for daytime roosting
2 and nesting with adjacent open areas where they hunt for small rodents and occasionally small
3 birds. Long-eared owls are often associated with coniferous forest edges or patches of conifers,
4 riparian woodland, and oak woodland habitats where sufficient cover is available. Snowden
5 (2001) reports a preference for riparian vegetation dominated by box elder or willow. They do
6 not construct their own nest, instead, they use stick nests built by other species, including
7 American crows and various hawk species. Adjacent foraging habitats include grasslands,
8 shrublands, open woodlands, cultivated farmland, and other open habitats. Habitat
9 requirements are similar during breeding and wintering seasons (Marks et al. 1994).

10 **Habitat Availability in the Planning Area.** Available nesting and roosting habitat includes
11 dense riparian woodlands along the Sacramento River, Feather River, Big Chico Creek, and
12 Butte Creek, willow and box elder thickets along smaller drainages, and woodlands along the
13 edges of grassland and chaparral habitats in the eastern portion of the planning area.

14 **Occurrence/Distribution in the Planning Area.** Considered rare by Snowden (2001) and an
15 uncertain breeder, there are no recent reported breeding occurrences of long-eared owls from
16 the planning area. Occurrences reported by Altacal Audubon and others are winter
17 occurrences.

18 3.7.6 Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*)

19 **Status.** The short-eared owl is designated by DFG as a state species of special concern.

20 **Description.** The short-eared owl is a medium-sized owl (34-43 cm) with relatively long (85-103
21 cm) rounded wings. Its ear tufts are small and appear as ridges that begin above the bill and
22 curve up and over the forehead and crest. It has a large round off-white facial disk with fine
23 brown tinges and black around the eyes. Underparts are white to buffy with dark brown
24 streaks and the back is dark brown with white mottling (www.owling.com). The female is
25 slightly larger than the male but otherwise the sexes are similar (Holt and Leasure 1993).

26 **Distribution.** The breeding range extends from Alaska to Central California in the west and
27 Northern Quebec and Newfoundland to Northern Virginia in the east. The winter ranges
28 includes all of southern U.S. to southern Mexico (Holt and Leasure 1993). In California, the
29 historic breeding range included most of the lowland portions of the state. The current
30 breeding distribution includes remaining open wetland, marsh, and prairie habitats in the
31 Central Valley and coastal areas. The species winters primarily in the Central Valley, Sierra
32 Nevada foothills, and southern California.

33 **Habitat Associations.** Short-eared owls are usually found in open areas with few trees,
34 including annual and perennial grasslands, prairies, meadows, freshwater emergent marshes,
35 dunes, and irrigated pasturelands where it nests and roosts on the ground in dense vegetation
36 and forages on small rodents and birds.

37 **Habitat Availability in the Planning Area.** Potential nesting habitat for short-eared owls in the
38 planning area is similar to the northern harrier. Probably the highest value potential nesting
39 habitat occurs in the wetland habitats of Llano Seco and the Butte Creek watershed in and

1 around Gray Lodge Wildlife Area. Irrigated cropland and the grassland and grassland/vernal
2 complexes in the eastern portion of the planning area also provide suitable wintering habitat.

3 **Occurrence/Distribution in the Planning Area.** Few breeding records for Butte County are
4 available. Snowden (2001) reports the short-eared owl as a rare breeder in Butte County.
5 Breeding records are from the Llano Seco and Butte Creek watershed areas.

6 **3.7.7 Willow Flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii*)**

7 **Status.** State Endangered. Of the three subspecies present in California, *E. t. brewsteri* is the
8 most likely to occur in the planning area. All subspecies are state-threatened, but *E. t. brewsteri*
9 has no federal status.

10 **Description.** The willow flycatcher is a small flycatcher (13-17 cm) similar in appearance to
11 other *Empidonax* flycatchers. Its upper parts are drab olive to brownish gray and underparts are
12 light gray washed with yellow on the belly during spring. It has two whitish wingbars, a white
13 throat contrasting with a dull brownish breast band. It has a short, wide bill and a medium
14 long tail. The sexes are similar (Craig and Williams 1998).

15 **Distribution.** The breeding range extends across southern Canada and throughout most of the
16 U.S. with the exception of the southeast U.S. It winters in Central and South America
17 (Sedgewick 2000). In California, Grinnell and Miller (1944) reported nesting willow flycatchers
18 throughout the state wherever deciduous shrubs, mainly thickets of willows, occurred.
19 Currently, the species is considered a rare to locally uncommon summer resident in wet
20 meadows and montane riparian habitats from 600 to 2,440 m and a common spring and fall
21 migrant at lower elevations (Craig and Williams 1998). *E.t. brewsteri* is currently found
22 primarily in isolated Sierra Nevada and Cascade meadows, but has more recently been detected
23 in several new locales such as along the Klamath River (Craig and Williams 1998).

24 **Habitat Associations.** Breeding habitat is typically moist meadows with perennial streams;
25 lowland riparian woodlands dominated by willows (*Salix* spp.), primarily in tree form, and
26 cottonwoods (*Populus* spp.), or smaller spring-fed or boggy areas with willow or alders (*Alnus*
27 spp.) (Serena 1982, Harris et al. 1988 [in Craig and Williams 1998]). Riparian deciduous shrubs
28 or trees, such as willow or alder, are essential elements on willow flycatcher territories (Sanders
29 and Flett 1989, Harris et al. 1988 in Craig and Williams 1998). During migration, the species can
30 be observed along riparian corridors at lower elevations.

31 **Habitat Availability in the Planning area.** There is no extensive wet meadow-riparian
32 breeding habitat within the planning area. Riparian habitat along the Sacramento and Feather
33 Rivers, Butte Creek and Big Chico Creek, and other smaller drainages, provide suitable cover
34 and roosting habitat during the fall and spring migratory periods.

35 **Occurrence/Distribution in the Planning area.** There are no recent breeding occurrences of
36 willow flycatcher from the planning area. Snowden (2001) reports breeding activity at a few
37 wet meadow riparian areas in northern Butte County, but outside of the planning area. Dawn
38 Garcia of California State University, Chico reports several migratory occurrences along Butte
39 Creek in 2006. Other occurrences during the spring and fall migratory periods are periodically
40 reported by local birders.

1 **3.7.8 Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*)**

2 **Status.** The loggerhead shrike is designated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a federal
3 species of concern and by DFG as a state species of special concern.

4 **Description.** The loggerhead shrike is a medium-sized (20-23 cm), stout, short-winged
5 passerine that is often seen perched on barbed wire fences. The underparts and back are grey
6 and the throat and upper breast is white, which distinctly contrasts with the black tail, wings
7 and facemask (Sibley 2000).

8 **Distribution.** The breeding range extends from central prairie provinces and the Canadian
9 border southward to Florida, west to California, and southern Mexico (Yosef 1996). In
10 California, the loggerhead shrike is a permanent resident and winter visitor in foothills and
11 lowlands throughout California, where it is considered a fairly common resident (Small 1994).

12 **Habitat Associations.** Shrikes prefer open habitats with scattered trees, shrubs, posts, fences,
13 utility lines, or other perches. It nests in small trees and shrubs and forages for small rodents
14 and insects in pastures and agricultural lands.

15 **Habitat Availability in the Planning Area.** Most of the planning area is considered potential
16 habitat for loggerhead shrike, particularly the lower elevation pasture and non-orchard
17 agricultural lands with small trees and shrubs for nesting. Highest value lands may occur in the
18 open pastures and irrigation croplands in the southwestern portion of the planning area, and in
19 the open grassland habitats on the eastern side of the planning area.

20 **Occurrence/Distribution in the Planning Area.** Nests sites are infrequently reported and
21 documented, likely due to the difficulty locating nests; however, occurrences of individual birds
22 are regularly, although infrequently, reported by local birders. Snowden (2001) considers the
23 species uncommon in Butte County and notes that populations may be declining as a result of
24 the loss of potential nest sites (small trees and shrubs).

25 **3.7.9 Yellow-billed Magpie (*Pica nuttalli*)**

26 **Status.** The yellow-billed magpie has no federal or state status and no other special status. The
27 species is included here due to its sensitivity to the effects of the West Nile virus. Recent
28 information regarding the susceptibility of magpies to the virus and the low survivability of
29 infected magpies has led to concern regarding the future status of yellow-billed magpie
30 populations.

31 **Description.** The yellow-billed magpie is a medium-sized corvid (43-50 cm) with a black head
32 and chest, white shoulders and belly, iridescent blue wings, and a long tapered black tail. The
33 bill is bright yellow. Males are slightly larger than females; otherwise, the sexes are alike.

34 **Distribution.** The species is endemic to California, west of Sierra Nevada. Its range includes
35 Sacramento and San Joaquin valley floors and foothills, and valleys of the Coast Ranges from
36 San Francisco Bay south to Santa Barbara County (Reynolds 1995).

1 **Habitat Associations.** Yellow-billed magpie inhabits open country with tall trees for nesting
2 and roosting. It usually forages on the ground in agricultural fields, grasslands, pastures, and
3 around farmyards and other disturbed sites. It nests high in trees, usually in valley oak, black
4 walnut, and other tall trees. Yellow-billed magpies are highly social, foraging and roosting
5 together often in large numbers. They nest individually or in loose colonies (Reynolds 1995).

6 **Habitat Availability in the Planning Area.** Suitable habitat is found throughout the lower
7 elevation portions of the planning area. All agricultural types are used, including orchards.
8 Pasturelands and grasslands also provide suitable habitat for magpies. Magpie nests are
9 commonly found along all of the major watercourses, including the Sacramento and Feather
10 Rivers, along roadside trees, and in isolated oak trees.

11 **Occurrence/Distribution in the Planning Area.** Yellow-billed magpie is widely distributed
12 throughout the mid- and lower-elevation portions of the planning area. Populations have
13 reportedly declined during the last two years (Altcal Audubon Society records) presumably as
14 a result of West Nile Virus infestation.

15 3.7.10 California Lark (*Eremophila alpestris*)

16 **Status.** The California horned lark is designated by DFG as a state species of special concern.
17 Of the numerous subspecies of horned lark, *E.a. rubea* is the locally breeding race within the
18 planning area (Snowden 2001); however, other subspecies likely occur in the planning area
19 during the migratory and wintering periods.

20 **Description.** Horned larks are small, sparrow-sized ground-dwelling birds. They are pale
21 sandy-brown, with a yellowish chin and throat, black mask and breast band, and two small
22 black tufts (“horns”) on the head.

23 **Distribution.** Horned larks breed widely throughout North America, from northern Alaska to
24 southern Mexico. They winter from southern Canada southward across the United States and
25 Mexico (Beason 1995).

26 **Habitat Associations.** Throughout their range, horned larks are associated with open desert
27 scrub, grasslands, montane meadows, and similar open habitats (Beason 1995). Grinnell and
28 Miller (1944) describe horned lark breeding habitat as level or gently sloping shortgrass prairie,
29 montane meadows, “bald” hills, open coastal plains, fallow grain fields, and alkali flats. More
30 recently in California, they are commonly found in open grasslands and rangelands in the
31 Sierra Nevada foothills, Coast Ranges, and southern California. Horned larks are also
32 considered an agricultural pest as they increasingly find available foraging habitat in newly
33 planted fields, particularly those near open grassland breeding habitat (Internet Center for
34 Wildlife Damage Management, <http://ICWDM.org.handbook/birds/hornedlarks.asp>)

35 **Habitat Availability in the Planning Area.** Breeding habitat for horned larks occurs
36 throughout the foothill grassland and valley grassland/vernal pool habitats. Irrigated
37 croplands also provide available foraging habitat; however, Snowden (2001) reports migratory
38 subspecies likely use the valley floor habitats while *E.a. rubea* apparently remains within its
39 foothill grassland breeding habitat.

1 **Occurrence/Distribution in the Planning Area.** Snowden (2001) reports horned larks are a
2 common breeding and wintering species in the planning area. Distribution includes all foothill
3 grassland and lower elevation grassland and non-orchard irrigated cropland; however, the
4 breeding distribution is limited largely to the non-cultivated grassland habitats in the eastern
5 portion of the planning area.

6 **3.7.11 Purple Martin (*Progne subis*)**

7 **Status.** The purple martin is designated by DFG as a state species of special concern. Three
8 subspecies of purple martin are currently recognized with *P. s. arboricola* the only one found in
9 California.

10 **Description.** Purple martin is the largest (15 cm) North American swallow. They are bluish-
11 blackish above in all plumages, with females having paler underparts (Sibley 2003).

12 **Distribution.** The purple martin breeding range extends from central Alberta to the Gulf of
13 Mexico east of the dry western section of the Great Plains. Disjunct populations are found in
14 the southern Rocky Mountain region, Baja California, northern and central Mexico, and along
15 the Pacific coast from Vancouver, British Columbia to central California. Smaller populations
16 are found on the Modoc Plateau, Sacramento area, northern Sierra Nevada, and in the
17 mountains of southern California. The winter range is primarily in central South America.
18 (Brown 1997)

19 **Habitat Associations.** Purple martins develop colonial nests in cavities of large trees in oak or
20 riparian woodlands and low-elevation coniferous forests. Nests are in old woodpecker cavities
21 in dead snags and are often in residual snags in burned or logged forests (Brown 1997). With
22 the extensive loss of mature riparian trees throughout much of their range in California, purple
23 martins have begun using man-made structures such as buildings, bridges and highway
24 overpasses for nesting (Airola and Grantham 2003).

25 **Habitat Availability in the Planning Area.** Potential breeding habitat is available in oak
26 woodland and savannah habitats along the eastern edge of the planning area. Currently,
27 potential man-made nesting habitat is unavailable at most freeway overcrossings or bridges
28 where vertical “weep” holes could be present (Airola and Grantham 2003). Future construction,
29 however, could create these nesting opportunities.

30 **Occurrence/Distribution in the Planning Area.** Snowden (2001) reports the possible
31 extirpation of purple martins from Butte County. Available and otherwise suitable nesting
32 habitat is unoccupied likely as a result of nest cavity competition from European starlings
33 (*Sturnus vulgaris*).

34 **3.7.12 California Thrasher (*Toxostoma redivivum*)**

35 **Status.** The California thrasher has no federal or state status and no other special status;
36 however, the species is of local concern and thought to be declining (Snowden 2001).

37 **Description.** The California thrasher is a large thrasher (28-33 cm) with a long, deeply curved
38 bill. It is dark brown above with lighter gray-brown breast and buff-brown to orange undertail

1 coverts. It has dark brown eyes, indistinct light brown eyebrow and dark “mustache”. The
2 sexes are alike (Cody 1988).

3 **Distribution.** Endemic to California and northern Baja California, the species is found in
4 chaparral and coastal scrub communities along the coast and Coast Ranges, western Sierra
5 Nevada, and southern California and Baja California deserts (Sibley 2003).

6 **Habitat Associations.** The California thrasher is found primarily in chaparral and other shrub
7 communities from sea level to montane chaparral. It will also breed in adjacent oak woodlands
8 and pine-juniper scrub as well as occasionally in parks and gardens, but only if dense cover is
9 available (Cody 1988).

10 **Habitat Availability in the Planning Area.** Chaparral habitats on the eastern edge of the
11 planning area provide suitable habitat for thrashers.

12 **Occurrence/Distribution in the Planning Area.** There are few nesting records of California
13 thrasher in Butte County; however, it has been regularly (although infrequently) reported
14 during the breeding season. Snowden (2001) reports the species as possibly declining in Butte
15 County as a result of rural urbanization and predation by house cats. The distribution likely is
16 directly associated with the distribution of chaparral vegetation in the planning area.

17 3.7.13 Yellow Warbler (*Dendroica petechia*)

18 **Status.** The yellow warbler is designated by DFG as a species of special concern.

19 **Description.** The yellow warbler is a small (12-13 cm), plain yellow wood-warbler with few
20 distinguishing marks. It is the only bright yellow wood-warbler with yellow spots on the tail.
21 The fresh-plumaged adult males have distinctive small red streaks on the underparts (Sibley
22 2003).

23 **Distribution.** The breeding distribution extends from northern Alaska and Canada southward
24 to the middle U.S. and west into Mexico. The species winters in Mexico and Central and South
25 America. Throughout California, yellow warbler is summer resident and transient in suitable
26 riparian habitats (Small 1994, Lowther et al. 1999).

27 **Habitat Associations.** In California, yellow warblers nest primarily in riparian habitats
28 (Grinnell and Miller 1944), but in some montane areas they also nest in a variety of shrub
29 habitats (e.g., manzanita, ceanothus) far removed from water (Grinnell et al. 1930, Beedy and
30 Granholm 1985). Migrants prefer edges to the interior of forests and broad-leaf trees to conifers.
31 They can be found in a variety of habitats, including riparian, oak woodland, and suburban
32 parks and gardens (Dunn and Garrett 1997).

33 **Habitat Availability in the Planning Area.** Available breeding habitat includes riparian
34 woodlands association with the Sacramento River, Feather River, Butte Creek, Big Chico Creek,
35 and other small drainages with suitable riparian vegetation.

36 **Occurrence/Distribution in the Planning Area.** Snowden (2001) notes that yellow warblers
37 nest in riparian and chaparral habitats in the montane zone, presumably outside of the planning

1 area, and are a rare breeding bird in valley riparian habitats within the planning area. Heath
2 (1998) reports breeding occurrences in the planning area along the Sacramento River. Dawn
3 Garcia of California State University, Chico, reports several migratory occurrences along Butte
4 Creek and several possible breeding occurrences along Butte Creek and Big Chico Creek from
5 2006 and 2007.

6

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8

This page intentionally left blank.