# SOUTH FORK WILLOW CREEK RANCH 2022 Landowner Letter

Rangeland Monitoring Network





#### Dear Mike and Kathy Landini,

Thank you for participating in Point Blue Conservation Science's state-wide Rangeland Monitoring Network (RMN; <u>https://www.pointblue.org/tools-and-guidance/farming-ranching/</u>).

Point Blue's RMN program is designed to be a long-term effort on each site. Each ranch's data contributes to our state-wide data set, helping us to understand rangeland ecosystems across the state and how they are changing over time. Our baseline sampling at South Fork Willow Creek Ranch occurred in 2015, the 2018 data was RMN's first re-sample, and the data presented here is from 2022 and is the 2nd re-sample at South Fork Willow Creek. Field work was conducted by myself and two technicians, My-Lan Le and Dabid Garcia; photos are from all three of us.

The purpose of this letter is to summarize the data we have collected on your ranch. It is broken down into the following sections:

- 1. Cover letter- this overview, includes detailed Table of Contents on next page
- 2. Ranch Fact Sheet one page about the soil, plants, and birds on your ranch
- 3. Figures and Maps these present the various data collected on your ranch from 2015-22
- 5. Appendices Plant and Bird Lists for your property

These data are best interpreted within the context of a ranch plan (adaptive/ holistic management plan, carbon farm plan, agency management plan, etc.). This landowner letter is meant to help you understand the condition of your land relative to your ecological goals, which hopefully informs future decision-making processes. Since the FAQ would be duplicative of the FAQ in the Divide Ranch landowner letter, I omitted that section in this document—see the Divide Ranch letter for more information.

Thank you so much for participating in our Rangeland Monitoring Network! I have deeply enjoyed all the hours spent collecting ecological data on your ranch, and am grateful for the opportunity to do so. I hope the information presented here is useful and interesting to you. Please reach out with any questions or feedback.

Best,

Sophie Noda Working Lands Ecologist Point Blue Conservation Science



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## South Fork Willow Creek Ranch Fact Sheet – 2022



## SOIL

**Textures:** Loam (at sampling point SFWO-02, 04, and 05), and sandy loam (sampling point SFWO-19) **Soil Organic Carbon (SOC)**: At South Fork Willow Creek, shallow SOC (0-10 cm

depth) averaged 1.15% and deep SOC (10-40 cm) averaged 0.48%. From 2018-22, average shallow SOC declined by 21% and average deep SOC declined by 9.5%. In

2015-18, average shallow SOC increased by 49% and deep SOC declined by 40%. Compaction: At South Fork Willow Creek, soil points showed no evidence of compaction. 4 out of 4 points were under the target NRCS target for bulk density, and 2 of the 4 points below the 10-minute NRCS target infiltration time. Average infiltration time increased by 36% from 2018-2022, and bulk density decreased 6% in the same time frame. A decreased bulk density indicates a reduction in soil compaction while an increase in water infiltration time indicates that water is being absorbed into the

soil slower, which could be due to a few different factors, including compaction.



## **PLANTS**

**Diversity:** We detected 69 plant species at South Fork Willow Creek Ranch in 2022. We detected an average of 43 species per point.

**Abundance:** The top 5 most abundant plant species (and their average % cover) were: 19% Blue oak (*Quercus douglasii*), 17% Red brome (*Bromus rubens*), 16% soft chess

(Bromus hordeaceus), 12% slender oatgrass (Avena barbata), and 11% Red-stemmed

#### filaree (Erodium cicutarium).

**Perennial Grass:** At the time of our plant surveys at South Fork Willow Creek, we detected an average perennial grass cover of 2% across the 3 points we monitored; these were Melic grass (*Melica sp.*), Purple needle grass (*Stipa pulchra*), Bulbous bluegrass (*Poa bulbosa*), and Harding grass (*Phalaris aquatica*).

Annual Grass: South Fork Willow Creek had an average absolute cover of 61% annual grass. Three top annual grass species are outlined above. Forbes: We found 1.3% perennial forb absolute cover and 47% annual forb absolute cover on average, plus a 2.7% average cover of legumes, which include vetches, lupines, and clovers. Trees & Shrubs: South Fork Willow Creek had 19% cover of shrubs and trees at the sites surveyed. Woody plant species on our surveys consisted exclusively blue oak (*Quercus douglasii*). For a complete list of plants detected see Appendix I.

Bare Ground: An average of 7% bare ground between points.

\*Orange = non-native species or Cal-IPC listed Invasive Species Green = native species or desirable finding



## **BIRDS**

**Diversity:** We detected 44 bird species at South Fork Willow Creek in 2022. There was an average of 9 species per point at each visit, which is an increase from when we last did surveys in 2016 and had an average of 6.5 species per point. A full

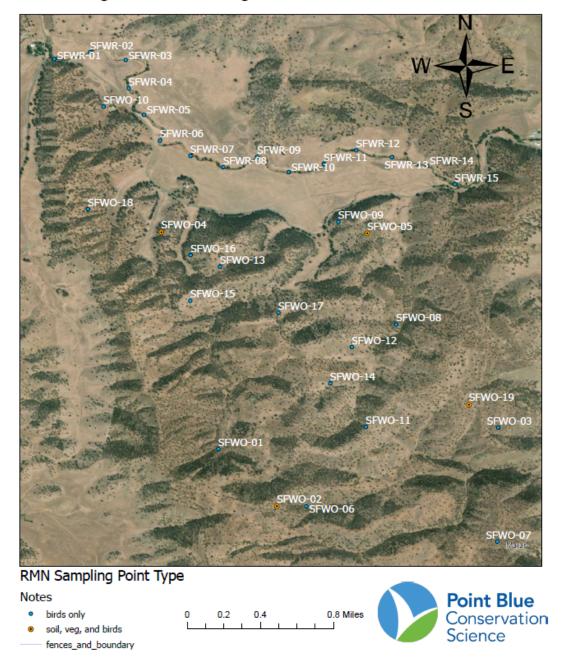
species list can be found in Appendix II. **Abundance:** The top 5 most common bird species detected at S. Fork Willow Creek were: European Starling (107), Mourning Dove (41), White-breasted Nuthatch (39), Oak Titmouse (30), and Ash-throated Flycatcher and Western Meadowlark tied (25).

**Changes in community composition:** The last time Point Blue did bird surveys was in 2016. Oak Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Acorn Woodpecker, California Quail, and Nutall's Woodpecker all are 5 species that increased in abundance from 2016-22. Lark Sparrow, Western Meadowlark, Western Kingbird, and Ash-throated Flycatcher saw decreases in abundance.

## **Maps and Figures**

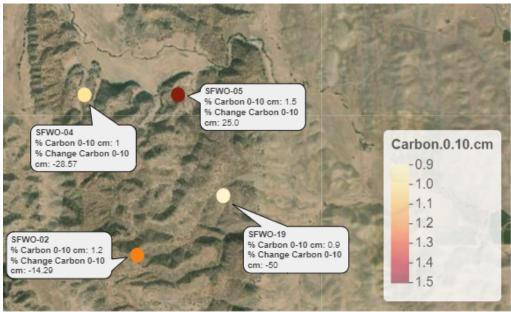
Maps

## South Fork Willow Creek 2022 Rangeland Monitoring Network



**Map 1.** Sampling points monitored in 2022. From the riparian transect, only SFWR-13, -14, and -15 were visited for bird counts.

Percent soil organic carbon and change at 0-10 cm



, USDA, USGS, AEX, GeoEye, Getmapping, Aerogrid, IGN, IGP, UPR-EGP, and the GIS User Community

**Map 2.** Shallow SOC in 2022 and percent change in shallow SOC at South Fork Willow Creek Ranch between 2018 and 2022. Note a significant increase in carbon at point 05, while 02, 04, and 19 lost carbon.

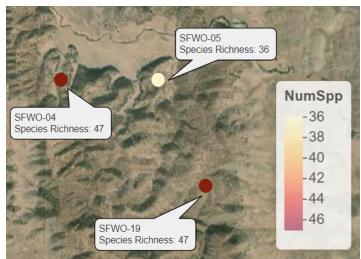


Map 3. Total bird species richness (number of species) observed within 300 meters across points at South Fork Willow Creek in 2022.

#### **Bird species richness**

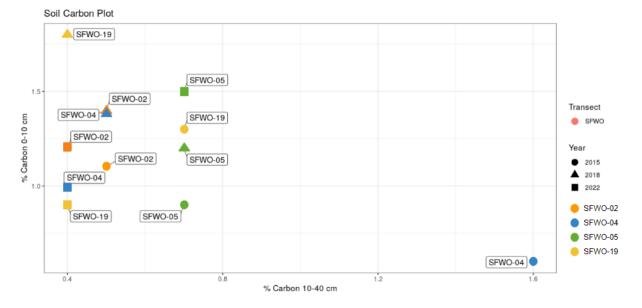
USGS, AEX, GeoEye, Getmapping, Aerogrid, IGN, IGP, UPR-EGP, and the GIS User Community

#### **Vegetation species richness**

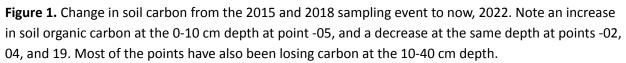


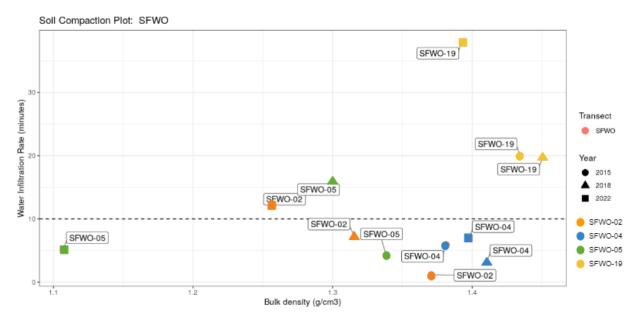
Map 4. Species richness (number of species) of plants detected during vegetation surveys in 2022.

USDA, USGS, AEX, GeoEye, Getmapping, Aerogrid, IGN, IGP, UPR-



## Figures Part 1: Soil





**Figure 2.** Scatter plot of soil compaction in 2015, 2018, and 2022 with water infiltration times on the Y axis and bulk density on the X axis. Note a decrease in bulk density at all points from 2018-2022 and a stable or decreasing water infiltration time at just 1 of 4 points.

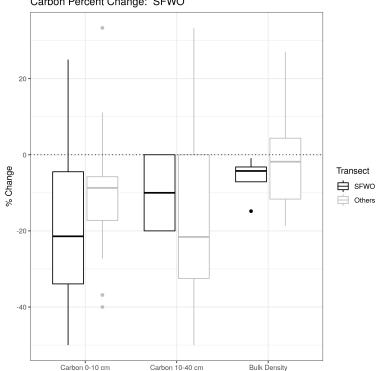
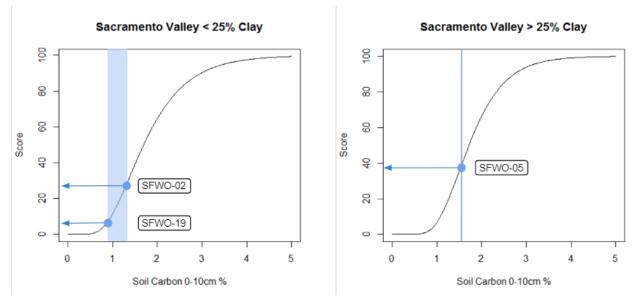


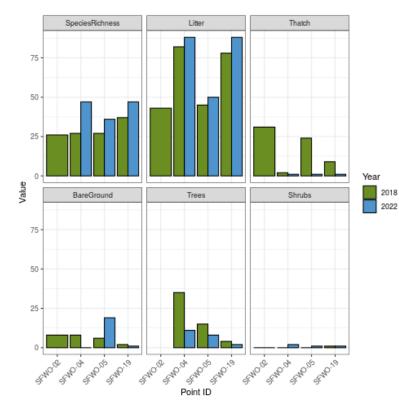
Figure 3. Box and whiskers plot of the percent change in carbon and bulk density from the 2018 sampling event to 2022. The boxes show the upper and lower quartiles (the interquartile range is where 50% of the data are found), the line inside is the median, and the whiskers are the minimum and maximum. Average percent change 2018-22 at all RMN ranches in the Sacramento Valley region are in gray. Note that a decreased bulk density indicates less compaction, which is positive as more pore space allows for more root growth, water holding capacity, and microbe and fungal life.

Carbon Percent Change: SFWO



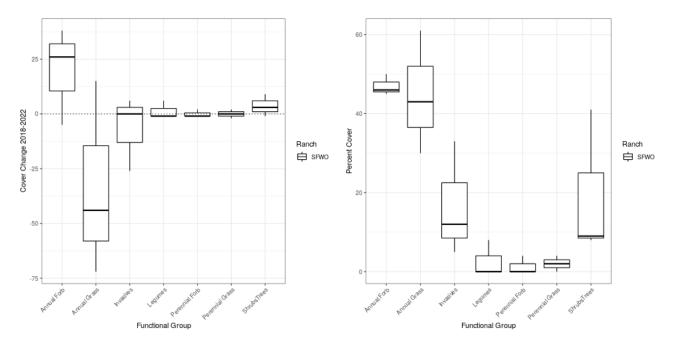
**Figure 4.** South Fork Willow Creek soils range from 0.9%-1.5% SOC at the 0-10 cm depth and are represented by the blue bar on the soil health curve. They span from the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile to 35<sup>th</sup> percentile among soils of a similar clay content within the region (since clay content is a factor that influences a soil's ability to hold SOC).

The soil health curves were developed by Point Blue soil ecologist Dr. Chelsea Carey and shows the range of what we have observed in the Rangeland Monitoring Network. We make assumptions that our data collection is representative of CA Rangelands.



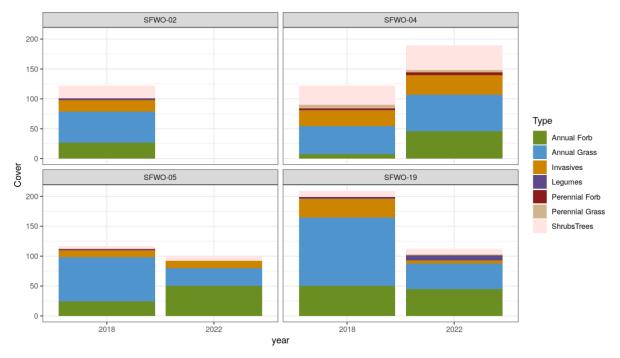
## Figures Part 2: Vegetation

**Figure 5.** Cover summary of points sampled in 2018 and 2022. Note that in the case of Species Richness, the Y-axis represents number of plant species, however for all other variables the Y-axis represents percent cover. Species richness increased at all points, as did litter, while thatch decreased at all points. Bare ground increased at just one point, -05.



**Figure 6** (left). Box and whisker plot of change in percent cover between 2018 and 2022. The boxes show the interquartile range (where 50% of the values occur), the horizontal line inside the box is the median value, and the whiskers show the minimum and maximum values.

Figure 7 (right). Box and whisker plot of percent cover of functional groups represented by 2022 data.



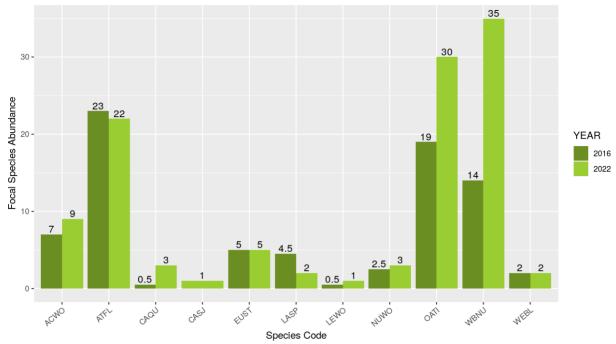
**Figure 8.** Bar graph with bins showing the % cover of functional groups at each point in 2018 and 2022. Note that % cover well exceeds 100% because we hit multiple species on each pin drop and vegetation is often layered. The species that are contributing to the "Invasive" category are red brome (*Bromus rubens*) and medusahead (*Elymus caput-medusae*). At point -19, medusahead cover reduced from 29% to 0%!

## Figures Part 3: Birds

Bird species code key

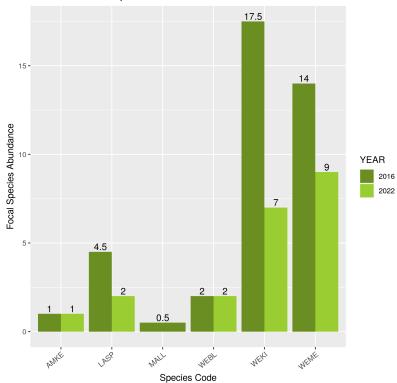
AMKE	American Kestrel	TRES	Tree Swallow	CASJ	California-Scrub Jay
LASP	Lark Sparrow*	WAVI	Warbling Vireo	EUST	European Starling
MALL	Mallard	WIFL	Willow Flycatcher	LEWO	Lewis's Woodpecker
WEBL	Western Bluebird*	WIWA	Wilson's Warbler	NUWO	Nuttall's Woodpecker
WEKI	Western Kingbird	YEWA	Yellow Warbler	HUVI	Hutton's Vireo
WEME	Western Meadowlark	ACWO	Acorn Woodpecker	OATI	Oak Titmouse
BANS	Bank Swallow	ATFL	Ash-throated Flycatcher	WBNU	White-breasted Nuthatch
BHGR	Black-headed Grosbeak	CAQU	California Quail		

**Table 1.** Species codes list for interpretation of bird figures below. \* = focal species in more than one habitat type

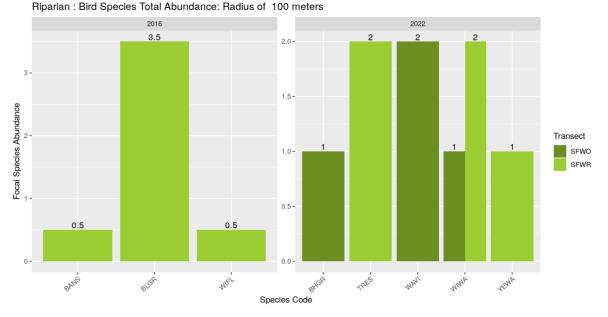


Oak.Woodland : Bird Species Total Abundance: Radius of 100 meters

**Figure 9.** Oak Woodland species abundance in 2016-2022. An increased abundance in many species is a positive sign and demonstrates an increasing capacity of the ranch to support nesting birds. We observed a marked increase in Acorn Woodpecker, Oak Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, and California Quail as well as increases in many other species.

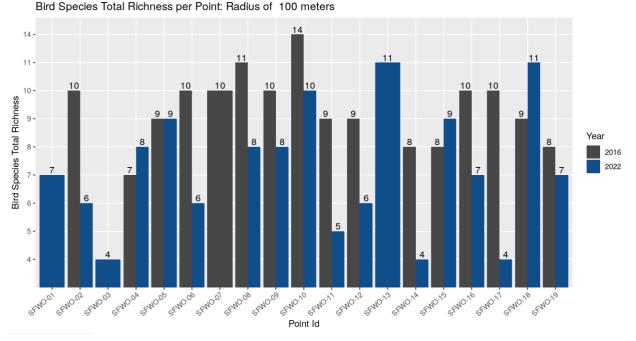


**Figure 10.** Grassland bird species abundance in 2016 and 2022. We observed stable abundance in American Kestrel and Western Bluebird. We also observed a decrease in Lark Sparrow, Western Kingbird, and Western Meadowlark.



**Figure 11.** Riparian bird species abundance in 2016-2022. SFWR is a riparian transect that contains 15 points, 3 of which we revisited in 2022. It is really neat that Bank Swallows and Willow Flycatchers were observed in the riparian area in 2016, however they were not observed again in 2022. Many of these riparian species have only been detected in the riparian transect points, including the Bank Swallow, Willow Flycatcher, Tree Swallow, and Yellow Warbler.

#### Grassland : Bird Species Total Abundance: Radius of 100 meters



**Figure 12.** Species richness per point and per visit in 2016 and 2022 for detections within 100 meters. We observed an increase in species richness at many of the points we monitored. Note that in 2022 we visited points once for bird counts, whereas in 2016 Point Blue visited points twice, and this increase is despite that change in effort.

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

*Very abbreviated for South Fork Willow Creek to avoid repetitiveness from the Divide Ranch letter.* 

## What points are being resampled and what is their history of sampling?

A CAR

*Soils:* In 2022, we revisited the 4 soil points that were last sampled in 2018 and were first sampled in 2015. This years' sampling event was the 2nd resample of these 4 points. The 3 points we revisited in 2022 are a subset of the 19 points that are selected for bird surveys (not including the riparian transect of bird points).

<u>Vegetation</u>: In 2022, we visited 3 of the 4 points that were soil sampled. These 3 points were originally surveyed in 2018, so this is their first time getting resampled. One soil point, SFWO-02, had vegetation surveyed in 2018, but not in 2022.

<u>Birds</u>: In 2022, we visited 22 points at South Fork Willow Creek. We did 1 round of bird surveys at all points during the peak of nesting season in mid-May. The last time Point Blue staff did bird surveys was in 2016, when 2 rounds were completed at 34 points. The first time surveys were completed was in 2014.

## What plants are growing on my ranch?

The **top 5 most abundant plant species** found on your ranch are listed on your ranch fact sheet, and **Appendix I** has a complete list of plants we documented on your property. It is organized by plant

families and also has other information, such as whether each species is an annual or perennial. If you want to know more about a particular species, there are many resources available. Two places we recommend starting are calflora (www.calflora.org) and USDA plants (<u>https://plants.sc.egov.usda.gov</u>).

The four of the five most common pasture plants detected at South Fork Willow Creek in 2015, 2018, and 2022 were non-native. Red brome (*Bromus rubens*), soft chess (*Bromus hordeaceus*), slender oatgrass (*Avena barbata*), and red-stemmed filaree (*Erodium cicutarium*) were detected with the highest frequency in 2022. Three are considered quality livestock forage: filaree, soft chess, and slender oatgrass. Red brome is considered moderate to poor quality forage because there is reportedly a short period in which it is palatable to cattle. While species like filaree and slender oatgrass are considered good forage, it should be noted that they are non-native and competitive, and should be managed to ensure that they do not outcompete other native and more desirable plant species.

#### What changes did we see in the ranch's bird community from 2019-22?

There was an increase in abundance of many species from 2015 to 2022 (see **Figures 9-11** and Fact Sheet). Oak Titmouse and White-breasted Nuthatch abundance increased dramatically, over doubling in the case of White-breasted Nuthatches. On the Ranch Fact Sheet, **Changes in community composition** tells you which species increased, decreased, or stayed the same. Many species increased in abundance or maintained stable abundances, with a few notable exceptions (discussed below).

#### Did all species increase from 2019 to 2022?

No. See **Figures 9-11** for changes in species abundance in each focal group. Some decreases that stood out were in the grassland focal group, including Lark Sparrow, Western Kingbird, and Western Meadowlark.

#### How can this data inform land management?

See the Divide Ranch letter for more detailed recommendations. Many of those recommendations apply to South Fork Willow Creek due to the similar habitat, vegetation, topography, and management. Something to keep an eye on for South Fork Willow Creek specifically is the medusahead presence. As mentioned in **Figure 8**, medusahead cover went from 29% to 0% at point -19. This is a significant victory and I encourage you to keep up the good work and to target medusahead in areas that you observe it popping up. Medusahead is still present at point -19 as we picked it up on the <u>releve</u> portion of our survey, but in significantly lower numbers. (<u>Releve</u>: we spend an extra 30 minutes recording every species within a 50 m radius that was not recorded on the line-point intercept survey, which is where percent cover is derived from).

I will include a flier resource from UC Cooperative Extension about timing of grazing and mowing treatments for medusahead and barbed goatgrass. Apologies if you are already familiar with this resource or its information.

## Appendix: Species Lists

## Appendix I: Plant List

Scientific Name	Common Name	Family	Provenanc e	Functional Group
Anthriscus caucalis	bur chervil	Apiaceae	Non-native	Annual Forb
Daucus pusillus	American wild carrot	Apiaceae	Native	Annual Forb
Torilis arvensis	spreading hedgeparsley	Apiaceae	Non-native	Annual Forb
Achyrachaena mollis	blow wives	Asteraceae	Native	Annual Forb
Achillea millefolium	common yarrow	Asteraceae	Native	Perennial Forb
Crepis occidentalis	largeflower hawksbeard	Asteraceae	Native	Annual Forb
Hemizonella minima	opposite-leaved tarweed	Asteraceae	Native	Annual Forb
Hypochaeris glabra	smooth cat's ear	Asteraceae	Non-native	Annual Forb
Lagophylla ramosissima	branched lagophylla	Asteraceae	Native	Annual Forb
Logfia	cottonrose	Asteraceae		Annual Forb
Micropus californicus	q-tips	Asteraceae	Native	Annual Forb
Psilocarphus	woollyheads	Asteraceae	Native	Annual Forb
Silybum marianum	blessed milkthistle	Asteraceae	Non-native	Annual Forb
Sonchus asper	spiny sowthistle	Asteraceae	Non-native	Annual Forb
Amsinckia	fiddleneck	Boraginaceae	Native	Annual Forb
Athysanus pusillus	common sandweed	Brassicaceae	Native	Annual Forb
Capsella bursa-pastoris	shepherd's purse	Brassicaceae	Non-native	Annual Forb
Lepidium nitidum	shining pepperweed	Brassicaceae	Native	Annual Forb
Sisymbrium	hedgemustard	Brassicaceae	Non-native	Annual Forb
Cerastium glomeratum	sticky chickweed	Caryophyllaceae	Non-native	Annual Forb
Silene gallica	common catchfly	Caryophyllaceae	Non-native	Annual Forb
Crassula connata	sand pygmyweed	Crassulaceae	Native	Annual Forb
Croton setigerus	dove weed	Euphorbiaceae	Native	Annual Forb
Lotus wrangelianus	Chilean bird's-foot trefoil	Fabaceae	Native	Legumes
Lupinus bicolor	miniature lupine	Fabaceae	Native	Legumes
Medicago polymorpha	burclover	Fabaceae	Non-native	Legumes
Trifolium albopurpureum	rancheria clover	Fabaceae	Native	Legumes

Scientific Name	Common Name	Family	Provenanc e	Functional Group
Trifolium hirtum	rose clover	Fabaceae	Non-native	Legumes
Trifolium microcephalum	smallhead clover	Fabaceae	Native	Legumes
Quercus douglasii	blue oak	Fagaceae	Native	ShrubsTrees
Erodium botrys	longbeak stork's bill	Geraniaceae	Non-native	Annual Forb
Erodium brachycarpum	shortfruit stork's bill	Geraniaceae	Non-native	Annual Forb
Erodium cicutarium	redstem stork's bill	Geraniaceae	Non-native	Annual Forb
Geranium molle	dovefoot geranium	Geraniaceae	Non-native	Annual Forb
Nemophila	baby blue eyes	Hydrophyllaceae	Native	Annual Forb
Trichostema laxum	turpentine weed	Lamiaceae	Native	Annual Forb
Allium amplectens	narrowleaf onion	Liliaceae	Native	Perennial Forb
Calochortus luteus	yellow mariposa lily	Liliaceae	Native	Perennial Forb
Dichelostemma capitatum	bluedicks	Liliaceae	Native	Perennial Forb
Triteleia laxa	Ithuriel's spear	Liliaceae	Native	Perennial Forb
Clarkia purpurea	winecup clarkia	Onagraceae	Native	Annual Forb
Eschscholzia californica	California poppy	Papaveraceae	Native	Annual Forb
Plantago erecta	dotseed plantain	Plantaginaceae	Native	Annual Forb
Aira caryophyllea	silver hairgrass	Poaceae	Non-native	Annual Grass
Avena barbata	slender oat	Poaceae	Non-native	Annual Grass
Bromus diandrus	ripgut brome	Poaceae	Non-native	Annual Grass
Bromus hordeaceus	soft brome	Poaceae	Non-native	Annual Grass
Bromus rubens	red brome	Poaceae	Non-native	Annual Grass
Hordeum murinum	mouse barley	Poaceae	Non-native	Annual Grass
Lolium perenne	perennial ryegrass	Poaceae	Non-native	
Melica	melicgrass	Poaceae	Native	Perennial Grass
Nassella pulchra	purple needlegrass	Poaceae	Native	Perennial Grass
Phalaris aquatica	bulbous canarygrass	Poaceae	Non-native	Perennial Grass
Poa bulbosa	bulbous bluegrass	Poaceae	Non-native	Perennial Grass
Taeniatherum caput-medusae	medusahead	Poaceae	Non-native	Annual Grass
Vulpia bromoides	brome fescue	Poaceae	Non-native	Annual Grass
Vulpia microstachys	small fescue	Poaceae	Native	Annual Grass

Scientific Name	Common Name	Family	Provenanc e	Functional Group
Gilia tricolor	bird's-eye gilia	Polemoniaceae	Native	Annual Forb
Leptosiphon ciliatus	whiskerbrush	Polemoniaceae	Native	Annual Forb
Microsteris gracilis	slender phlox	Polemoniaceae	Native	Annual Forb
Navarretia	pincushionplant	Polemoniaceae	Native	Annual Forb
Navarretia pubescens	downy pincushionplant	Polemoniaceae	Native	Annual Forb
Pterostegia drymarioides	woodland pterostegia	Polygonaceae	Native	Annual Forb
Claytonia	Springbeauty, miner's lettuce	Portulacaceae	Native	Forb
Dodecatheon	Shooting star	Primulaceae	Native	Perennial Forb
Galium	bedstraw	Rubiaceae		Forb
Castilleja attenuata	attenuate Indian paintbrush	Scrophulariacea e	Native	Annual Forb
Castilleja exserta	exserted Indian paintbrush	Scrophulariacea e	Native	Annual Forb
Collinsia parviflora	maiden blue eyed Mary	Scrophulariacea e	Native	Annual Forb

Appendix II: Bird List

Species Code	Common Name	Count
EUST	European Starling	107
WBNU	White-breasted Nuthatch	39
OATI	Oak Titmouse	32
ATFL	Ash-throated Flycatcher	25
ACWO	Acorn Woodpecker	22
LASP*	Lark Sparrow	4
CASJ	California Scrub-Jay	5
CAQU	California Quail	4
NUWO	Nuttall's Woodpecker	3

Focal Species: Oak Woodland Grassland Riparian Non-focal species \* Oak Woodland and Grassland focal species

Species Code	Common Name	Count
LEWO	Lewis's Woodpecker	1
CALT	California Towhee	1
WEKI	Western Kingbird	10
WEME	Western Meadowlark	25
KILL	Killdeer	4
AMKE	American Kestrel	3
YBMA*	Yellow-billed Magpie	2
WEBL*	Western Bluebird	2
MALL	Mallard	2
BHGR	Black-headed Grosbeak	3
WAVI	Warbling Vireo	3
WIWA	Wilson's Warbler	3
TRES	Tree Swallow	2
YEWA	Yellow Warbler	1
MODO	Mourning Dove	41
RWBL	Red-winged Blackbird	19
CLSW	Cliff Swallow	6
RCSP	Rufous-crowned Sparrow	4
CORA	Common Raven	4
HOFI	House Finch	4
LEGO	Lesser Goldfinch	3
EUCD	Eurasian Collared-Dove	3
ROWR	Rock Wren	2

Species Code	Common Name	Count
BUOR	Bullock's Oriole	2
внсо	Brown-headed Cowbird	2
NOFL	Northern Flicker	1
LAZB	Lazuli Bunting	1
WETA	Western Tanager	1
BLPH	Black Phoebe	1
TOWA	Townsend's Warbler	1
AMRO	American Robin	1
HOFI	House Finch	1
BARS	Barn Swallow	1
NOMO	Northern Mockingbird	1