

# People, Farms, Birds, and Bees

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- **Blake Matheson**  
Monterey Audubon
- **Steve Shimek**  
The Otter Project



**Western Snowy Plover at Salinas River NWR  
USFWS Threatened Species**

# THE SALINAS RIVER

Lifeblood of the Central Coast's Birdlife

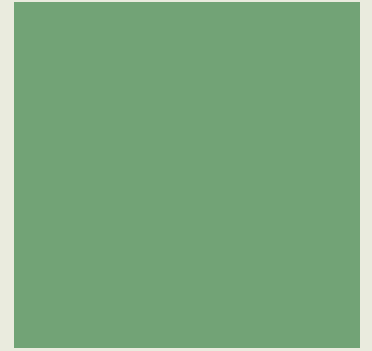
Blake Matheson, Board President & Conservation Chair

Monterey Audubon

# SALINAS RIVER

## “IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS”

- The most important coastal river in California south of San Francisco
- The Salinas comprises multiple eco-regions and species suites, each of which- independently and in its own right- is internationally recognized as critical to the health of California’s birdlife, and global bird health more broadly

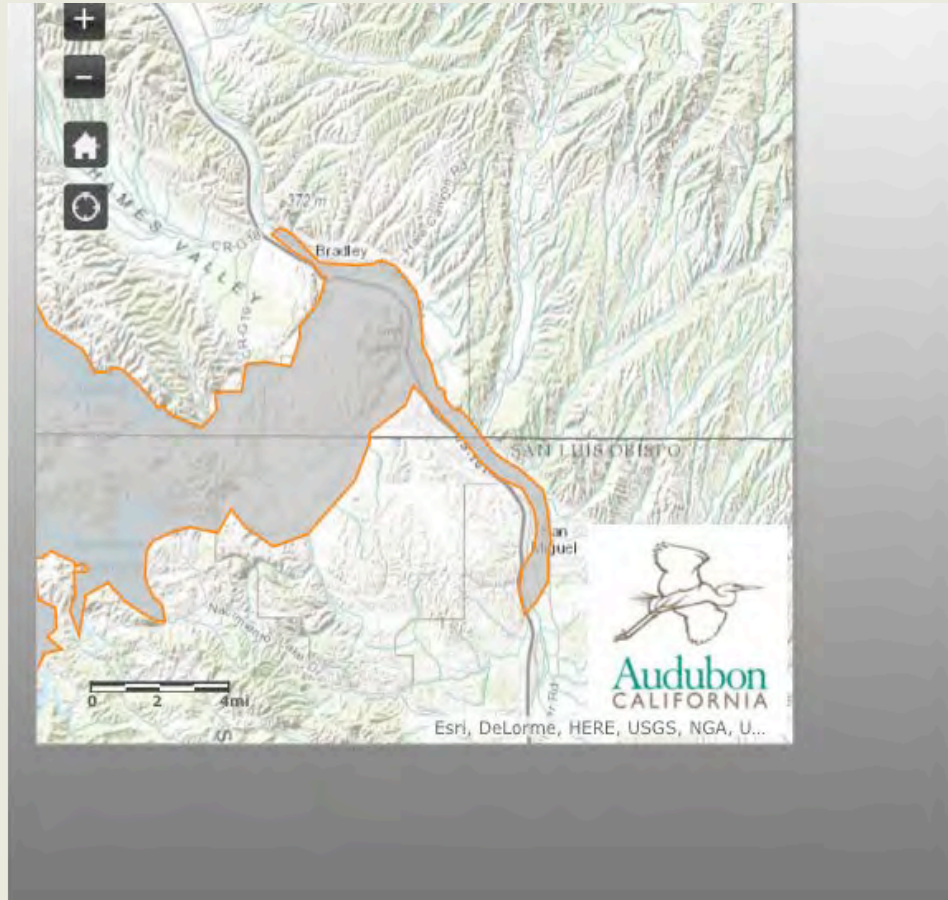


# Important Bird Areas

- IBA Concept; internationally recognized tool for avian conservation planning by public and private groups
- *“Important Bird Areas (IBAs) identify essential sites that provide habitat for (i) rare, threatened or endangered birds, (ii) exceptionally large congregations of shorebirds, or (iii) exceptionally large congregations of waterfowl.”* IBA Technical Report
- Three Salinas IBAs
  - San Antonio (Upper River)
  - King City (Middle Reaches)
  - Lower River (Davis Rd to Mouth and surrounding beaches)

# San Antonio; Upper River IBA

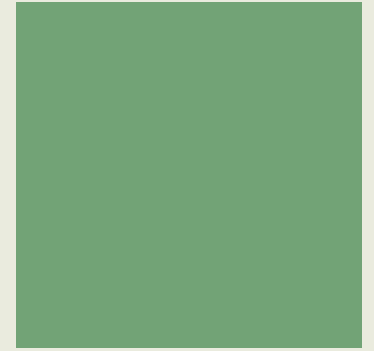
## San Miguel to North of Bradley



# San Antonio/Upper River IBA

- *“land lying between the San Antonio and Nacimiento Rivers from their headwaters in the Santa Lucia Mountains to their confluence with the upper Salinas River, and an extensive riparian corridor on the Salinas River between the two confluences”*
- *“riparian corridor along the Salinas River, particularly between the confluences of the San Antonio and Nacimiento, is designated as "critical habitat" for Least Bell's Vireo (a few nested in the 1990s), and has the highest densities of riparian obligate species in coastal central California.”*





*Least Bell's Vireo; Federally Endangered, Upper River Designated Critical Habitat; necessary to facilitate restoration of former range*



*Wilson's Warbler*


*Widespread as a breeding bird in riparian habitats.*

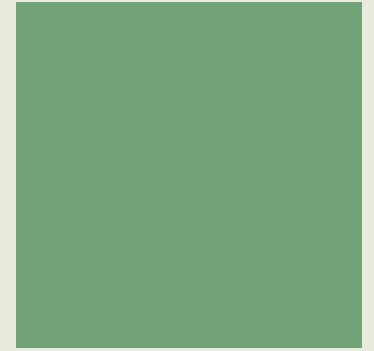


# King City IBA- Middle River

San Ardo to northwest of King City

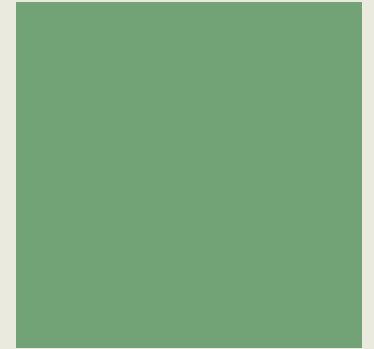


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- *“The King City Grasslands IBA encompasses the best remaining riparian habitat on the middle Salinas River forming a corridor of habitat that includes San Lorenzo County Park, and extensive arid grasslands to the east. San Lorenzo is a tributary of the Salinas; it and Lewis Creek form much of the northern and eastern boundary.”*

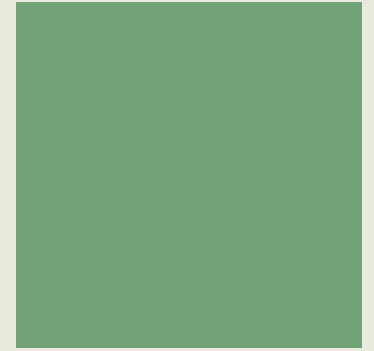


*Northern Harrier*  
*California Species of Special Concern (2008)*

*Yellow Warbler; Species of Special Concern breeding in streamside riparian areas*



*Yellow-breasted Chat a California Species of Special Concern*



# Lower Salinas River IBA

## Hwy 68 crossing to Pacific



# Lower Salinas IBA

- *“Strips of riparian vegetation still remain, best-developed away from the coast, and the estuary at the river mouth passes through the northern end of one of the state's most extensive coastal dune systems...”*
- *The river mouth hosts a largely undisturbed roost site for waterbirds throughout the year. Brown Pelicans are common in summer; they are often joined by non-breeding small flocks of American White Pelican. Gulls and ducks proliferate in migration and winter. In many years a large breeding colony of Caspian Tern forms and California Least Tern or Black Skimmers pass through”*



The lower river is used by an important and diverse array of wading and shorebirds.

*American Avocet, Red Phalarope, Virginia Rail (Clockwise)*





Large numbers of terns and skimmers are present at the mouth annually

*Clockwise: Caspian Tern, Black Skimmer California Least Tern (USFWS Endangered Species)*

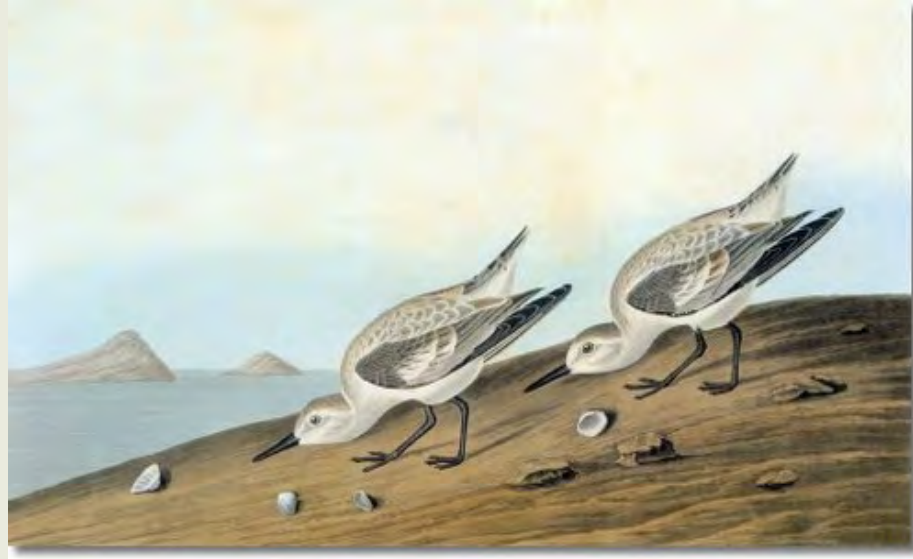


*Osprey; frequently seen in migration and winter*

Fundamentals:

- 1) *The remnant habitat and biodiversity of the Salinas is too critical to too many species to degrade for convenience or for pecuniary interests.*
- 2) *We need to restore and expand native habitat, not shrink it. (Public and Private Funds exist.)*
- 3) *IBAs along the Salinas must be categorically excluded from all adverse habitat modifications.*
- 4) *Species impacts and cumulative environmental impacts need to be analyzed in ways that are meaningful and extensive using the best science available; the Public has a right to know ecological costs.*
- 5) *Water quality impacts from ag runoff affect overall system vitality, including the health of avian species, and require deeper public scrutiny and more careful*

THANK YOU



MONTEREY AUDUBON

*Celebrating, Conserving and Restoring the Birds and Wildlife of the Monterey Region since 1943*

# Salinas River Channel Maintenance

- **What does it look like?**
- **Does it work?**
- **What are the costs?**
- **What is our recommendation?**





CLIMBER OF SALINAS R.





1989 Salinas River upstream of Gonzales Bridge



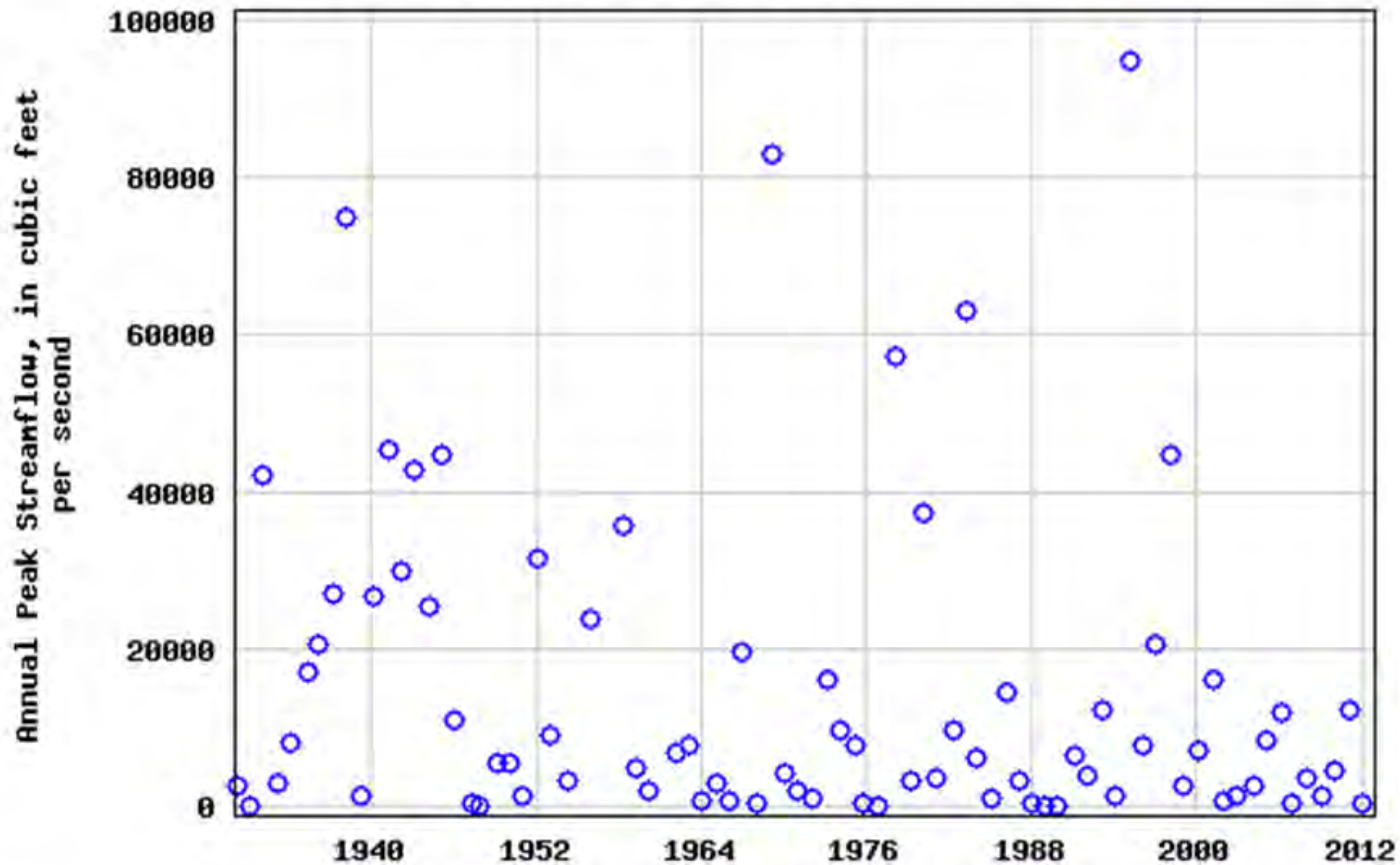
Imagery Date: 5/5/2012 | lat: 36.481924° | lon: -121.455700° | elev: 116 ft | eye alt: 8984 ft



The Otter Project  
[www.otterproject.org](http://www.otterproject.org)



## USGS 11152500 SALINAS R NR SPRECKELS CA





01.29.2009









“Ocean discharge of freshwater microcystins was confirmed for three **nutrient-impaired rivers** flowing into the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary... Deaths of 21 southern sea otters, a federally listed threatened species, were linked to microcystin intoxication.”

Miller MA, Kudela RM, Mekebri A, Crane D, Oates SC, et al. (2010) Evidence for a Novel Marine Harmful Algal Bloom: Cyanotoxin (Microcystin) Transfer from Land to Sea Otters. PLoS ONE 5(9): e12576. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0012576



“We have seen a 30- to 100-fold increase in domoic acid (an algal toxin) in water samples in the last decade or so,” said Clarissa Anderson, a biological oceanographer at UC Santa Cruz who recently won a California Sea Grant Focus Award to study the blooms. **“We think that the toxicity of these blooms is related to agricultural runoff,”** Anderson said. “We are especially interested in “first-flush” storms in the beginning of the rainy season in fall.”

*Yellow Warbler; Species of Special Concern breeding in streamside riparian areas*







PACIFIC  
INSTITUTE

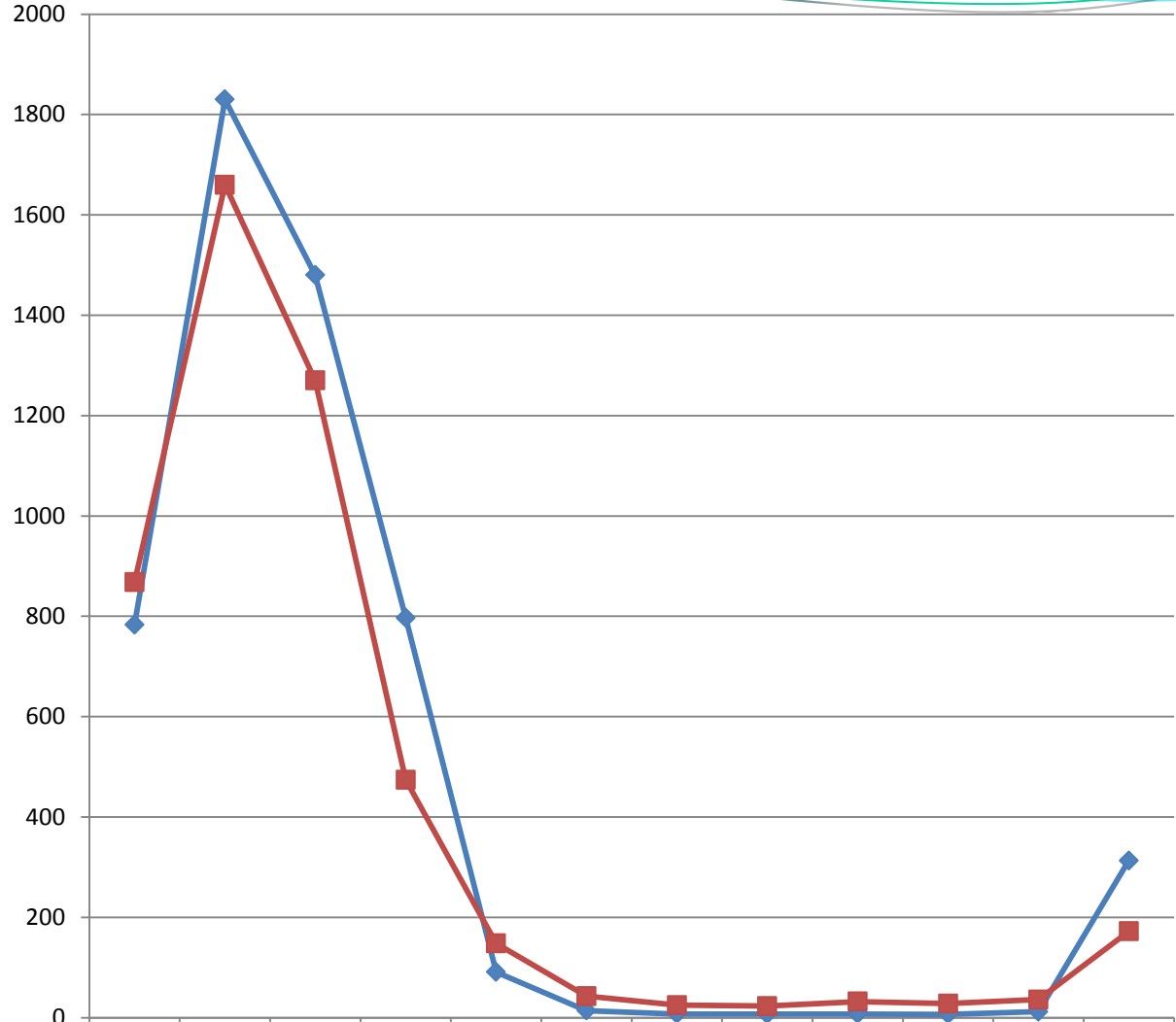


**Recommendation:** The Draft EIR should be immediately supplemented to define a process project proponents must follow:

- Science-based with hydrological and biological analyses;
- Impact avoidance, minimization and mitigation;
- Baseline hydrology – Both pre- and post-project conditions must be defined;
- Cooperative;
- Engagement -- engage resource agencies and advisors to ensure multiple benefits;
- Monitoring – Applicants agree to a monitoring program measuring multiple project benefits including flood risk reduction and ecological conditions.



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◆ Pre-Dams 1929-1960  
 ■ Post-Dams 1962-2012

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Pre-Dams 1929-1960	783	1830	1480	797	91	14	7.2	6.9	7.4	6.8	12	313
Post-Dams 1962-2012	868	1660	1270	474	148	43	25	23	32	28	36	172



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