

Jonathan S. Feenstra Ph.D.  
556 S. Fair Oaks Ave Suite 108  
Pasadena, CA 91105  
(626) 319-4723  
[feenstra@alumni.caltech.edu](mailto:feenstra@alumni.caltech.edu)

**Results of Rapid Assessment Survey of Proposed Development Site Bordering Debs Park near the Intersection of Latrobe Street and Sinova Street in Montecito Heights, Los Angeles, CA**

**Survey Description and Method**

The proposed development site (hereafter referred to as “the site”) was surveyed thoroughly for approximately one hour between 8:40 and 9:40 AM on August 6, 2008 by consulting biologist Jonathan Feenstra. The site was examined on foot and lists prepared of the encountered species of plants and animals present. Bird species in the list below are those seen or heard either in or immediately adjacent to the site (in order to include individuals whose territories and/or regular movements include portions of the site).

**Site Description**

The site is a flag-type vacant lot off Latrobe St north of the intersection with Sinova St in the Montecito Heights neighborhood of Los Angeles. The site lies partly along Latrobe St (proposed access road) then extends east and flags south. The site nearly entirely surrounds two residential properties on the corner of Latrobe and Sinova. The site is bordered on its remaining sides by Debs Park.



Two pitches define the site – a more level grade present at the west end near the access from Latrobe and a steeper grade along eastern part of the site which slopes up (east) to a ridge top within the Debs Park boundary. A primitive access road has been cut from Latrobe through the middle of the site.

The eastern part of the site with the more level grade has been disked. Several trees remain including a eucalyptus, an exotic pine, and a large palmetto. There are a few emergent plants in this area: castor bean (*Ricinus communis*), rattlesnake weed (*Euphorbia sp.*), Russian thistle (*Salsola tragus*), and bristly ox-tongue (*Picris echioides*). The disked plants seem to have been mostly mustard (*Brassica sp.*) and wild oats (*Avena fatua*) with sporadic brome grasses (*Broma sp.*). These plants thickly cover most of the remaining un-disked area of the site, particularly in the northern portion. The southern flag end of the site is quite thickly vegetated with shrubs and small trees. Remnants of an old orchard yard include each of California pepper tree (*Schinus molle*), stone fruit (probably peach or apricot), pomegranate, cherry, citrus, and fig. Native plants are represented by several individuals of coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*), Southern California black walnut (*Juglans californica*), poison oak (*Toxicodendron diversiloba*), and toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*). Other plants found were: wild lettuce (*Lactuca serriola*), false jimson weed (*Datura wrightii*), horehound (*Marrubium vulgare*), goosefoot (*Chenopodium sp.*), and ice plant (*Carpobrotus sp.*). Cultivated plants from the fenced-in residential yards extend slightly into/over the site. Some trees and bushes (including pepper, eucalyptus, and pine) from Debs Park hang over the fence, as well.







Wildlife confirmed using the site include insects, lizards, birds, and mammals. Wildlife species and individuals other than those observed in this short survey is certainly likely. Insects were represented by standard butterflies to the area: one Cabbage White (*Pieris rapae*) and seven Marine Blues (*Leptotes marina*). Two Western Fence Lizards (*Sceloporus occidentalis*) were seen in the disked area, including one young individual about 3 cm in length.

Birdlife was more extensive (due in part to the greater diversity and ease of detection). The following bird species were observed during the survey:

Red-tailed Hawk ( <i>Buteo jamaicensis</i> )	1
Yellow-chevroned Parakeet ( <i>Brotogeris chiriri</i> )	2
Anna's Hummingbird ( <i>Calypte anna</i> )	2
Rufous/Allen's Hummingbird ( <i>Selasphorus sp.</i> )	2
Western Scrub-Jay ( <i>Aphelocoma californica</i> )	2
Common Raven ( <i>Corvus corax</i> )	6
Bewick's Wren ( <i>Thryomanes bewickii</i> )	2
California Towhee ( <i>Pipilo crissalis</i> )	3
House Finch ( <i>Carpodacus mexicanus</i> )	5
Lesser Goldfinch ( <i>Carduelis psaltria</i> )	2

The above species are expected and common in this area, habitat, and time of year. The Common Ravens were seen in a family group (recently fledged juveniles accosting parents) and bred locally (possibly in one of the dense trees immediately over the fence in Debs Park. California Towhees are also very probable breeders beneath the dense brush of the site. In addition, presence of either wintering or transient sapsuckers (*Sphyrapicus sp.*) is evidenced by the significant welling of the large eucalyptus at the northwest corner of the site.





The only mammal directly observed was a feral cat (or pet of nearby resident). However, several worn game trails span the site through the weedy underbrush. No tracks were found in the dry crumbled dirt.



In addition, the scat of a medium sized omnivore, probably a raccoon (*Procyon lotor*) or coyote (*Canis latrans*), was found near thick vegetation and a game trail east of the residential area.



This report contains the result of the rapid assessment survey only. A more thorough examination and survey protocol is always recommended to better determine the inventory of plants and animals utilizing the area – particularly as this site borders the open protected space of Debs Park and therefore may play a greater role as natural shelter and wildlife corridor.