

A conservation strategy for Swainson's hawks in the Central Valley

**based on their adaptation to, and dependence on,
specific agricultural practices and crop types**



Michael Bradbury

Department of Water Resources

and

Swainson's Hawk Technical Advisory Committee

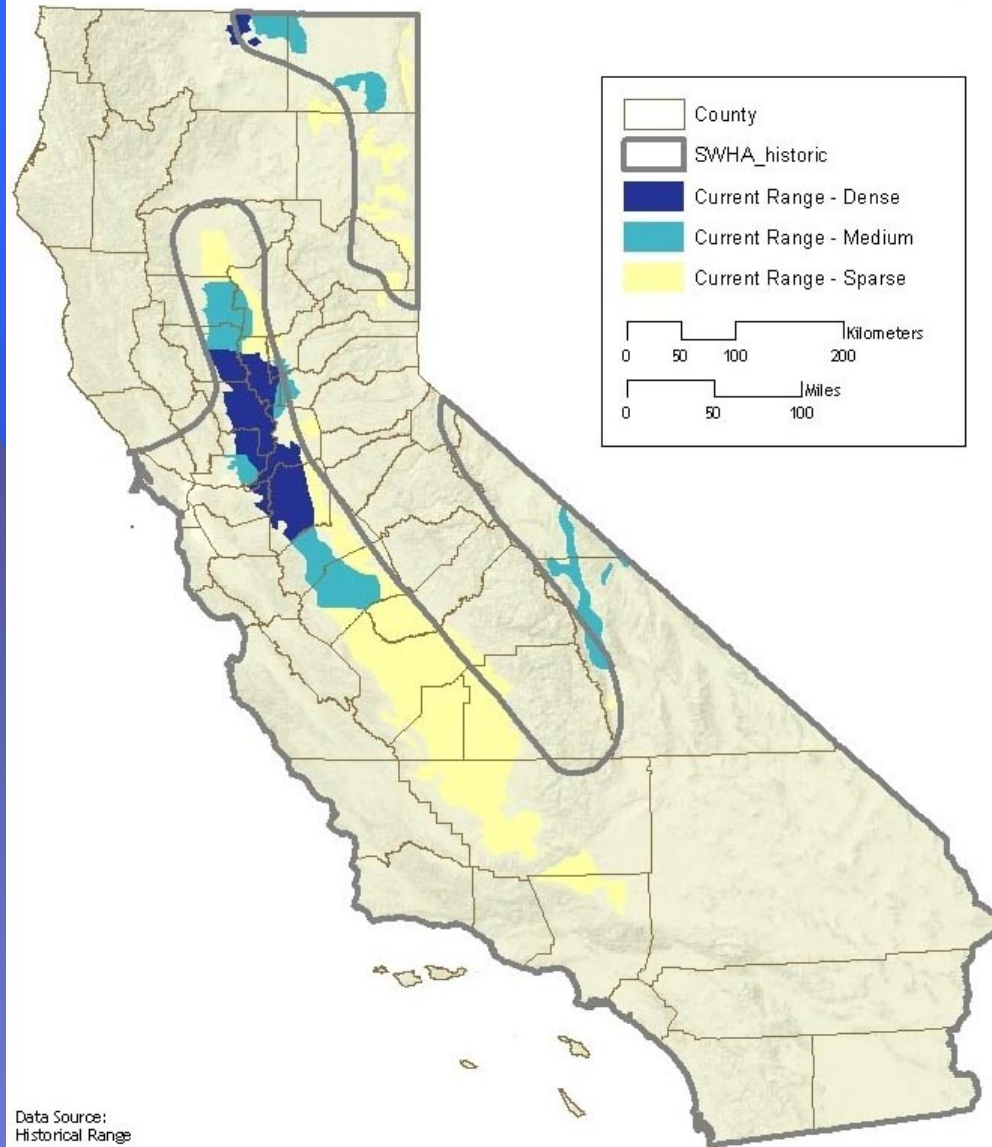
Swainson's Hawk Technical Advisory Committee

- **California's foremost experts on Swainson's hawks in California**
- **Established to facilitate the conservation and recovery through research and education**
- **Involved in every conservation planning effort in the valley that affects Swainson's hawks (that we know of)**
- **Currently involved with research on genetics, migration, habitat use, disturbance factors, population trends and distribution**

Expert Qualifications

- **Member of the SWHA TAC since 1995**
- **Have been involved in SWHA research since 1992, including:**
 - **Migration**
 - **Population size and distribution**
 - **Nest site disturbance**
- **Lead Coordinator for TAC on Genetics Study**
- **Lead author on Survey Protocol for Swainson's Hawks, adopted by Dept of Fish and Game**

Swainson's Hawk Current and Historical Range



Data Source:
Historical Range
CA Dept. of Fish and Game (unpublished 1979)
Current Range
CA Dept. of Fish and Game (unpublished 2005)

Created: Sept. 2005, Randerson\SWHA_current&historical_range.mxd

Swainson's hawk population in California

Pre-1800 estimate – 20,000 pairs

Current estimate – 1500 pairs

**Primary cause of decline – loss of foraging
habitat**

**Secondary cause – loss of nest sites due to nest
tree removal or disturbance**

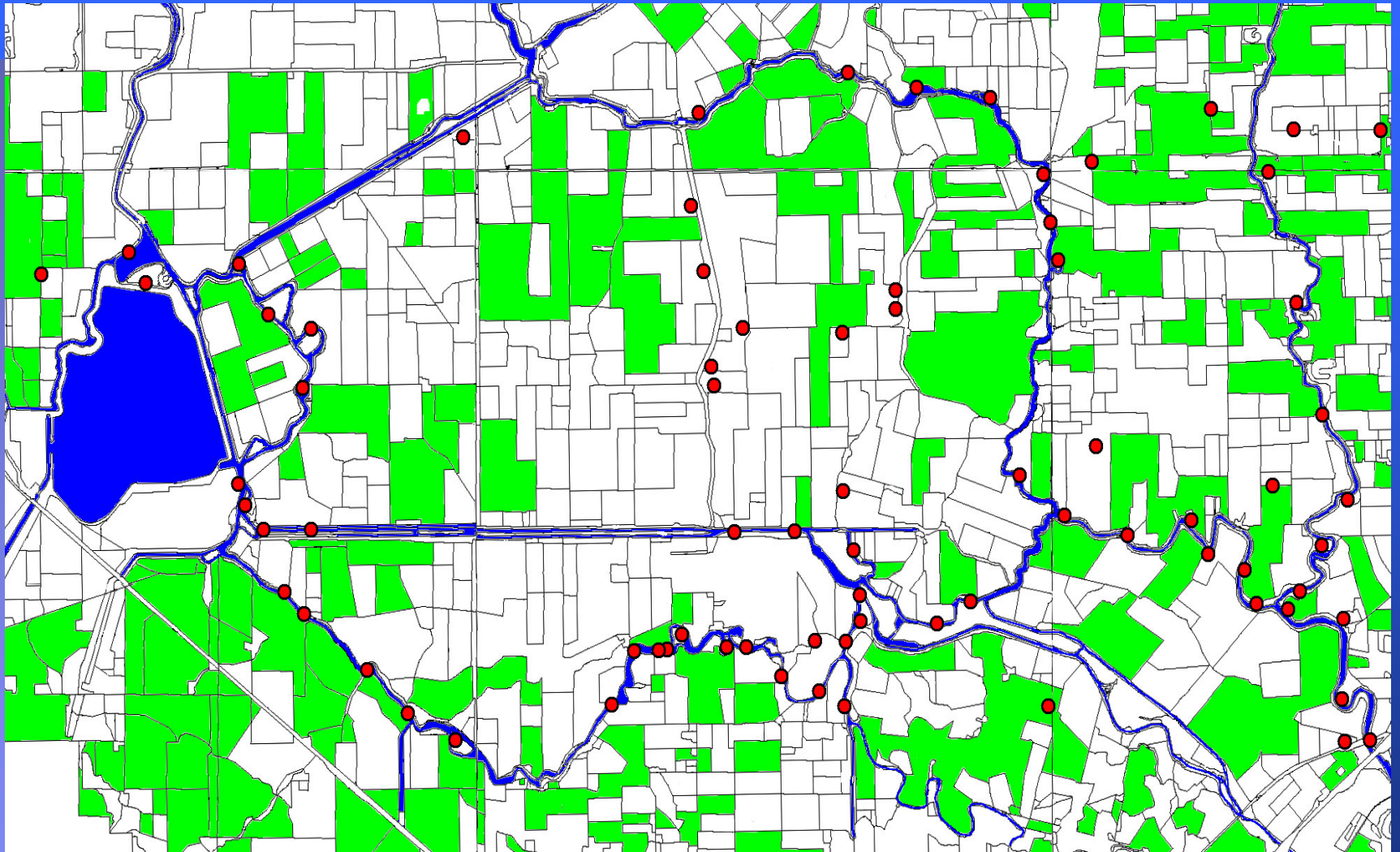
Swainson's hawk

State listed Threatened



“Swainson's hawks require large, open grasslands with abundant prey....”

California Department of Fish and Game

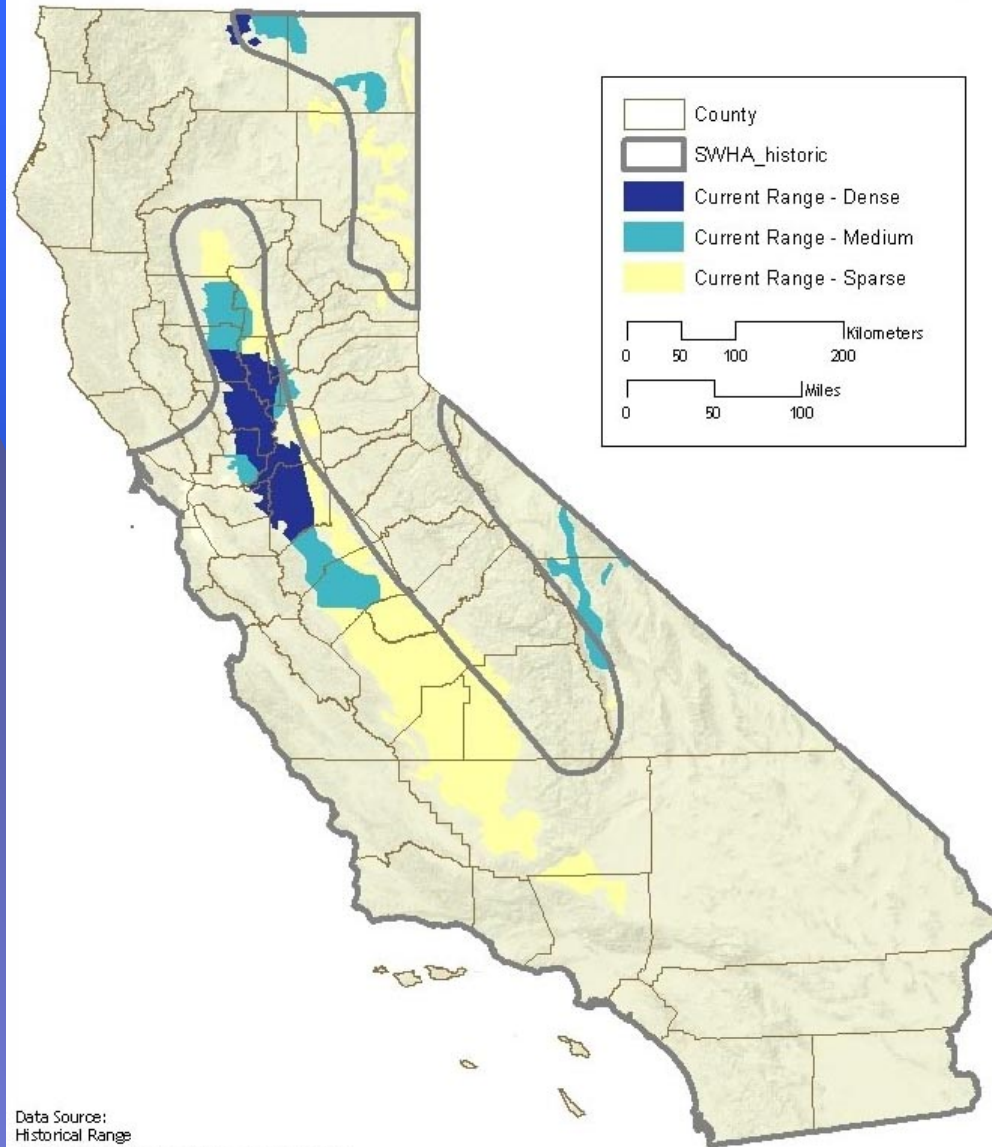


Abundance of Swainson's hawk nests and alfalfa in the South Delta

Myth of Habitat Enhancement

- **Much of the current range of the species is already likely at maximum density**
- **Enhancement is not always possible:**
 - Natomas Basin Conservancy preserves had just 102 acres of alfalfa out of 762 acres dedicated to Swainson's hawks**
- **Many counties grow a significant amount of alfalfa, but have few nesting SWHAs**

Swainson's Hawk Current and Historical Range



Data Source:
Historical Range
CA Dept. of Fish and Game (unpublished 1979)
Current Range
CA Dept. of Fish and Game (unpublished 2005)

Created: Sept. 2005, Randerson\SWHA_current&historical_range.mxd

Myth of effectiveness of forced relocation

- No data to support the effectiveness of preserving and “enhancing” lands away from the existing nest sites.**
- A reduction in the amount of foraging habitat and the number of nest sites will result in the reduction of the species nesting range and population size.**
- Mitigation lands preserved out of county and away from the impacted nesters will not benefit those birds, and will result in population declines.**

The greatest threat to Swainson's hawks in California is the continued reduction of foraging range and associated nesting habitat

