SUNSET VALLEY

Gaines Greenbelt
2025 Annual Report

Submitted by the
City of Sunset Valley

Introduction

The Gaines Greenbelt is owned and managed by the City of Sunset Valley as part of the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve (BCP). The Gaines Greenbelt provides habitat for the federally endangered Golden-Cheeked Warbler (*Setophaga chrysoparia*, GCWA) and a portion contains a public use hike and bike trail. Sunset Valley has signed a Managing Partner Agreement with the Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan (BCCP), The Sunset Valley – BCCP Managing Partner Agreement adds the Sunset Valley Gaines Greenbelt to the BCP Barton Creek Macrosite. The Managing Partner Agreement was officially filed in 2014.

The Gaines Greenbelt parcel is approximately 21.9 acres located in Travis County, Texas, at the northern edge of the City of Sunset Valley. The parcel's south side borders the back lot lines of residential sites, a hotel, and a Texas Department of Transportation stormwater pollution prevention facility located along US Highway 71/State Highway 290 West; east of the tract lies a larger-lot residential area; and, the remaining parcel borders the City of Austin's Barton Creek Greenbelt trail system (Appendix A).

Golden-cheeked Warbler Surveys

The City of Sunset Valley conducted a presence/absence survey in the Gaines Greenbelt between April and May 2025. No Golden-cheeked Warblers were detected during this period. The next survey, which will occur in 2027 will be conducted earlier in the season. The survey is attached in Appendix B.

Trail Management Activities

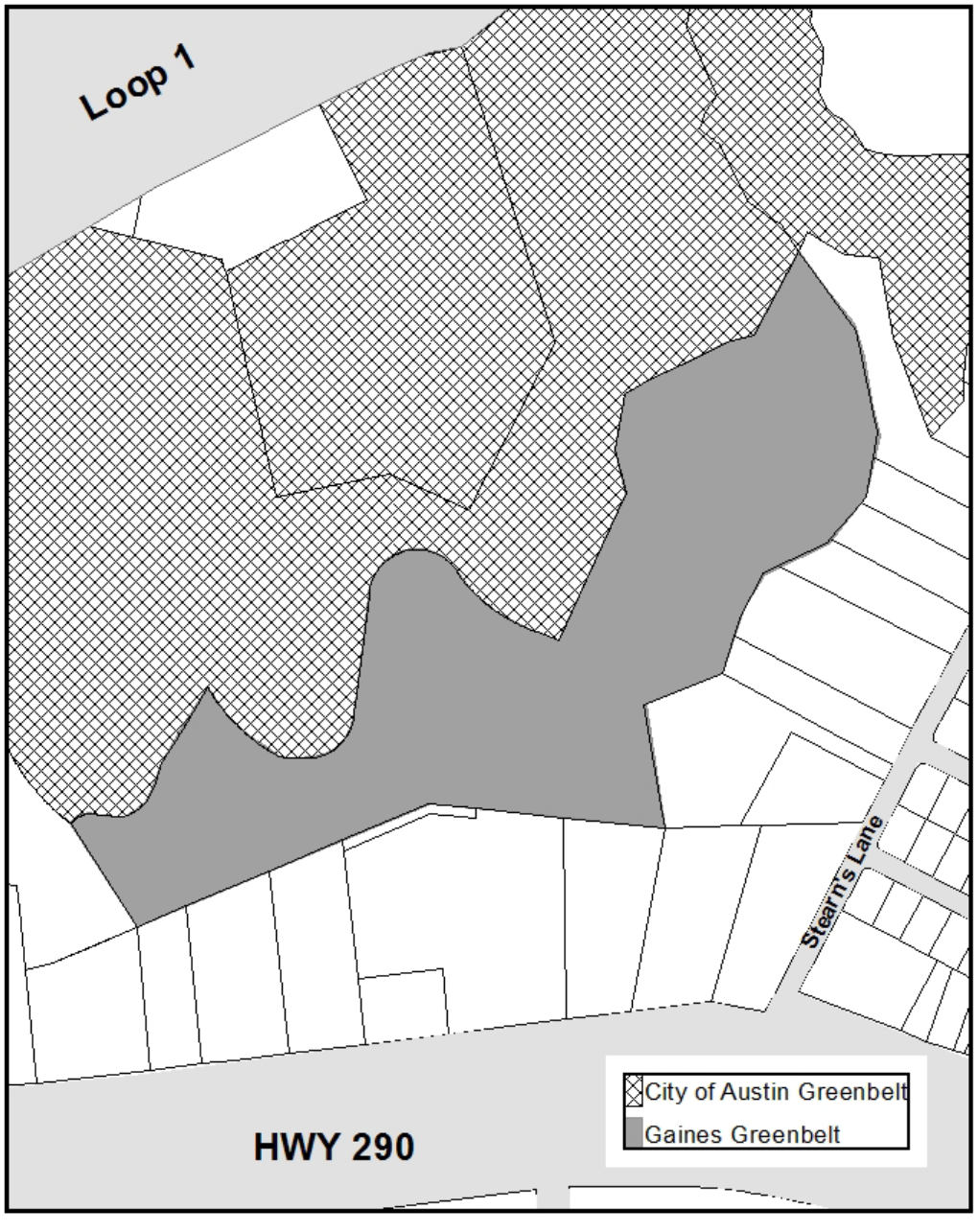
Hill Country Conservancy (HCC) oversees the operation and maintenance of the Violet Crown Trail within the Gaines Greenbelt. HCC will generate a separate report that details all trail management activities within the area of the Violet Crown Trail. The City routinely checks the trail for hazards and other concerns.

The City worked with HCC to remove brush and other hazards from the trail. HCC had their contractor remove debris and the City provided disposal/recycling services.

Budget

Budgetary expenditures only reflect the cost of consultants. The City of Sunset Valley does not track staff time regarding open space management. In 2025, the City spent $3,367.50 in consultant fees.

Appendix A
Map of Gaines Greenbelt



Appendix B

ENDANGERED SPECIES SURVEY SUMMARY

GAINES GREENBELT,

TRAVIS COUNTY, TEXAS

BOWMAN PROJECT NO. 070560-01-002

JUNE 5, 2025

1.0 GENERAL INFORMATION

PROJECT NAME:	Gaines Greenbelt Golden-cheeked Warbler Survey
COUNTY:	Travis County, Texas
LOCATION:	Approximately 0.5 miles north of the City of Sunset Valley between Mopac (Loop 1) and U.S. 290
USGS 7.5-QUAD:	Oak Hill, Texas
PROPERTY SIZE:	Approximately 21 acres
CLIENT:	City of Sunset Valley Public Works Department – Environmental Programs Attn: Carolyn Meredith 3205 Jones Road Sunset Valley, Texas 78745
SUBJECT SPECIES:	Golden-cheeked Warbler (GCWA, *Setophaga chrysoparia*)
HABITAT AREA:	GCWA – Approx. 21 acres of potential suitable habitat
SURVEY PERSONNEL:	Matt Haverland, Nick Gladstone
SURVEY DATES:	Arpil 11 – May 9, 2025
TOTAL SURVEY TIME:	Approximately five hours (Table 1)
NUMBER OF VISITS:	5

2.0 METHODS

This endangered species survey summary report documents the Golden-cheeked Warbler (GCWA) presence/absence surveys for the above-mentioned project. This summary report covers the approximately 21-acre City of Sunset Valley Gaines Greenbelt in south-central Travis County, Texas (Figure 1). Survey methods were consistent with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) protocol for GCWA presence/absence surveys (USFWS 2022).

As shown in Table 1 and Appendix I, five visits were made to the survey area, with all visits at least 5 days apart. Survey hours exceeded the minimum requirement of one hour per survey visit for 25 acres of potential habitat required for a complete survey. Weather conditions were acceptable for completing field surveys. Survey visits usually began within 30 minutes of sunrise or within 7 hours after sunrise. A large portion of the survey route (track) followed the Violet Crown Trail, which occasionally meanders out of the project area. During the fifth visit after no GCWA were detected during any survey, playback to elicit a response was performed following USFWS protocols.

Field observations were recorded with ESRI Field Maps Software. Matt Haverland, of Bowman is covered by USFWS permit number PER2333296 with Nick Gladstone operating under supervision of the same permit.

3.0 RESULTS

No GCWA were detected during the 2025 presence/absence surveys (See Figure 2). Previous surveys of the site (and surrounding areas) resulting in the following: the 2022 survey resulted in one male GCWA detected at the site, the 2020 survey resulted in two male GCWAs detected adjacent to the project site, and the 2018 survey resulted in zero observations. Bowman Consulting was not contracted to conduct surveys during the 2023 and 2024 seasons but Annual Report information pertaining to the Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan indicates surveys were not conducted (https://www.traviscountytx.gov/tnr/nr/bccp/reports). Prior surveys in 2014 made 13 detections over 5 site visits. Other bird species observed during the 2025 GCWA survey are listed in Table 2.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS

No GCWA were detected during the 2025 survey season. It is recommended that continued surveys are conducted in the future to confirm presence/absence, and that future surveys begin earlier in the season.

5.0 REFERENCES

Campbell, L. 2003. Endangered and threatened animals of Texas – Their life history and management. Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Wildlife Division. Austin, Texas. 127 pp.

USFWS Section 10(a)(1)(A) Scientific Permit Requirements for Conducting Presence/Absence Survey and Habitat Assessments for the Endangered Golden-cheeked Warbler (2022).

6.0 ATTACHMENTS

FIGURE 1.	Gaines Greenbelt Study Area
FIGURE 2.	Gaines Greenbelt Topographic Map
TABLE 1.	Survey dates, duration, personnel, and weather conditions for the 2025 Gaines Greenbelt GCWA presence/absence survey.
TABLE 2.	Birds observed on Gaines Greenbelt (Spring 2025).

7.0 SIGNATURES

PREPARED BY:



SIGNATURE

MATT HAVERLAND
ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENTIST
USFWS PERMITTED GCWA SURVEYOR
PRINTED NAME

MAY 30, 2025
DATE

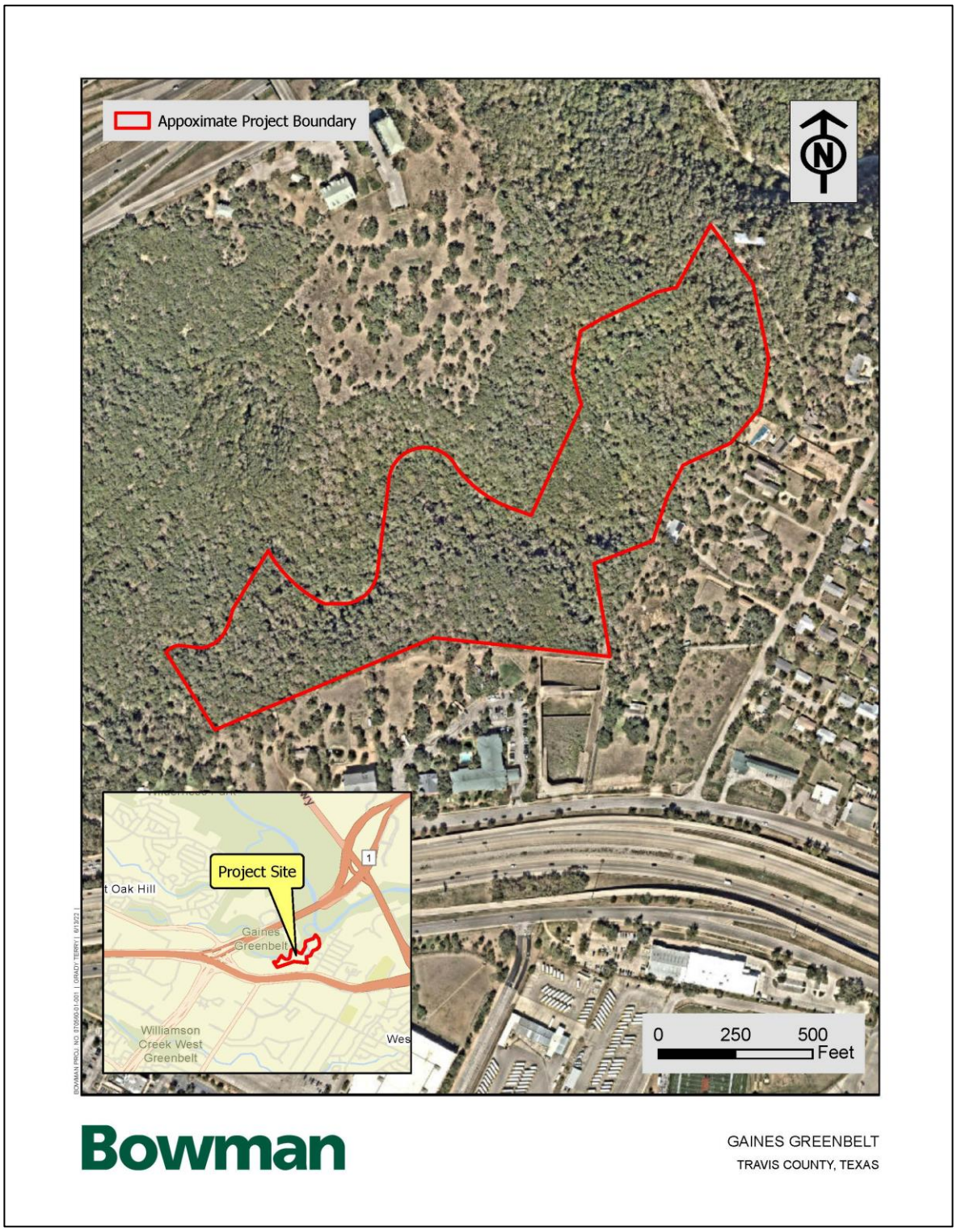


Figure 1. Gaines Greenbelt Study Area

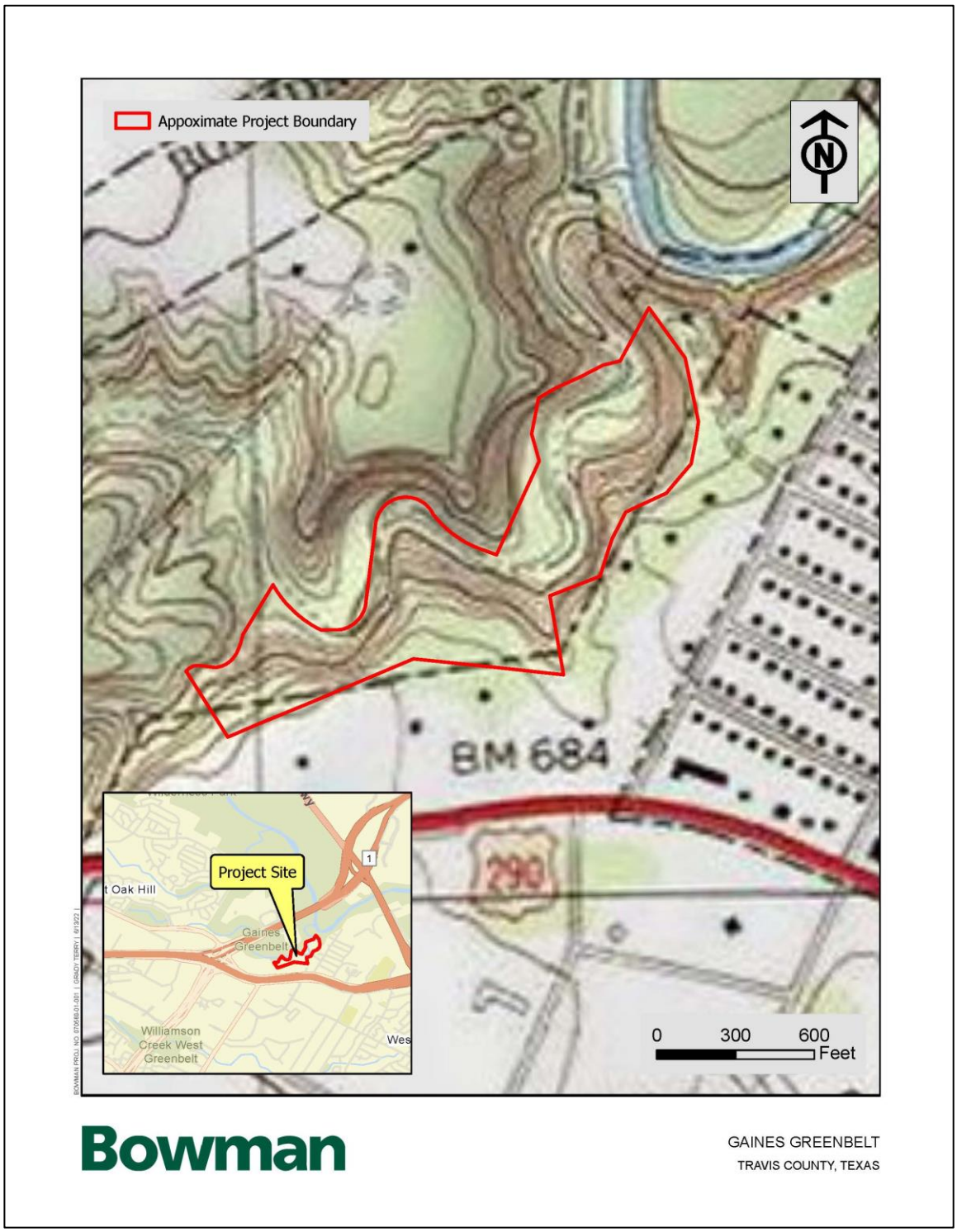


Figure 2. Gaines Greenbelt Topographic Map

TABLE 1. SURVEY DATES, DURATION, PERSONNEL, & WEATHER CONDITIONS FOR THE 2025 GAINES GREENBELT SURVEY

Date	Time		Temperature (°F)		Wind Direction		Wind Speed (mph)		Cloud Cover (%)		Personnel	Comments
	Start	End	Start	End	Start	End	Start	End	Start	End		
4/11/2025	9:30	10:30	70	74	N	N	5	5	0	0	M. Haverland	No GCWA
4/18/2025	7:35	8:37	70	72	N	n	12	14	50	50	N. Gladstone	No GCWA
4/27/2025	8:25	9:25	71	78	-	-	-	-	70	70	M. Haverland	No GCWA
5/2/2025	8:30	9:30	69	74	-	-	-	-	80	80	M. Haverland	No GCWA
5/9/2025	9:00	10:00	71	76	S	S	10	10	0	30	M. Haverland	No GCWA

TABLE 2. BIRDS OBSERVED ON GAINES CREEK GREENBELT (SPRING 2025)

Common Name	**Scientific Name**
Bewick's Wren	*Thryomanes bewickii*
Black-crested Titmouse	*Baeolophus atricristatus*
Black-throated Green Warbler	*Setophaga virens*
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	*Polioptila caerulea*
Canyon Wren	*Catherpes mexicanus*
Carolina Chickadee	*Poecile carolinensis*
Carolina Wren	*Thryothorus ludovicianus*
Downy Woodpecker	*Picoides pubescens*
Gray Catbird	*Dumetella carolinensis*
Lesser Goldfinch	*Carduelis psaltria*
Magnolia Warbler	*Setophaga magnolia*
Mourning Dove	*Zenaida macroura*
Nashville Warbler	*Leiothlypis ruficapilla*
Northern Cardinal	*Cardinalis cardinalis*
Painted Bunting	*Passerina ciris*
Red-eyed Vireo	*Vireo olivaceus*
Summer Tanager	*Piranga rubra*
White-eyed Vireo	*Vireo griseus*
Yellow Warbler	*Setophaga petechia*
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	*Coccyzus americanus*
Yellow-rumped warbler	*Setophaga coronata*