

Briefs 12/6/2006

## Blackbird loses protection bid

SACRAMENTO - The tricolored blackbird, all but gone from San Joaquin County, does not warrant protection under the Endangered Species Act, the federal government said in a decision announced Tuesday.

The black, red and white birds have declined over the decades as Central Valley marshlands have been drained or otherwise affected by development. More recently, however, the birds' numbers have rebounded from 154,000 birds in 2000 to 260,000 birds in 2005, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said.

The conservation group **Center for Biological Diversity** requested protection for the tricolored blackbird in 2004. In rejecting the group's petition, Fish and Wildlife officials said they are already trying to boost blackbird populations.

Those efforts have focused on dairy farms, where tricolored blackbirds typically nest in silage crops. Traditionally, these crops are often harvested before the blackbird chicks have fledged, but officials said some dairy operators are allowing the crops to stand until the birds have left.