

California Wildlife Habitat Relationships System
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
California Interagency Wildlife Task Group

FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCK

Dendrocygna bicolor

Family: ANATIDAE
B065

Order: ANSERIFORMES

Class: AVES

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

The fulvous whistling-duck nests irregularly in California in the Imperial Valley in dense wetlands of cattails along the south end of the Salton Sea (Remsen 1978). It is found in fresh emergent wetlands, shallow lacustrine and quiet riverine waters; it also feeds in wet croplands and pastures. Fairly common (but declining) in the Imperial Valley March to August and sporadic through winter (Garrett and Dunn 1981). Elsewhere in California, it is rare and irregular (McCaskie et al. 1979, Garrett and Dunn 1981), with most records from the San Joaquin Valley. According to Cogswell (1977) it is uncommon to fairly common (some years only) in the San Joaquin Valley, April to November.

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Feeds mostly nocturnally but also diurnally on rice, other grains, seeds, and green shoots of herbs. About 3% of diet is insects (Palmer 1976). Searches for food by walking over wet fields or in shallow water; swims in shallow water and takes food from surface, as well as by tipping; often makes shallow dives (Palmer 1976).

Cover: In California, usually rests by day in dense emergent wetland, and rarely perches in trees or uses wooded habitats (Cogswell 1977).

Reproduction: In California, nests in dense emergent wetland of cattails near the south end of the Salton Sea (Garrett and Dunn 1981), usually on high ground (Cogswell 1977). Formerly nested in dense emergent wetland of tules, and less commonly in rice fields, in the San Joaquin Valley (Palmer 1976).

Water: No additional data found.

Pattern: Prefers to nest and roost in dense emergent wetland near good feeding areas in shallow water or wet fields.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, circadian feeder, but principally active nocturnally.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Apparently migrates in California. Most of breeding population leaves September to February, and migrates to wintering areas in Mexico.

Home Range: No information found.

Territory: No information found.

Reproduction: Nests April to September in southern California (Cogswell 1977). Information below, mostly from Harrison (1978), pertains to other parts of North America. Monogamous, solitary nester, but often nests in high densities. Clutch size 8-16, but often several females lay in same nest, resulting in many more eggs. Single-brooded. Incubation 28 days. Precocial young are tended by both parents. A young bird reared by Meanley and Meanley (1959) first flew at 63 days. First breeds at 1 yr.

Niche: Nests often destroyed by farmers in other parts of North America. Nest predators include skunks, raccoons, opossums, and dogs. Susceptible to poisoning by pesticides used on crops. Susceptible to killing by hunters because of unwary behavior (Johnsgard 1975b).

Comments: Formerly nested along southern coast, in San Francisco Bay, and in San Joaquin Valley. Decline in California probably resulted from destruction of wetland habitat; a California Species of Special Concern (Remsen 1978).

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B065

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