

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

LONG-TAILED DUCK

Clangula hyemalis

Family: ANATIDAE

Order: ANSERIFORMES

Class: AVES

B097

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

The Long-tailed Duck is a rare, but regular, winter visitor along the entire California coast. Often found with flocks of scoters on estuarine and marine habitats, usually near rocky shores. Present primarily late October to early April, and very rare in summer. Vagrants occur at the Salton Sea, and on lakes and rivers elsewhere in the interior (Cogswell 1977, McCaskie et al. 1979, Garrett and Dunn 1981).

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: On wintering grounds, feeds primarily by diving for small crustaceans, mollusks, aquatic insects and small fishes. Also eats a variety of plant foods, including domestic grains. Probably dives deeper than any other duck; has been captured in nets as deep as 55-73 m (180-240 ft) (Bellrose 1976). Commonly feeds in water of moderate depth, even as shallow as 1.2 m (4 ft). In California, favors "rough water by the rocky coasts or fairly deep but calmer bays or coves" (Cogswell 1977).

Cover: Requirements as for feeding.

Reproduction: Does not breed in California. Circumpolar breeder along arctic coasts and inland, in tundra and tundra-like habitats. Usually nests on islands, either off the coast or in tundra ponds and lakes, but also nests on upland sites on tundra near water (Bellrose 1976).

Water: No additional data found.

Pattern: No additional data found.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, diurnal activity.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Individuals arrive in California in October, and depart in April, migrating to breeding grounds on arctic coasts.

Home Range: No information found.

Territory: On arctic breeding grounds, drakes display intense aggression among one another. In Manitoba, drakes defended feeding territories, which often did not contain the nest.

Reproduction: Pair bond established in winter or in spring migration; nesting usually initiated in June. Monogamous, nesting solitarily or near other pairs. Clutch size 2-11; in Manitoba, usually 6-8, average 6.8 (Alison 1975), and usually single-brooded. Incubation

averages 26 days. Precocial young are cared for by female only. Fully capable of flight at 29-35 days. Probably does not breed until second year in most cases (Alison 1975, Bellrose 1976).

Niche: Highly susceptible to entanglement and drowning in gill nets. Very few are shot in California. Inclement winter weather is an important source of mortality in the Great Lakes region (Ellarson 1956). Disease also may be a major cause of death. Important predators on eggs include herring gulls, common ravens, and especially parasitic jaegers (Evans 1970, Alison 1975). In Manitoba, predation was reduced when nesting near Arctic terns, which often attacked potential predators (Evans 1970).

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