

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

HOODED MERGANSER

Lophodytes cucullatus

Family: ANATIDAE

Order: ANSERIFORMES

Class: AVES

B104

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

Fairly common October through April in the Central Valley, Coast, Transverse, Peninsular, Klamath, and Cascade Ranges, and Modoc Plateau, and locally along the Colorado River and Salton Sea. At least 2 nesting records in northern California. Occurs usually on fresh or brackish water.

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Dives in shallow, often rapidly flowing water; also gleans on water surface. Eats small fish, crustaceans, frogs, aquatic insects, and rarely seeds, buds, and stems of aquatic plants (Bellrose 1976).

Cover: Uses riparian deciduous woodland bordering quiet ponds, streams, lakes, and marshes. Dives for cover.

Reproduction: Nests along shorelines in flooded trees, snags, or stumps. Uses woodpecker cavity, nest box, or rarely a hollow log.

Water: No additional data found.

Pattern: Uses ponds, small reservoirs, and rivers. Requires riparian vegetation, especially flooded trees and snags, for nesting.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong diurnal activity.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Migrates from breeding grounds in Pacific Northwest into California. Breeding and wintering grounds overlap considerably. No well-defined migration corridors observed. Migrates alone, in pairs, or in small flocks.

Home Range: No data found.

Territory: No data found.

Reproduction: Breeds late February through late June, with peak in March and April. Single-brooded, but may replace lost clutches. Average clutch 9-11 eggs, range 4-21 (Morse et al. 1969, Bellrose 1976). Female incubates, and cares for precocial young. From 148 nests in nest boxes, containing an average 10.9 eggs, an average 10.7 ducklings fledged. These eggs hatched at the rate of 90.7% (Bellrose 1976).

Niche: In some areas, competition for nest sites among hooded merganser, goldeneyes,

and wood duck results in mixed clutches. Predation on adults, eggs and young by raccoons, snakes, and minks has been reported. Shuns areas of human activity (Bellrose 1976).

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