

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

RED-SHOULDERED HAWK

Buteo lineatus

Family: ACCIPITRIDAE

Order: FALCONIFORMES

Class: AVES

B119

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

Locally uncommon to common yearlong resident the length of the state along coast, and in Central Valley. Uncommon, even in suitable habitat in western Sierra Nevada foothills. Fairly common resident in woodlands west of southern desert region (Garrett and Dunn 1981). Frequents low-elevation riparian woodlands, up to 1500 m (5000 ft), especially where interspersed with swamps and emergent wetlands.

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Forages mostly along edges of wet meadows, swamps, and emergent wetlands. In western Sierra Nevada foothills, feeds in early successional stages of valley foothill hardwood and valley foothill hardwood-conifer habitats. Diet highly varied; eats small mammals, snakes, lizards, amphibians, small or young birds, and large insects. Searches for prey from perches on trees, snags, and posts. Pounces from a perch, or glides and searches, mainly below tree canopy.

Cover: Primarily uses tree foliage in riparian deciduous habitats for cover.

Reproduction: Nests in dense riparian habitats. Builds a nest of sticks about half way up in a tall tree. Nest height averages 15 m (50 ft) (range 6-24 m, 20 80 ft). Nest located next to main tree trunk, or on old nests of squirrels, hawks, or crows; lined with strips of bark, dry leaves, and sprigs of evergreens (Call 1978).

Water: Nests near permanent water. Has been reported bathing (Bent 1937).

Pattern: Typical habitat includes dense riparian areas, with adjacent edges, swamps, marshes, and wet meadows for hunting.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, diurnal activity.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Mostly resident in California. Some northern populations migrate for winter.

Home Range: In Michigan, 42 breeding home ranges averaged 63 ha (156 ac), and varied from 7.7 to 155 ha (19-384 ac) (Craighead and Craighead 1956). In Maryland, home range averaged about 194 ha (480 ac) (Stewart 1949). In Michigan, 3 winter ranges averaged 339 ha (838 ac), and varied from 127-503 ha (313-1242 ac). One closely studied individual maintained daily range of only 43 ha (160 ac), which included frequented perches (Craighead and Craighead 1956).

Territory: Territory apparently same as home range. Displays territoriality against conspecifics, red-tailed hawks, and golden eagles (Brown and Amadon 1968).

Reproduction: Breeds February through July, with peak activity April and May. Clutch size 1-5 eggs, usually 3.

Niche: Old nests often used by long-eared owls. Population has declined in recent decades with loss of riparian habitats. Young may be preyed upon by great horned owls.

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