

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

FERRUGINOUS HAWK
Family: ACCIPITRIDAE
B124

Buteo regalis
Order: FALCONIFORMES Class: AVES

Written by: C. Polite, J. Pratt
Reviewed by: S. Bailey
Edited by: G. Ahlborn
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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

Uncommon winter resident and migrant at lower elevations and open grasslands in the Modoc Plateau, Central Valley, and Coast Ranges. Fairly common winter resident of grasslands and agricultural areas in southwestern California (Garrett and Dunn 1981). Casual in northeast in summer. Frequents open grasslands, sagebrush flats, desert scrub, low foothills surrounding valleys, and fringes of pinyon-juniper habitats.

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Searches for prey from low flights over open, treeless areas, and glides to intercept prey on the ground. Also hovers, and hunts from high mound perches. Cooperative hunting and ground pursuit of prey have been observed. Mostly eats lagomorphs, ground squirrels, and mice; also takes birds, reptiles, and amphibians. Population trends may follow lagomorph population cycles.

Cover: Roosts in open areas, usually in a lone tree or utility pole. Tolerant of heat; nest often unshaded.

Reproduction: No breeding records from California. Nests in foothills or prairies; on low cliffs, buttes, cut banks, shrubs, trees, or in other elevated structures, natural or human-made (Bent 1937, Olendorff 1973, Call 1978). Nest tree often isolated, or in transition zone to adjacent community (Smith and Murphy 1973). Sticks up to 2.5 cm (1 in) used to construct nest; dried manure also used (Olendorff 1973, Call 1978).

Water: No data found. Water requirements probably met from prey.

Pattern: Requires large, open tracts of grasslands, sparse shrub, or desert habitats with elevated structures for nesting. *B. regalis* wintering in Colorado avoided areas near urban development (Berry et al. 1998).

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, diurnal activity. In hot weather, often hunts only in early morning and late afternoon.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Migratory; generally arrives in California in September and departs by mid-April.

Home Range: In South Dakota, home ranges were estimated to be 17-117 km² (7-46 mi²).

Territory: In South Dakota, average territory size was estimated to be 5 km² (1.9 mi²).

Reproduction: Breeds from Oregon into Canada. Egg laying begins in April (Weston 1969, Olendorff 1973). Clutch size 2-6; mostly 4 (Olendorff 1973, Smith and Murphy 1973). Incubates about 28 days. Young fledge at 38-50 days (Olendorff 1973).

Niche: Tends to displace red-tailed and Swainson's hawks. Young may be preyed upon by golden eagles and great horned owls. Competes with the numerous avian and mammal species that prey upon small mammals. Urban development may contribute to loss of suitable wintering habitat in California.

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