

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

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RUDDY TURNSTONE

*Arenaria interpres*

Family: SCOLOPACIDAE  
B177

Order: CHARADRIIFORMES

Class: AVES

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#### DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

Fairly common in California in spring migration from late March to mid-May, and in fall migration from mid-July to late October. Uncommon between early November and late March, and rare and of irregular occurrence in summer (Cogswell 1977, McCaskie et al. 1979, Page et al. 1979). Prefers the rocky intertidal shores, and less commonly, the sandy beaches of outer-coast marine habitats. Forages commonly on piles of kelp washed onto the beach. Also occurs on tidal mudflats of estuarine habitats (Page et al. 1979, Garrett and Dunn 1981). Very small numbers occur fairly regularly in the Central Valley, at the Salton Sea, and around shallow lakes in the Great Basin in migration (McCaskie et al. 1979, Garrett and Dunn 1981).

#### SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

**Feeding:** Feeds by probing, jabbing, and overturning objects such as stones, shells, driftwood, mud crust, or kelp to catch the invertebrates underneath (Groves 1978, Johnsgard 1981, Fleischer 1983). During the breeding season, the main foods are dipterans (especially adult and larval midges), lepidopterans, hymenopterans, and spiders. Some plant material is taken early in the nesting season if invertebrates are not available. In rocky intertidal habitats in the nonbreeding season, takes a variety of crustaceans, worms, mollusks, and insects (Harris 1979). Occasionally eats small fish and vegetative material (Bent 1929). Also feeds on human refuse and the decaying carcasses of beached fish, mammals, and other animals (Harris 1979). Has been reported to prey on tern eggs when incubating terns are frightened from nests by humans (Bent 1929).

**Cover:** Requires undisturbed areas above tidal waters for roosting during the high tide period.

**Reproduction:** Nests in arctic regions on a variety of tundra substrates, ranging from marshy flats in the lowlands to well-drained hummocky slopes. In general, nests fairly close to wet areas. Nest may occur in shallow depression, but the overall area usually is well-elevated. After the breeding season, gathers in flocks on gravel beaches (Nettleship 1973, Connors et al. 1979).

**Water:** No additional data found.

**Pattern:** Uses a variety of tundra habitats for nesting. In nonbreeding season, typically occurs in the rocky intertidal regions of outer coast habitats.

#### SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

**Activity Patterns:** Yearlong, diurnal activity.

**Seasonal Movements/Migration:** Arrives on arctic breeding grounds in late May and early June (Johnsgard 1981). Juveniles fledge in late July and August and move from tundra nesting grounds to coastal gravel beaches, where some remain until early September (Connors et al. 1979). Autumn migrants arrive in central California beginning in mid-July, and the southward migration appears to continue through mid-September (Page et al. 1979). The main northward movement through central California occurs about mid-May (Page et al. 1979). Uncommon winter resident of California, and occurs only irregularly in summer.

**Home Range:** On Ellesmere Island in the Canadian arctic, a 240 ha (592 ac) area supported 12 pairs (Nettleship 1973). The highest density was 4 pairs in a 4 ha (10 ac) area.

**Territory:** Data on the size of individual nesting territory not found. Not territorial in winter in central California (Myers et al. 1979), but defended feeding territory in Costa Rica (Fleischer 1983).

**Reproduction:** Clutch usually completed by second week in June (Nettleship 1973). Probably monogamous; apparently there is a tendency for some clumping of nests (Beven and England 1979, Johnsgard 1981). Clutch size 4 eggs, and replacement clutches sometimes are laid. Incubation period 21-23 days, and both sexes incubate. Precocial young leave the nest within several hr of hatching, and are accompanied by both parents to favorable feeding locations. Female usually leaves the family well before the young have fledged. Young attain first flight at about 19 days (Johnsgard 1981).

**Niche:** Known to prey on eggs of ground-nesting seabirds that have been frightened from the nest site. About 50% of fledglings survive the first year, and average adult mortality is about 33% (Boyd 1962). Long-tailed jaegers and arctic foxes take eggs, chicks, and fledged young (Nettleship 1973).

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