

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

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MOURNING DOVE

*Zenaida macroura*

Family: COLUMBIDAE  
B255

Order: COLUMBIFORMES

Class: AVES

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#### DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

Common in a variety of habitats throughout the state, including croplands, pastures and other grasslands, open chaparral, Great Basin and desert habitats, open hardwood, hardwood-conifer, riparian, and low-elevation conifer. There is a general movement in fall and winter from northern latitudes. These movements are especially noticeable in northeastern California and in the northern sections of the southern deserts. Much less common in winter in cold parts of the state.

#### SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

**Feeding:** Feeds almost entirely on seeds of cereal grains, forbs, and grasses; occasionally on snails in spring; less often on insects. Obtains food from ground by pecking. For details see Browning (1959, 1962) and Grenfell et al. (1980).

**Cover:** Cover is provided by trees and shrubs and woodland and forest stands.

**Reproduction:** Nest is a loose platform of twigs on a horizontal limb or in crotch of tree, old bird nest, or (rarely) on the ground. Nests in conifers and deciduous trees. Nest height usually 1-6 m (3-20 ft) above ground.

**Water:** Drinks water once or twice daily (Grinnell and Miller 1944).

**Pattern:** Open woodlands, grasslands, croplands, and deserts all provide adequate habitat. Requires a water source nearby.

#### SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

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

**Seasonal Movements/Migration:** Resident throughout the state except at highest elevations. There is downslope movement in fall, and upslope movement in spring, in the major mountain ranges of the state. Also a general movement south from northern latitudes in fall from north of California, within the state, and into Mexico.

**Home Range:** In Missouri, Tomlinson et al. (1960) reported most feeding within 1.6 km (1 mi) of nests, indicating a home range of no more than 10 km<sup>2</sup> (4 mi<sup>2</sup>).

**Territory:** Territory 64-91 m (210-300 ft) in diameter in a moderately dense population in urban Missouri (Jackson and Baskett 1964). In Ohio, Mackey (1954) found average diameter of nesting territory to be 30 m (100 ft). In California, 3 to more than 40 pairs nest per 40 ha (100 ac) in valley foothill hardwood and valley foothill riparian habitats (VanVelzen 1974). Feeds outside nesting territory.

Reproduction: Breeds mostly from late January to late September (peak in May and June); in California can breed almost all year, depending on weather (Nice 1923). Raises 2-6 broods a year. Almost invariably lays 2 eggs per clutch (range 1-3). Usually breeds solitarily, but sometimes more than 1 nest in same tree. Male incubates much of day and female at night, for 14-15 days. Young fed seeds and crop milk by both adults during nestling period of 13-15 days (VanVelzen 1974).

Niche: Adults or eggs preyed upon by domestic cats, falcons and accipiters, snakes, and small mammals. Infection by *Trichomonas*, a protozoan, may be a significant mortality factor (Rue 1973).

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