

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

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FLAMMULATED OWL

*Otus flammeolus*

Family: STRIGIDAE

Order: STRIGIFORMES

Class: AVES

B263

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#### DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

A common summer resident locally (Winter 1974 Garrett and Dunn 1981) in a variety of coniferous habitats from ponderosa pine to red fir forests. Breeds in the North Coast and Klamath Ranges, Sierra Nevada, and in suitable habitats in mountains in southern California. Occurs in montane regions from 1830-3050 m (6000-10,000 ft) elevation; prefers low to intermediate canopy closure.

#### SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

**Feeding:** Eats almost exclusively insects and other arthropods (Ross 1969); mostly moths, beetles, and orthopterans. Hawks from a tree or snag, gleans from branches, trunks, or ground.

**Cover:** Roosts close to trunk of fir or pine tree; also uses cavities in snags or trees for cover.

**Reproduction:** Nests in cavity or woodpecker hole (usually northern flicker, occasionally pileated woodpecker) in aspen, oak, or pine snags or trees. Nest usually placed 1-12 m (3-40 ft) above ground (Bull and Anderson 1978). Occasionally nests in a burrow in a bank, or in a nest box. In the Blue Mountains of Oregon, Thomas (1979) estimated that minimum tree dbh used for nesting was 30.5 cm (12 in).

**Water:** No data found.

**Pattern:** Frequents montane forests, especially ponderosa pine; favors small openings, and edges and clearings with snags for nesting and roosting.

#### SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

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

**Seasonal Movements/Migration:** Migrates at night to winter from Mexico to Guatemala. Latest record for the state is in October, and the earliest spring arrival record is April (Winter 1974).

**Home Range:** Average home range of 2 males in the Sierra Nevada was 40 ha (100 ac) (Winter 1974). Marshall (1939) found 18 males on a 5.2 km<sup>2</sup> (2 mi<sup>2</sup>) site, and 4 males and 1 female on a 20 ha (50 ac) site. Breeding densities have varied from 3.2 to 5.2 males per 100 ha (247 ac) (Marshall 1939, Winter 1974).

**Territory:** Territory defended in May and June; seldom more than 274 m (900 ft) in diameter, and varying from 1.6 to 4 ha (4-10 ac). Territories distributed singly, or in small

groups, in open forest on flat or moderate slopes.

Reproduction: Breeds May through October; peak in June and July. Clutch size 2-5, usually 3-4. One brood per yr; rarely 2. Male feeds incubating female. May nest in loose colonies (Ehrlich et al. 1988).

Niche: Predators include spotted owls, other large owls, accipiters. Eggs and young may be preyed upon by squirrels, longtailed weasels, and other mammals. May compete for nest sites with screech-owls, American kestrels, and other secondary cavity-nesting species.

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