

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

NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL

Aegolius acadicus

Family: STRIGIDAE

Order: STRIGIFORMES

Class: AVES

B274

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

An uncommon to common resident found in many stages of most forest habitats, from sea level to the red fir zone. Common in mature riparian and oak habitats with intermediate canopy closure. Occurs through most of the state, excluding the southeastern desert regions. Breeding range includes Santa Catalina Island. Apparently much rarer in southern California (Garrett and Dunn 1981).

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Eats mostly woodland mice and other small mammals; also a few birds and arthropods; rarely amphibians. Perches and pounces on prey on ground; also hawks.

Cover: Roosts perched, or in a tree cavity, usually within a snag, in broken forest habitats.

Reproduction: Nests in tree and snag cavities and woodpecker holes (especially flicker). Nest usually 1.5 to 15 m (5-50 ft) above ground. Nest may be lined with moss, leaves, bark, or feathers; often no lining. Conifers preferred, but hardwood snags used also (Karalus and Eckert 1974).

Water: No data found.

Pattern: Frequents forest and herbaceous edges.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, nocturnal activity.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Makes altitudinal movements in response to weather conditions.

Home Range: In Minnesota, an individual was observed using 112 ha (280 ac) in fall, 31 ha (76 ac) of which was used only sparingly (Forbes and Warner 1974). Wintering individuals ranged over approximately 40 ha (100 ac) (Mumford and Zusi 1958).

Territory: No data found.

Reproduction: Breeds from early March through August. Clutch size 3-7; mean of 5.6. Eggs laid at 1-3 day intervals in April and May; incubated 21-28 days. Semialtricial young fledge at about 30 days.

Niche: Predators include great horned owls, great gray owls, spotted owls, and other large owls. Long-tailed weasels and tree squirrels may take eggs and young. Competitors include

screech owls and pygmy-owls.

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