

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

WHIP-POOR-WILL

Caprimulgus vociferus

Family: CAPRIMULGIDAE
B278

Order: CAPRIMULGIFORMES

Class: AVES

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

A rare and local summer resident in mountains of southern California. Thought to be a recent immigrant within last 20 yr (Garrett and Dunn 1981) to the San Gabriel, San Bernardino, San Jacinto, and Clark Mountains, although records from the 1800s exist (Grinnell and Miller 1944). In California, has been found on steep slopes in montane hardwood, montane hardwood-conifer, and mixed conifer habitats, as well as in montane riparian and pinyon-juniper habitats. Observed at Point Reyes, Marin Co. in 1986 (McCaskie et al. 1988). Apparently absent from California in winter.

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Feeds on flying insects, especially moths, caught in short sallies made from the ground, or from a perch in a tree.

Cover: Mostly provided by open oak and oak-pine woodlands. On Clark Mountain, inhabits mixture of pinyon pine and white fir. Seems to prefer hillsides and slopes.

Reproduction: Nest is a scrape on the ground in the litter of woodlands. Nesting was suspected in 1972 in San Jacinto Mountains (Small 1974), but nesting in California has not yet been confirmed (Garrett and Dunn 1981).

Water: Sometimes found near riparian areas in woodlands. Presumably meets water needs from food.

Pattern: Found in sparse and dense woodlands, often on steep slopes.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Crepuscular and nocturnal in habits. Uncertain if undergoes torpor.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Arrives in California from Mexico and Central America (Peterson 1980) by early May, and apparently mostly gone by mid-August. Casual in late fall and winter in southern lowlands (Garrett and Dunn 1981).

Home Range: No data found.

Territory: No data found. Pairs per 40 ha (100 ac) reported: 5.8 in a pitch pine-oak forest in New Jersey (Slack and Root 1980); 2.6 on a pine plantation in Indiana (Webster 1980); and 2 in a strip mine and deciduous woodlot in Tennessee (Nicholson 1980).

Reproduction: Suspected, but not yet confirmed to breed in California. Outside of California, breeding begins in early May. Pair nests solitarily. Two eggs incubated 17-20

days. Nestlings semiprecocial, and tended mostly by female (Harrison 1978).

Niche: Eggs and young preyed upon by mammals and snakes. Adults occasionally taken by hawks and owls (Bent 1940).

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B278

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