

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

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WHITE-THROATED SWIFT

*Aeronautes saxatalis*

Family: APODIDAE

Order: APODIFORMES

Class: AVES

B282

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#### DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

Fairly common to common throughout most of southern California. Occurs north in the Coast Ranges to southern Mendocino Co., in the Sierra Nevada and Cascade Range to Siskiyou Co, where recently reported to breed (McCaskie et al. 1988), and east of the Sierra Nevada north to the White Mts. Nests and roosts in crevices on rocky cliff faces, and sometimes on buildings. Forages widely over a great variety of habitats. In summer, less common north of about 38° latitude, and few nesting colonies above 1800 m (6000 ft) elevation. In winter, generally less common, especially in northern California, and mostly absent from the higher mountains, Great Basin, and colder deserts. Rarely seen in the Imperial Valley, and does not breed there (Grinnell and Miller 1944, McCaskie et al. 1979, Garrett and Dunn 1981).

#### SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

**Feeding:** Feeds exclusively on flying insects captured in long, continuous foraging flights over most terrains and habitats, usually high in the air.

**Cover:** Roosts in deep crevices in faces of rocky cliffs (Bent 1940, Grinnell and Miller 1944), and occasionally in similar sites on tall buildings.

**Reproduction:** Nest placed in deep crevice in face of rocky cliff (Grinnell and Miller 1944), usually high above the ground. Similar sites on tall buildings also used. There is a record of nesting in rough-winged swallow burrows (Bent 1940).

**Water:** No data found.

**Pattern:** Needs suitable nest site and roost site. Otherwise, shows little apparent habitat preference; ranges widely over most terrains and habitats, usually high in the air.

#### SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

**Activity Patterns:** Diurnal activity. Sometimes goes into torpor at roost in unfavorable weather in nonbreeding season (Hanna 1917, Bartholomew et al. 1957).

**Seasonal Movements/Migration:** Much of the breeding population departs for the winter, especially from the higher mountains, Great Basin, cold deserts, and northern California. Even in southern California, where large numbers remain in winter, the population is reduced (Garrett and Dunn 1981).

**Home Range:** Grinnell and Miller (1944) suggested that this species may have a greater daily cruising radius than any other bird in California.

Territory: Territoriality has not been reported.

Reproduction: Breeds from early May to mid-August. Nests in small colony. Clutch size usually 4-5; range 3-6. No information found on incubation or nestling periods. Young altricial, and probably tended by both parents, as in other swifts (Harrison 1978).

Niche: Most nest sites inaccessible; nest predation and disturbance probably negligible. Captured by peregrine falcons, sometimes in large numbers, and perhaps by other falcons. Colony uses a nest site for many years. Reportedly the fastest swift in North America.

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B282

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