

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

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BLACK-CHINNED HUMMINGBIRD

*Archilochus alexandri*

Family: TROCHILIDAE

Order: APODIFORMES

Class: AVES

B286

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#### DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

A common summer resident of riparian woodlands in coastal lowlands, foothills, and canyons of southern California. Occurs locally in desert areas, and along the Colorado River. Uncommon in the lowlands and foothills of central northern California, and in the Great Basin region of northeastern California. Prefers valley foothill and desert riparian habitats when nesting, and often enters adjacent scrub and woodland habitats to feed. Fairly common in valley foothill hardwood and valley foothill hardwood-conifer habitats. Occasionally nests in orchards. There are few documented, winter records in California. Unrecorded from the Channel Islands (McCaskie et al. 1979, Garrett and Dunn 1981), but there is 1 record from the Farallon Islands (DeSante and Ainley 1980).

#### SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

**Feeding:** Eats small insects, spiders, and nectar. Insects are gleaned from foliage or caught in the air. Nectar is taken from a wide variety of flowers while hovering.

**Cover:** Uses trees and shrubs for cover. Ranges into chaparral and arid woodlands near breeding areas (Grinnell and Miller 1944).

**Reproduction:** Nests in small, open cup placed on limb of understory tree or shrub in wooded habitat near stream or other water source. Nest height usually 0.9 to 9.1 m (3-30 ft) from the ground.

**Water:** Nest usually close to a water source. Bathes in water (Ehrlich et al. 1988). Nectar is a major source of water.

**Pattern:** Sparse to open riparian woodland preferred for breeding, and a variety of nearby woodland and shrub habitats used for feeding. Male breeding territory in southern California often on northeast-facing slope in canyon bottom, in tall, broken chaparral mixed with oaks, or in canyon-bottom clearing (Stiles 1973).

#### SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

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

**Seasonal Movements/Migration:** Arrives in mid-March and early April, and departs in September. There are few winter records. Upslope movement after breeding, to 2600 m (8500 ft) (Grinnell and Miller 1944); this is especially frequent in southern California.

**Home Range:** No data found.

**Territory:** In southern California, male breeding territory averaged 0.1 ha (0.25 ac) (Stiles

1973). In Arizona, Balda (1970) recorded 8 nests per 40 ha (100 ac) in oak woodland, and 21 per 40 ha (100 ac) in oak juniper woodland. In Santa Barbara, Pitelka (1951) found 41-130 nests Per 40 ha (100 ac).

Reproduction: Breeds from early April to early August, with peak activity in June. Promiscuous; female nests semicolonially. Usually lays 2 eggs (rarely 1 or 3), and sometimes raises 2 or 3 broods in a season in southern California (Cogswell 1949, Stiles 1973). Female incubates 13-16 days, and tends altricial young until fledging 21 days later (Harrison 1978). Female feeds young for several days after fledging (Johnsgard 1983).

Niche: Humming birds apparently have few predators. Greatest source of mortality probably unseasonable cold weather, which kills nectar sources, reduces insect densities, and increases energy demands.

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