

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

ALLEN'S HUMMINGBIRD

Selasphorus sasin

Family: TROCHILIDAE

Order: APODIFORMES

Class: AVES

B292

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

A common summer resident (January to July) and migrant along most of the California coast. Breeders are most common in coastal scrub, valley foothill hardwood, and valley foothill riparian habitats, but also are common in closed-cone pine-cypress, urban, and redwood habitats. Occurs in a variety of woodland and scrub habitats as a migrant. Although mostly coastal in migration, fairly common in southern mountains in summer and fall migration (Garrett and Dunn 1981), and a few occur regularly in the Sierra Nevada (Gaines 1977b). Very rare in fall, and rare to uncommon in spring, on the Farallon Islands (DeSante and Ainley 1980). The subspecies *S. s. sedentarius* is a common resident of the Channel Islands (except San Nicolas and Santa Barbara islands, where it is an occasional visitant), and of the Palos Verdes Peninsula, Los Angeles Co. (Garrett and Dunn 1981).

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Hovers to take nectar from a wide variety of herbaceous and woody flowering plants; also eats insects and spiders.

Cover: Cover is provided by shrubs and trees near foraging areas.

Reproduction: Often attaches nest to more than one lateral support on eucalyptus, juniper, willow, other trees, vines, shrubs, or ferns. Nest sometimes placed at end of branches of shrub or tree or on tree trunk; often placed in shade of overhanging cover. Nest usually 0.3 to 3 m (1-10 ft) from ground, but sometimes as high as 21 m (70 ft).

Water: Uses sprinklers, bird baths, and other human water sources for bathing and possibly drinking, but also obtains water from nectar and dew.

Pattern: Breeds in sparse and open woodlands, coastal redwoods, and sparse to dense scrub habitats. Widespread on the Channel Islands. Distribution highly dependent on abundance of nectar sources.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, diurnal activity.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Mostly winters in Mexico. Migrants arrive in late January and early February and mostly are gone by late July, but stragglers occur to late August and September. Rare in winter except in the range of the resident subspecies *S. s. sedentarius*, and on the coast just east of that range. South coast records in winter usually not identified to subspecies and may be either *S. s. sasin* or *S. s. sedentarius* (Garrett and Dunn 1981). Migration mostly coastal, but a few are recorded in the interior, especially in fall migration (McCaskie et al. 1979, Garrett and Dunn 1981), when some individuals follow the higher

mountains southward (Grant and Grant 1968).

Home Range: No data on home range found. Nest densities in Santa Barbara (Pitelka 1951a) and in Santa Cruz (Legg and Pitelka 1956) were 50-250 nests per 40 ha (100 ac).

Territory: Small, numerous feeding territories (Pitelka 1951b, Legg and Pitelka 1956), and larger more formally defined mating territories are defended.

Reproduction: Breeds from mid-February to early August with peak activity in April. Promiscuous; usually 2 eggs laid. In Berkeley, and probably in other areas, typically 2 broods per season (Johnsgard 1983). Incubation lasts 16-22 days; altricial young fledge about 22 days later. All nesting duties performed by female (Harrison 1978). Nests often clustered.

Niche: Hummingbirds occasionally are taken by hawks, small mammals, and snakes, but sudden cold periods, which kill food sources, pose the largest threat. Hummingbirds are important pollinators of many specially adapted flowers.

Comments: The status of this species in migration and in winter is uncertain in many areas, because of its similarity in all plumages to the rufous hummingbird. Females and immatures of the 2 species are nearly impossible to distinguish in the field.

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