

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

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NUTTALL'S WOODPECKER

*Picoides nuttallii*

Family: PICIDAE  
B302

Order: PICIFORMES

Class: AVES

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#### DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

A common, permanent resident of low-elevation riparian deciduous and oak habitats. Occurs in the Central Valley, Transverse and Peninsular Ranges, in the Coast Ranges north to Sonoma Co. and rarely to Humboldt Co., and in lower portions of the Cascade Range and Sierra Nevada. Occurs as a vagrant in the Owens Valley.

#### SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

**Feeding:** Forages mostly in oak and riparian deciduous habitats. Pecks, probes, drills for sap, and gleans from trunks, branches, twigs and foliage. Adult and larval insects, mostly beetles, may make up 80% of the diet. Also eats berries, poison-oak seeds, nuts, other fruits, and sap (Bent 1939).

**Cover:** Tree cavities and foliage provide cover.

**Reproduction:** Excavates nesting cavity from 0.6 to 18 m (2-60 ft) above ground. Nest located mostly in riparian habitat in dead (occasionally live) trunk or limb of willow, sycamore, cottonwood, or alder; rarely in oaks (Bent 1939, Miller and Bock 1972).

**Water:** No information found, but frequents riparian habitats.

**Pattern:** Frequents a mix of deciduous riparian and adjacent oak habitats. Requires snags and dead limbs for nest excavation.

#### SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

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

**Seasonal Movements/Migration:** May move upslope after breeding.

**Home Range:** A yearlong average of 7 home ranges in a riparian strip in Monterey Co. was about 0.8 km (0.5 mi) (Miller and Bock 1972). Reported density varied from 3-18 pairs per 40 ha (100 ac) (Raphael and White 1978).

**Territory:** Defends immediate area around nest, especially from ladder-backed and downy woodpeckers.

**Reproduction:** Breeds from late March to early July; peak activity April to early June. Miller and Bock (1972) reported average clutch size of 4.6 eggs; range 3-6 (N = 42). Male does much of incubating and tending of altricial young.

**Niche:** Adults taken by Cooper's hawks and goshawks. Raccoons, long-tailed weasels,

tree squirrels, and mice prey on eggs and young. Where range extends into desert riparian corridors, there is marginal overlap with the ladder-backed woodpecker (e.g., Morongo Valley, San Bernardino Co.) (Short 1971). A few hybrids are known from the vicinity of Victorville and Walker Pass (Garrett and Dunn 1981). Pair may remain on year-round territory (Ehrlich et al. 1988).

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B302

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