

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

WHITE-HEADED WOODPECKER

Picoides albolarvatus

Family: PICIDAE

Order: PICIFORMES

Class: AVES

B305

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

A common, yearlong resident of montane coniferous forests up to lodgepole pine and red fir habitats. Occurs in Sierra Nevada, Cascade, Klamath, Transverse, and Peninsular Ranges, and Warner Mountains. Occasionally found at lower elevations along North Coast and in interior areas (McCaskie et al. 1988).

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Forages on live, mature conifers with deeply creviced and scaly bark (Raphael and White 1984). Feeds in sparse, upper and middle foliage layers of conifers. Also forages on snags, pine and fir cones, and terminal needle clusters. Gleans, pries, scales, or chips cones open for seeds; gleans insects from needles or picks them from under bark flakes. Annual diet consists of 60% pine and other conifer seeds, 20% ants, and 20% other insects (Bent 1939, Koch et al. 1970, Ligon 1973).

Cover: Nest and roost cavities and trees provide cover. Prefers semi-open areas with large, mature trees, providing 40-70% canopy.

Reproduction: Nests in open conifer habitats, often near edges of roads, natural openings, or on edges of small clearings. Excavates cavity in large snag or stump at least 61 cm (2 ft) in diameter (at nest height); trunk with hard shell and soft interior preferred. Nests 2-15 m (6-50 ft) above ground (Raphael and White 1984). Up to 3 cavities excavated per pair per yr (Thomas 1979).

Water: Regularly drinks water.

Pattern: Frequents montane pine and fir forest habitats with large trees and snags, and tree/shrub, and tree/herbaceous ecotones.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, diurnal activity.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Yearlong, resident, but may move downslope in winter.

Home Range: No information found. Thomas (1979) speculated that maximum population density in Blue Mts. of Oregon was 12.4 pairs per 100 ha (5 per 100 ac).

Territory: Average territory of 6.1 ha (15 ac) reported in Blue Mts. of Oregon (Thomas 1979).

Reproduction: Breeds from mid-April to late August; peak activity mid-June through

mid-July. Average clutch 4 eggs; range 3-7. Incubation probably 13-15 days, by male and female.

Niche: May reduce local conifer seed crops. Cutting of logs at ground level reduces available nest sites in stumps. Abandoned cavities used by many species (Thomas 1979). Many mammals prey upon eggs and young; raptors prey on adults. Male and female tend to feed separately in winter. Drills less than most woodpeckers (Koch et al. 1970, Ehrlich et al. 1988).

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B305

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