

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

BLACK-BACKED WOODPECKER

Picoides arcticus

Family: PICIDAE
B306

Order: PICIFORMES

Class: AVES

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

Uncommon, yearlong resident from about 1900-2900 m (6000-9500 ft) predominantly in fir and lodgepole pine forest from the Siskiyou Mts., Mt. Shasta, and Warner Mts. south through the Cascade Range and Sierra Nevada to Tulare Co. (Grinnell and Miller 1944).

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Flakes away bark or drills into trunks of conifers to obtain larval and adult insects, mostly wood-boring beetles. Typically forages in snags, dying or insect-infested trees. Small amounts of fruits, mast, cambium eaten as well (Bent 1939).

Cover: Prefers relatively large trees for foraging and nest site. Canopy cover may range from sparse to dense (Short 1974).

Reproduction: Both sexes excavate nesting cavity 25 cm (10 in) deep; usually 3-6 m (10-20 ft) above ground, but occasionally to 25 m (80 ft) (Short 1974). In California, excavates nesting cavity in trunk of living conifer or snag (Raphael and White 1984).

Water: No information found.

Pattern: Frequents montane conifer forests, especially with lodgepole pine, firs, snags, windfalls, and burns. Present in areas some years, absent others.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, diurnal activity.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Most individuals probably yearlong residents, but some downslope movement occurs in winter (Gaines 1977b). Also may follow insect infestations of dead trees.

Home Range: In Michigan, Mayfield (1958) observed foraging at least 0.4 km (0.25 mi) from nest.

Territory: No data found.

Reproduction: Usually lays eggs mid-May to mid-June. Monogamous. Incubation probably 12-14 days. Clutch averages 4 eggs (range 2-6). Both sexes care for altricial young. Fledging age unknown (Bent 1939, Mayfield 1958).

Niche: Apparently attracted to forest stands with wood-boring insect infestations, including burns and windfall areas.

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