

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

WESTERN WOOD-PEWEE

Contopus sordidulus

Family: TYRANNIDAE
B311

Order: PASSERIFORMES

Class: AVES

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

A common to abundant summer resident in most forest and woodland habitats below 3000 m (10,000 ft) throughout California, exclusive of the deserts and Channel Islands. Nests most commonly in ponderosa pine, montane hardwood-conifer, mixed conifer, Jeffrey pine, lodgepole pine, eastside pine, red fir, aspen, and valley foothill riparian habitats. Common transient in wooded habitats throughout California, including the deserts and Channel Islands (Grinnell and Miller 1944, Garrett and Dunn 1981).

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Sallies from exposed perch for flying insects, especially flies and wasps. Feeds occasionally on berries and grass seeds; rarely gleans insects from foliage (Bent 1942).

Cover: Trees of almost any size serve as nesting and roosting sites. Uses trees, especially those with dead lower branches, as singing posts and foraging perches.

Reproduction: Open, cup nest of plant fibers, fine grasses, and dead leaves usually saddled on horizontal branch well out from trunk, 4-25 m (13-80 ft) above ground.

Water: "Does not seem to be attracted to water" (Grinnell and Miller 1944), but does use riparian habitat and drinks from streams (Hering 1948).

Pattern: Most numerous in open woodlands and forests with sparse to moderate canopy, which edge on meadows, streams, lakes, and other moist, open habitats.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, diurnal activity.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Arrives from South American wintering areas in late April (southern California) to early May (northern California). Transients still moving north in early June. Departs breeding areas by mid-August. Transients occur through September, rarely October. No reliable winter records (Garrett and Dunn 1981).

Home Range: No information found, but probably equal to territory. Density estimates range from 1-10 pairs per 40 ha (100 ac) in Colorado aspen-conifer habitat (Beaver and Baldwin 1975), to 18-33 pairs per 40 ha (100 ac) in Sacramento Valley riparian habitats (Gaines 1974a).

Territory: In Colorado, Eckhardt (1976) reported a territory averaged 1.2-1.6 ha (3-4 ac) over 3 yr. Territory size probably varies widely depending on habitat and foraging conditions.

Reproduction: Peak egg laying June and early July. Monogamous; incubation probably 12-13 days. Clutch averages 3 eggs (range 2-4); probably single-brooded. Both sexes care for altricial young. Fledging age uncertain (Bent 1942).

Niche: Distinguished from empidonax flycatchers by slightly larger size and lack of light eye ring. Little information available on natural history, considering abundance and widespread distribution.

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