

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

CASSIN'S KINGBIRD

Tyrannus vociferans

Family: TYRANNIDAE
B331

Order: PASSERIFORMES

Class: AVES

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

An uncommon to common, permanent resident, or migrant, in southern and central California. Distribution irregular in Mojave and Colorado deserts. Occurs from sea level to 1585 m (0-5200 ft) in the Providence Mts. (Grinnell and Miller 1944, Garrett and Dunn 1981). Frequents savannah and open woodland habitats with shrub and herbaceous understory; valley foothill hardwood, pinyon-juniper, Joshua tree, valley foothill riparian, and desert riparian. Also uses developed water sources in desert areas.

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Eats mostly flying insects, but eats more fruit than other kingbirds (Ehrlich et al. 1988). Hawks insects from perch in tree or top of shrub. Forages out over grassland.

Cover: Cover provided by foliage of taller trees and shrubs.

Reproduction: Places nest in tall tree, commonly near top, in open crotch or on horizontal limb. Nests in oak, cottonwood, pine, walnut, hackberry, sycamore, juniper, eucalyptus, or other species.

Water: No information found.

Pattern: Frequents savannah and open woodland with taller trees and shrubs for perching and nesting. Forages out over grassland.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, diurnal activity.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Yearlong resident or migrant. Resident along southwestern coastal region, occasionally north to Monterey Co. In spring and summer, ranges inland west of San Joaquin Valley and south from Alameda Co. Also found in Mojave and Colorado deserts and some Great Basin habitats, primarily in summer (Small 1974).

Home Range: No data found. In southern Arizona oak woodland, Balda (1970) reported 30 pairs per 40 ha (100 ac).

Territory: Highly territorial at nest site (Hespenheide 1964). In Texas, Ohlendorf (1974) observed that distances between nests in riparian habitat were a minimum of 206 m (675 ft).

Reproduction: Male performs aerial courtship display while singing (Wetmore 1920a, 1920b). Nests from late April through June (Dawson 1923, Miller and Stebbins 1964). Clutch averages 3.3 eggs (N = 15), range 2-4 (Ohlendorf 1974). Incubation 12-14 days, mostly by

female (Bent 1942). May raise 2 broods in southern part of range. Family group apparently maintained through August (Preble 1921).

Niche: May display interspecific aggression towards western kingbirds (Ohlendorf 1974), although probably reduced in California because of difference in time of nesting (Willet 1912) and nest site preference (Hespenheide 1964). Although aggressive also towards cactus wrens, house finches, and other species at nest site, Hespenheide (1964) reported that competition for food and breeding sites appeared negligible.

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