

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

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VIOLET-GREEN SWALLOW

*Tachycineta thalassina*

Family: HIRUNDINIDAE

Order: PASSERIFORMES

Class: AVES

B340

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#### DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

A common summer resident in most wooded habitats in the state, less common in shrub habitats. Breeds in forest and woodland areas throughout the state, including coastal and desert ranges, from coastal woodlands to pine forests (especially at middle elevations). Also breeds on cliffs and rock formations with suitable crevices in desert regions. An isolated breeding colony exists below Parker Dam (San Bernardino Co.). Uncommon in winter from Mendocino Co. and the Central Valley south. Rarely migrates through the Channel Islands.

#### SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

**Feeding:** Hawks insects from the air with prolonged, gliding flights. Feeds over fields, lakes and streams, and over forests and woodlands. Shows a preference for feeding over bodies of water.

**Cover:** Trees and snags in open woodlands and forests provide nesting and other cover. Cliffs and other rock formations also used locally.

**Reproduction:** Breeds in old woodpecker hole in tree or snag, in crevice in rocks, or sometimes in nest box or other human-made structure. Nest usually more than 1.5 m (5 ft) above ground. Often breeds in forests and woodlands close to water, but also breeds in drier sites.

**Water:** No additional information found.

**Pattern:** Inhabits sparse to dense stages of most woodland and forest habitats. Feeds over grasslands, croplands, meadows, brushy areas, rangelands, and bodies of water. Numbers related to availability of trees and snags with cavities for nesting.

#### SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

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

**Seasonal Movements/Migration:** One of the earliest migrants, arriving by late January. Numbers increase through the spring, and begin to diminish in September. Most have left the state by mid-October, but a few remain through the winter.

**Home Range:** Brooding pair apparently ranges widely in search of food (Grinnell and Miller 1944).

**Territory:** Apparently only the nest site is defended. Reported breeding density in California 63 pairs per 40 ha (100 acres) in oak (N = 1), 30 pairs in riparian (N = 1), and 3-17 pairs in conifer forests (N = 6) (Raphael and White 1978). In Arizona, density was 10 pairs

per 40 ha (100 acres) in fir-pine-aspen forests and 30 in ponderosa pine forests (Haldeman et al. 1973).

**Reproduction:** Breeds from April through August with peak activity in May and June. Pair may nest solitarily or in small, loose colonies, as determined by nest site availability (Bent 1942). Lays 4-7 eggs, usually 4-5; single-brooded. Incubation is 13-15 days. Altricial young are tended by both parents and fledge at 16-24 days (Harrison 1978).

**Niche:** Subject to infrequent predation from snakes, domestic cats and other small mammals, accipiters, and falcons. European starlings and house sparrows compete for nesting sites (Bent 1942). Removal of snags reduces nesting opportunities (Ehrlich et al. 1988).

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