

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

NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW *Stelgidopteryx serripennis*
Family: HIRUNDINIDAE Order: PASSERIFORMES Class: AVES
B341

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

A fairly common to common, summer resident except in southern deserts. Rare in spring and fall on the Channel Islands. Winters irregularly in interior southern California; especially at Salton Sea and Colorado River. Casual on the southern coast and in northern California in winter. Breeds in banks or cliffs bordering water from grassland to ponderosa pine habitats, from sea level to about 1800 m (6000 ft) elevation, but more commonly at lower elevations. In migration, occurs over many open habitats, usually in association with other migrating swallows (Grinnell and Miller 1944, McCaskie et al. 1979, Garrett and Dunn 1981).

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Hawks insects in long, cruising flights down water courses, and over fields and other open areas.

Cover: Cover during breeding season provided by a variety of habitats with suitable banks and cliffs for nesting. Uses open forests and woodlands of all successional stages, grasslands, and brushlands. In migration, forages with other swallows over croplands, grasslands, and other open habitats.

Reproduction: Breeds in burrow or hole in bank or cliff, usually near water. Excavates own burrow, or uses natural crevice or hole, or uses burrow made by other animal. Nest usually lined with grasses, rootlets, and other plant matter.

Water: Usually nests near water, but often in dry habitat as well. Water does not seem to be a prerequisite for breeding locality. No data found on drinking needs.

Pattern: Breeds in brushlands, woodlands, and forests, where streams and rivers have cut banks making nesting sites. Grasslands, meadows, pastures, and croplands all used as foraging habitats both in breeding season and in migration.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, diurnal activity.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Migrants arrive in California in late January from Mexico and Central America. Numbers increase through spring; largely gone from breeding areas after July. Most have departed California by early September, but a few remain to winter irregularly in the south, and occasionally in the north.

Home Range: No data found.

Territory: Lunk (1962) reported that only the immediate vicinity of the nest entrance was

defended, and that nests were as close as 4.4 m (14.5 ft) from one another.

Reproduction: Breeds from April into August with a peak in May and June. Monogamous; breeds solitarily or in scattered pairs. Clutch size 4-8, average 6 or 7. Single-brooded; incubation 13-16 days. Altricial young tended by both parents and fledge at 18-21 days (Harrison 1978).

Niche: Subject to predation from snakes and hawks (Bent 1942). Rodents and other small mammals prey on eggs and nestlings.

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B341

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