

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

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GRAY JAY

*Perisoreus canadensis*

Family: CORVIDAE  
B345

Order: PASSERIFORMES

Class: AVES

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#### DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

A local, uncommon resident in northern California. Found in the coastal region south to Mendocino and Lake cos., and locally in mountain regions in Trinity, Humboldt, Siskiyou, Lassen, Plumas, and Modoc cos. (McCaskie et al. 1979, 1988). Found in open and dense forests in the North Coast Ranges and in montane coniferous forests (Grinnell and Miller 1944). Frequents mixed conifer, Douglas-fir, redwood, red fir, Jeffrey pine, and lodgepole pine habitats. Recently found in Lassen Park area.

#### SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

**Feeding:** Omnivorous; eats insects, berries, eggs and nestlings of birds, carrion, camp scraps (Ouellet 1970). Feeds from the ground, fallen trees and logs, foliage, and bark. Gleans and hawks insects. Stores food in soil or in trees as a sticky, saliva-covered bolus made in the throat (Dow 1965).

**Cover:** Trees and shrubs in mixed conifer, Douglas-fir, redwood, red fir, Jeffrey pine, and lodgepole pine forests provide cover.

**Reproduction:** Nests in a conifer or shrub 2.4 to 30 m (8-100 ft) above ground, usually below 9 m (30 ft). Nest often placed on horizontal branch on south or southwest side of a tree, facing a forest opening.

**Water:** No additional information found.

**Pattern:** Inhabits open and dense stages of mature coniferous forests.

#### SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

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

**Seasonal Movements/Migration:** Apparently a yearlong resident in northern California, but may make altitudinal movements or follow food supplies.

**Home Range:** May equal territory size.

**Territory:** Rutter (1969) estimated 65-130 ha (160-320 ac) per pair in an Ontario spruce-tamarack forest.

**Reproduction:** Nests from March into July with peak activity in May. Pair nests solitarily. Lays 2-5 eggs, average 3-4. Incubation 16-18 days; altricial young tended by both parents. Fledges at approximately 15 days (Harrison 1978).

Niche: Little natural history information available for California population. Eats eggs and nestlings of birds when presented with the opportunity. Adults occasionally taken by large accipiters.

#### REFERENCES

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