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

YELLOW-BILLED MAGPIE *Pica nuttalli*
Family: CORVIDAE Order: PASSERIFORMES Class: AVES
B352

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

A common, yearlong resident of the Central Valley, and coastal mountain ranges south from San Francisco Bay to Santa Barbara Co. Also breeds locally on the coast in Monterey Co., and is casual in winter on the coast north to Sonoma Co. Rare visitor in Shasta Valley, Siskiyou Co. (McCaskie et al. 1979). Formerly more widespread in the south. Range contraction may be related to local eradication attempts (Garrett and Dunn 1981). Inhabits valley foothill hardwood, valley foothill hardwood-conifer, valley foothill riparian, orchard vineyard, cropland, pasture, and urban habitats.

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Omnivorous and opportunistic. Eats about 70% animal matter annually; insects, soil invertebrates, carrion, bird eggs and nestlings. Also eats acorns, seeds and grains, berries and other fruits. Gleans food from herbage and picks from ground; also hawks flying insects and searches under objects (Kalmbach 1927, Linsdale 1937, Bent 1946).

Cover: Oak savannah, riparian woodland, pastures and croplands with trees provide cover.

Reproduction: Builds a large, bulky nest of twigs, lined with mud, rootlets, and grasses; domed with a loose network of twigs (Harrison 1978). Nest placed 9.1 to 24 m (30-80 ft) above ground; mean 17 m (55 ft) (Verbeek 1973).

Water: Probably drinks (Grinnell and Miller 1944).

Pattern: Prefers open oak and riparian woodland, and farm and ranchland with tall trees in the vicinity of grassland, pasture, and cropland (Grinnell and Miller 1944).

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, diurnal activity.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Yearlong, resident. Sometimes wanders beyond usual range in winter.

Home Range: Verbeek (1973) reported home range in Monterey Co. averaged about 40 ha (100 ac) during breeding season, and expanded to about 607 ha (1500 ac) in nonbreeding season.

Territory: Also in Monterey Co., Verbeek (1973) found territory held year-round; averaged 1.2 ha (3 ac), range 0.6 to 1.9 ha (1.5 to 4.8 ac).

Reproduction: Pair nests singly or in small, loose colony. Breeds from late February to mid-July with peak activity in May and June. Lays 5-9 eggs, usually 6-8; incubated by female only, while male feeds her. Nestlings tended by both parents; fed up to 7 wk after fledging (Linsdale 1937, Bent 1946, Harrison 1978).

Niche: Preys on bird eggs and young.

Comments: Endemic to cismontane California.

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