

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

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BROWN CREEPER

*Certhia americana*

Family: CERTHIIDAE  
B364

Order: PASSERIFORMES

Class: AVES

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#### DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

A common to uncommon resident in montane habitats throughout the state, and in coastal conifer habitats south to San Luis Obispo Co. There is downslope movement to interior and coastal foothills and lowlands in fall and winter. A rare transient in southern deserts and on Channel Islands in fall and winter. May winter above normal breeding elevation in conifer habitats in the Sierra Nevada (Gaines 1977b). Prefers dense, mature stands of conifers, but also found in hardwood and hardwood-conifer habitats, especially in winter (Grinnell and Miller 1944, Garrett and Dunn 1981).

#### SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

**Feeding:** Gleans insects, their larvae, and other invertebrates, from bark of tree trunks and branches; also probes in crevices in bark. May eat some seeds in eastern U.S. Typically spirals up tree trunk feeding (Bent 1948).

**Cover:** Dense, mature stands of conifers provide cover. Hardwoods and riparian deciduous trees also used, especially in winter.

**Reproduction:** Builds nest behind loose bark, or rarely in tree cavity. Typically nests in old-growth incense cedar, coastal redwood, pine or fir, or snag. In Sierra Co., nest tree height averaged 26.5 m (85 ft), range 6-48 m (18-142 ft). Nest height averaged 2.2 m (7 ft), range 0.3-6.5 m (1-20 ft). Average nest tree dbh was 68 cm (26.6 in), range 35-164 cm (14-64 in) (Raphael and White 1984).

**Water:** No information found.

**Pattern:** Frequents dense, old-growth coniferous forests. Also uses deciduous riparian trees and other hardwoods, especially in winter.

#### SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

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

**Seasonal Movements/Migration:** May move downslope in winter. Appearance on lower slopes in southern coastal lowlands, in southern deserts, and on coastal islands may indicate limited latitudinal migration peaking in October (DeSante and Ainley 1980).

**Home Range:** Probably same as territory, but little information available.

**Territory:** No information found. Number of pairs, or individuals, per 40 ha (100 ac) reported as: 4-5 pairs in Great Britain (Jones 1972), 1.7 pairs in burned Jeffrey pine-fir stands and 3.6 in unburned stands in the Sierra Nevada (Bock and Lynch 1970), 24 in a Marin Co.

bay-Bishop pine-mixed forest (Stewart 1974).

Reproduction: Monogamous. Pair breeds solitarily from March to mid-August, with peak activity from mid-May to mid-June. Clutch averages 4 eggs; range 3-5. Incubation 14-17 days; by female at night. Altricial young fledge in 15-16 days (Harrison 1978, Ehrlich et al. 1988).

Niche: Subject to predation from snakes, accipiters and small mammals.

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Life history accounts for species in the California Wildlife Habitat Relationships (CWHR) System were originally published in: Zeiner, D.C., W.F.Laudenslayer, Jr., K.E. Mayer, and M. White, eds. 1988-1990. *California's Wildlife.* Vol. I-III. California Department of Fish and Game, Sacramento, California. Updates are noted in accounts that have been added or edited since original publication.