

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

ROCK WREN

Salpinctes obsoletus

Family: TROGLODYTIDAE
B366

Order: PASSERIFORMES

Class: AVES

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

A common resident throughout much of California. Restricted to rock outcrops, talus slopes, cliffs, banks, in a variety of habitats, mainly Great Basin, desert, chaparral, and perennial grassland. Populations at higher elevations apparently move downslope below winter snowcover, and northernmost populations may migrate southward. Absent along the immediate North Coast from Marin Co. to the Oregon border. Winters but does not breed in the Central Valley or along most of the South Coast. Common on Farallon and Channel Islands (Grinnell and Miller 1944, DeSante and Ainley 1980).

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Gleans and probes for insects, spiders, other small invertebrates from the ground, rocks, and crevices. Often runs while feeding (Bent 1948, Verner and Boss 1980).

Cover: Crevices and cavities within talus, rock outcrops, or rough, earthen banks provide refuge and foraging sites.

Reproduction: Nests under large rock, in cavity in cliff or bank, or in cavity or crevice among rocks.

Water: Smyth and Bartholomew (1966) did not observe drinking and concluded that water needs met from food. Smyth and Coulombe (1971) did not observe drinking at desert water holes.

Pattern: Inhabits rock outcrops, talus slopes, fractured cliff faces, and dry earthen banks in a variety of habitats.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, diurnal activity.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Populations at higher elevations may move downslope in winter, and northern populations may move southward to southern California coastal areas and coastal islands (DeSante and Ainley 1980, Garrett and Dunn 1981).

Home Range: No information found. Anderson et al. (1972) reported 25 breeding males per 40 ha (100 ac) in juniper-sage upland in eastern Oregon. Walcheck (1970) reported 5 pairs per 40 ha (100 ac) in pine-juniper woodland in Montana. Hensley (1954) found 5-8 pairs per 40 ha (100 ac) in the Sonoran Desert in Arizona.

Territory: No additional data found.

Reproduction: Breeds from February into September with peak from May into July. Clutch size 4-10, mostly 5 or 6. May rear 2, or more, broods per season (Harrison 1978). Both parents incubate and tend altricial young (Verner and Willson 1969).

Niche: Ogden and Hornocker (1977) found remains in 2% of the prairie falcon eyries sampled in Idaho. Usually found in more arid habitat than the canyon wren; the 2 species apparently come into contact only infrequently (Grinnell and Miller 1944).

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