

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

BEWICK'S WREN

Thryomanes bewickii

Family: TROGLODYTIDAE
B368

Order: PASSERIFORMES

Class: AVES

Written by: D. Dobkin
Reviewed by: L. Mewaldt
Edited by: R. Duke

DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

A common resident throughout the state except in subalpine conifer habitat in the Sierra Nevada and drier portions of the southeastern deserts. Principally a chaparral species; common in mixed and montane chaparral habitats. Also breeds commonly in pinyon-juniper habitat. May move outward from montane chaparral, particularly into riparian habitats, but also into borders of woodlands and coniferous forests with brushy understory. There is considerable variation in the habitats occupied by the 9 California subspecies recognized by Grinnell and Miller (1944). Wintering populations occur in southeastern lowlands. Resident on Santa Rosa, Santa Cruz, Anacapa, and Santa Catalina Islands.

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Feeds on insects, spiders, other small invertebrates; rarely on seeds. Mostly forages on lower limbs and branches of small trees and shrubs, stems of large herbaceous plants. Gleans primarily, although occasionally flycatches or hovers to pick prey from foliage. Mostly forages within the cover of dense, shrubby vegetation within 1.3 m (4 ft) of the ground (Grinnell and Miller 1944, Bent 1948, Cody 1974).

Cover: Seeks cover in dense shrubs, thickets, slash piles, fallen trees.

Reproduction: Nests in cavity in ground, snag, rock crevice, human-made structure, woodpecker hole, or in virtually any cavity (Harrison 1978).

Water: Not reported to drink by Smyth and Coulombe (1971) or Williams and Koenig (1980).

Pattern: Prefers natural cavity or rock crevice for nesting. Dense shrubs, thickets, slash piles used for cover and foraging.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, diurnal activity.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Mostly a resident all year, although a portion of populations in the north or at higher elevations may move southward and/or downslope in winter. Apparently a winter visitor in parts of southeastern lowlands.

Home Range: Presumably same as territory in sedentary populations. Cody (1974) reported density of 1.5 pairs per ha (0.6 per ac) in chaparral habitats on California mainland, and 3.0 pairs per ha (1.2 per ac) on California islands with comparable habitats. In the Sierra Nevada, pairs per 40 ha (100 ac) reported in American Birds (1948-1976) included: 12-56 (av 37, N = 5) in oak woodland; 2-215 (av 49, N = 8) in riparian, and 6-35 (av 21, N = 8) in

coniferous forest habitats (summarized in Raphael and White 1978).

Territory: Defends territory year-round. In dense riparian cover in Oregon, Kroodsma (1973) reported 28 territories averaging 2.0 ha (4.9 ac), range 1.3-3.8 ha (3.1-9.4 ac). In another, more open site 6 territories averaged 3.8 ha (9.4 ac), range 2.5-4.8 ha (6.1-11.8 ac). Cogswell (1962) reported territory averaging 2.3 ha (5.8 ac), range 1.0-6.9 ha (2.5-17 ac) in Los Angeles Co. chaparral.

Reproduction: Breeds from mid-February into early August, with peak from mid-May to late June. Clutch size 4-11, mostly 5-7 (Bent 1948). May be double, possibly triple-brooded some years. Incubation about 14 days, by female. Altricial young tended by both parents; leave nest at 14 days. Young then fed by parents for 2 more wk (Harrison 1978).

Niche: Preyed upon by sharp-shinned hawks and owls (Miller 1941), roadrunners and rattlesnakes (Bent 1948). Miller (1941) reported competition for nest sites with house wrens and plain titmice. Root (1969b) found Bewick's and house wrens interspecifically territorial in coastal California, with the latter excluding the former from established territories upon return from wintering areas in spring.

REFERENCES

- Bent, A. C. 1948. Life histories of North American nuthatches, wrens, thrashers, and their allies. U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 195. 475pp.
- Cody, M. L. 1974. Competition and the structure of bird communities. Princeton Univ. Press, Princeton, NJ. 318pp.
- Cogswell, H. L. 1962. Territory size in three species of chaparral birds in relation to vegetation density and structure. Ph.D. Thesis, Univ. California, Berkeley. 567pp.
- Grinnell, J., and A. H. Miller. 1944. The distribution of the birds of California. Pac. Coast Avifauna No. 27. 608pp.
- Harrison, C. 1978. A field guide to the nests, eggs and nestlings of north American birds. W. Collins Sons and Co., Cleveland, OH. 416pp.
- Kroodsma, D. E. 1973. Coexistence of Bewick's wrens and house wrens in Oregon. *Auk* 90:341-352.
- Miller, E. V. 1941. Behavior of the Bewick's wren. *Condor* 43:81-99.
- Raphael, M. G., and M. White. 1978. Avian utilization of snags in a northern California coniferous forest. U.S. Dep. Agric., For. Serv., Reg. 5, San Francisco. Prog. Rep. 18pp.
- Root, R. B. 1969b. Interspecific territoriality between Bewick's and house wrens. *Auk* 86:125-127.
- Smyth, M., and H. M. Coulombe. 1971. Notes on the use of desert springs by birds in California. *Condor* 73:240-243.
- Williams, P. L., and W. D. Koenig. 1980. Water dependence of birds in a temperate oak woodland. *Auk* 97:339-350. foraging behaviors of white-breasted and pygmy nuthatches in ponderosa pine habitat. Pages 301-329 in J. G. Dickson, R. N. Conner, R. R. Fleet, J. C. Kroll, and J. A. Jackson, eds. The role of insectivorous birds in forest ecosystems. Academic Press, New York. 381pp.