

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

TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE

Myadestes townsendi

Family: TURDIDAE
B382

Order: PASSERIFORMES

Class: AVES

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

A fairly common summer resident at about 1200-2500 m (4000-8000 ft) in montane coniferous forests with sparse to moderate canopy. Uncommon in inner northern coastal ranges from Siskiyou Mts. south to Lake Co. Fairly common throughout the Cascade-Sierra Nevada cordillera, in the Warner Mts., Modoc Co., Sweetwater and White Mts., Mono Co., the Panamint Mts., Inyo Co., and major southern California mountain ranges south to Santa Rosa Mts., Riverside Co. May nest on Clark Mt., San Bernardino Co. Preferred nesting habitats include Jeffrey pine, mixed conifer and ponderosa pine, with sparse to moderate canopy. May remain on breeding range in winter, or disperse. Apparently depends in part on availability of fruits, especially juniper and mistletoe berries. In the Sierra Nevada, a few even winter among junipers above breeding range. In sum, erratically uncommon to fairly common winter resident in breeding range, in wooded canyons below breeding range, and in juniper and pinyon-juniper habitats east of Cascade-Sierra Nevada cordillera, and on western edge of deserts. Rare transient and winter resident elsewhere in coastal interior and desert regions of state, including Channel Islands (Grinnell and Miller 1944, Gaines 1977b, McCaskie et al. 1979, Garrett and Dunn 1981).

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Omnivorous; eats insects, spiders, worms, other small invertebrates, berries and other fruits. Hawks flying insects and stoops on ground-dwelling prey from exposed, usually shaded, perches; also gleans from foliage and tree trunks. Arthropods dominate diet in spring and summer; berries and other fruits, especially juniper, mistletoe, manzanita, toyon, madrone and serviceberry dominate in fall and winter (Bent 1949).

Cover: Cover provided by trees and shrubs in conifer forests. Prefers forests with sparse to moderate canopy, high singing perches, shaded foraging perches, and openings between or under leafy crowns. Requires ledge or other cover over ground nest.

Reproduction: Builds open-cup nest of sticks, twigs, grasses, pine and fir needles, rootlets. Nest usually placed on bank beside a stream, road, or trail; in a cavity or crevice in a cliff; at base of a tree that has been bent over or burned on downward side; or on a stump or mass of upturned roots. Site typically shaded, well-drained, free of snow early in season, and protected from rain (Grinnell and Miller 1944).

Water: No additional information found.

Pattern: Breeders most numerous on openly forested slopes and canyons with suitable nesting sites. Trees often widely spaced and interspersed with montane chaparral, especially with berry-producing shrubs. Closely restricted to vicinity of berry-producing trees and shrubs in winter.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, diurnal activity.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Arrives in wintering areas in late September and October, and usually departs by April.

Home Range: Probably same as territory. Carothers et al. (1973) reported 3.3 pairs per 40 ha (100 ac) in spruce-fir habitat in Arizona. Johnston (1949) found 2.5 pairs per 40 ha in Idaho. Haldeman et al. (1973) reported 3 pairs per 40 ha in Arizona fir-pine-aspen forest.

Territory: Winter feeding territory of 25 individuals near Eagle Lake, Lassen Co., estimated by Lederer (1977a) as averaging 0.3 ha (0.7 ac), range 0.1-0.7 ha (0.3-1.7 ac). A year later, Lederer (1977b) found 6 winter territories averaging 1.1 ha (2.7 ac), range 0.8-1.3 ha (2.1-3.3 ac), held September to April. In Arizona, winter territory centered on a supply of juniper berries; in a good berry year, 4 territories averaged 0.7 ha (1.7 ac), range 0.6-0.8 ha (1.5-2.0 ac). In a year with reduced berry production, 3 poorly defined territories averaged 3.8 ha (9.5 ac), range 2.5-5.3 ha (6.2-13.2 ac). In both years, only a portion of the population maintained territories (Salomonson and Balda 1977). Paul (1964) stated that breeding territory was "perhaps a hundred yards of cutbank".

Reproduction: Breeding season begins late April to late May with peak egg laying in June. Monogamous. Clutch usually 4 eggs, range 3-5. Both sexes care for altricial young. Fledging age unknown (Bent 1949, Harrison 1978).

Niche: Winter diet sometimes all berries. May defend a berry source (Ehrlich et al. 1988).

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