

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

HERMIT THRUSH

Catharus guttatus

Family: TURDIDAE
B386

Order: PASSERIFORMES

Class: AVES

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

A widespread and common, summer resident in the Cascade Range, Sierra Nevada, and throughout northwestern California. In summer, inhabits dense conifer habitats of northern coast and montane habitats, mostly ponderosa pine, montane hardwood, montane hardwood-conifer, and lodgepole pine. Apparently breeders in California migrate out of the state in fall and are replaced by other races from the north (Grinnell and Miller 1944). These races winter in lowlands and lower portions of mountain ranges throughout the state. Most common wintering in northern, central, and coastal portions of the state; locally uncommon in the southern interior. Winters in conifer, hardwood, and hardwood-conifer habitats with dense understories, and in other dense, shrubby areas. Common in urban and orchard-vineyard habitats in winter, especially near sources of berries and other fruits (McCaskie et al. 1979, Garrett and Dunn 1981). Fairly common to abundant migrant on Farallon Islands (DeSante and Ainley 1980); also occurs on Channel Islands in migration (Grinnell and Miller 1944).

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Eats insects, spiders, worms, other small invertebrates. Also eats large amounts of berries, other fruits and seeds (especially poison-oak) (Beal 1907, Bent 1949). Usually forages on ground, under brush canopy (Grinnell and Miller 1944, Miller and Stebbins 1964), in bushes, and rarely in the air. Sifts forest litter with bill. Gleans and plucks berries from bushes while hovering or fluttering. Rarely flycatches.

Cover: Cover provided by stands of trees with mostly closed canopy and dense shrub understory.

Reproduction: Nest is an open cup 0.9 to 9 m (3-30 ft) above ground; usually placed in a well-shaded, small tree. Occasionally nests on ground. Often nests near water.

Water: Drinks freely (Airola 1980).

Pattern: In summer, usually found in cool, moist, forests with dense understory; especially on north-facing slopes and in shaded canyons.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, diurnal activity. Nocturnal migrant.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Breeders in California apparently migrate out of the state and are replaced in winter by individuals that breed north of the state. Winter visitants usually arrive by October and depart by May.

Home Range: Breeding density in Arizona was 1.1 pairs per 40 ha (100 ac) in

fir-pine-aspen, 8 pairs per 40 ha in ponderosa pine (Haldeman et al. 1973), and 10-13 pairs per 40 ha in spruce-fir forest (Carothers et al. 1973). In a bay-Bishop pine-mixed forest in Marin Co., Stewart (1974) found 10 males per 40 ha.

Territory: Carothers et al. (1973) sketched 3 territories varying from 0.6 to 1.0 ha (1.5 to 2.5 ac) in a spruce-fir forest in Arizona.

Reproduction: Breeds from early May to mid-August. Lays 3-6 eggs, usually 4; incubated by female for 12-13 days. Altricial young tended by both parents until fledging at 10 days (Harrison 1978).

Niche: Subject to predation by accipiters, snakes, domestic cats, and corvids.

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