

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

AMERICAN ROBIN

Turdus migratorius

Family: TURDIDAE
B389

Order: PASSERIFORMES

Class: AVES

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

A common summer resident throughout much of California, excluding southern deserts; even more widespread in winter, but mostly withdraws below snowline in mountains. Prefers open, wooded areas with moist, herbaceous understories. As breeders, most common in mountains and on the coastal slope; found in virtually all forested habitats, especially in sparse and open-canopied areas. Uncommon to absent from most scrub, chaparral, sagebrush, and desert habitats. Less common east of the Cascade Range and Sierra Nevada. In the Central Valley and adjacent foothills, nests mostly in riparian forests, irrigated croplands, and urban habitat. A few nest at oases in southern deserts. Common and widespread in winter throughout most lowland and foothill areas, but distribution and abundance vary erratically; numbers usually low in southern deserts (Grinnell and Miller 1944, McCaskie et al. 1979, Garrett and Dunn 1981).

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Animal foods predominate in the breeding season; eats mostly earthworms, caterpillars, beetles, many other small arthropods, and snails. In nonbreeding season, eats more berries and other fruits, seeds, seedlings and sprouts (Bent 1949, Martin et al. 1961). Searches visually for invertebrates on ground in moist, herbaceous vegetation, preferring short plant cover, and occasionally bare earth or forest litter. Plucks berries and other fruits from trees and shrubs. In deserts, often eats mistletoe berries and palm dates.

Cover: Trees and large shrubs provide roosting, nesting, and other cover.

Reproduction: Builds nest of mud, twigs, herbage, on horizontal branch or in crotch of variety of trees, or occasionally in a large shrub or on ground. Nest placed in open forest, often on edge of clearing; mostly 0.9 to 7.6 m (3-25 ft) above ground, but varies from 0.3 to 23 m (1-75 ft) (Harrison 1978).

Water: Bathes and drinks regularly and has been reported carrying water to nestlings (Bent 1949). Also requires water for mud for nest construction.

Pattern: Requires moist, open, wooded areas for nesting and roosting, with herbaceous understory or nearby clearings for foraging. Large shrubs may substitute for trees. Requires moist soil for earthworms, and mud for nest construction.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, diurnal activity.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Apparently not migratory in lower and warmer parts of the California breeding range. Mostly withdraws from higher mountains above snowline in

winter. May wander unpredictably throughout the lowlands, including large areas not occupied while breeding, apparently in search of berries and other fruits. Migrators from north of California are nomadic and occasionally winter in large numbers in the central, western part of the state.

Home Range: Home range in Massachusetts averaged about 400 m (1320 ft) around the nest (Hirth et al. 1969). In nonbreeding season, often flies long distances from nightly roost to forage. Gaines (1974a) reported 7-13 males per 40 ha (100 ac) in Central Valley riparian habitat. Haldeman et al. (1973) reported 20 pairs per 40 ha (100 ac) in a ponderosa pine forest, and 2 pairs per 40 ha (100 ac) in a fir-pine-aspen forest in Arizona.

Territory: Territory averaged 0.12 ha (0.3 ac), range 0.04 to 0.24 ha (0.11-0.60 ac) in Wisconsin (Young 1951, 1956). A rough sketch by Carothers et al. (1973) suggested 3 territories varying from 0.6 to 1.0 ha (1.5 to 2.5 ac) in an Arizona spruce-fir forest.

Reproduction: Breeds from early April to late August. A monogamous, solitary nester. Usually lays 4 eggs, sometimes 3 or 5, rarely 6 or 7. May raise 2 broods per season. Incubation lasts 11-14 days. Altricial young, downy at hatching, tended by both parents and leave nest at 14-16 days. Probably breeds first at 1 yr (Harrison 1978).

Niche: Often roosts communally. Once hunted widely for food. Numbers reduced by DDT poisoning in recent decades, especially in eastern U.S. (Ehrlich et al. 1988).

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