

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

NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD

Mimus polyglottos

Family: MIMIDAE
B393

Order: PASSERIFORMES

Class: AVES

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

A common to abundant, yearlong resident, primarily below 300 m (1000 ft) throughout much of California. Breeds in coastal region from Mendocino Co. south to San Diego Co., and throughout the Central Valley. Common on southern coast and interior, fairly common in southern desert areas. Less common and local north to Owens Valley, and apparently withdraws from these areas in winter. Found in a variety of lowland habitats, especially chaparral, valley foothill hardwood, valley foothill riparian, pinyon-juniper, desert scrub, and desert wash. Abundant in urban and orchard-vineyard habitats, especially in suburban areas with exotic plantings (McCaskie et al. 1979, 1988, Garrett and Dunn 1981). Range spreading north and west in recent decades following increasing human settlement and cultivation (Grinnell and Miller 1944, McCaskie et al. 1988).

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Eats mostly insects, earthworms, snails in breeding season; eats more berries and other small fruits in nonbreeding season (Bent 1948). Drops from perch to take prey on ground, gleans from foliage, and hawks prey from air. Picks fruits from shrubs and trees. Defends a winter territory containing berries and other small fruits. Frequents olive and other orchards and ornamental shrub plantings for foraging (Grinnell and Miller 1944).

Cover: Shrubs and small trees provide cover.

Reproduction: Nests in a shrub, small tree, or tangle of vines. Nest often less than 2 m (6 ft) above ground, occasionally up to 12 m (40 ft).

Water: Drinks regularly (Smyth and Coulombe 1971).

Pattern: Frequents shrubland habitats. Often most abundant in suburban and other human areas with exotic shrub and tree plantings. Requires open areas for foraging, and elevated perches for seeking prey on ground and for singing. Winter territory often centers around berry or other small fruit source.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, diurnal activity.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Mostly a yearlong resident but some individuals wander in fall and winter.

Home Range: Same as territory.

Territory: In a residential area of Pasadena, breeding territory averaged 0.4 ha (1 ac),

range 0.2-0.6 ha (0.6-1.4 ac); winter territory was smaller and centered on berry and other fruit source (Michener and Michener 1935). Hensley (1954) reported territory of 2.9 and 3.3 ha (7.1 and 8.2 ac) for 2 pairs in the Sonoran Desert in Arizona. Howard (1974) reported an average territory of 1.1 ha (2.7 ac), range 0.6-2.5 ha (1.5-6.2 ac) in Texas.

Reproduction: Breeds from mid-February to late September, with peak in May and June. Clutch size 3-6; 4 or 5 most common. Frequently produces 2 broods per season. Incubation 11-14 days, by female only. Young tended by both parents and leave nest at 12-14 days (Harrison 1978).

Niche: Interspecifically aggressive all year. Pair bond may last several years. Male and female may defend separate feeding territory in winter (Ehrlich et al. 1988).

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