

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

SAGE THRASHER

Oreoscoptes montanus

Family: MIMIDAE
B394

Order: PASSERIFORMES

Class: AVES

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

A common summer visitor and breeder east of the Cascade Range and Sierra Nevada, primarily in sagebrush and low sagebrush habitats. Occurs much less frequently in other Great Basin shrub habitats. Uncommon in winter in a variety of shrub habitats: in the San Joaquin Valley north to Merced Co., and occasionally farther north; locally in southeastern deserts; and rarely in southern coastal areas. Fairly common as a migrant in spring, and uncommon in fall, in southern interior; rare along southern coast. Breeds on level or moderately sloping sites with sagebrush of moderate density (Grinnell and Miller 1944, McCaskie et al. 1979, Garrett and Dunn 1981).

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Eats insects and other small, terrestrial arthropods; also eats berries, especially in nonbreeding season. Gleans prey from ground beneath and between shrubs and occasionally from shrub foliage; picks berries from shrubs (Bent 1948).

Cover: Uses moderately spaced shrubs for cover, especially sagebrush.

Reproduction: Nest well concealed in a low shrub (especially sagebrush) from ground level up to 0.9 m (3 ft), but usually less than 0.3 m (1 ft) above ground. Where shrub canopy is low, a ground nest is common. Requires some foliage for cover above nest.

Water: No data found.

Pattern: Breeds and feeds in sagebrush habitat on flatlands and moderately inclined slopes. Uses other similar shrublands less frequently.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, diurnal activity.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Arrives on breeding grounds in March and departs in September. Winter residents present mostly from October through April. Migrants occur mostly in February and March and September through November.

Home Range: In Wyoming, Hoppes (1978) found 2 territorial males on 12.3 ha (30.8 ac) of sagebrush flat. Jewett et al. (1953) recorded a density of 5 pairs per 2.6 km² (1 mi²) in Washington. Density in breeding season in a variety of habitats in Mono Co., varied from 0.8 to 24.7 per 40 ha (100 ac) (Weston and Johnston 1980).

Territory: Seven breeding territories in Idaho sagebrush averaged 0.96 ha (2.3 ac), range 0.64-1.64 ha (1.6-4.0 ac) (Reynolds and Rich 1978).

Reproduction: Breeds from early April to mid-August, with a peak in May and June. Clutch size usually 4-5 eggs, range 3-7. Incubation 13-17 days. Altricial young tended by both parents. Killpack (1970) reported an 11-day nestling period in Colorado.

Niche: Killpack (1970) noted nest predation by a coyote in Colorado. Apparently removes cowbird eggs from nest (Ehrlich et al. 1988).

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