

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

BENDIRE'S THRASHER

Toxostoma bendirei

Family: MIMIDAE
B396

Order: PASSERIFORMES

Class: AVES

Written by: D. Dobkin

Reviewed by: L. Mewaldt

Edited by: R. Duke, S. Granholm

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

A very local spring and summer resident and breeder in flat areas of desert succulent shrub and Joshua tree habitats in Mojave Desert area. Occurs primarily in San Bernardino Co. and western Kern Co. (Grinnell and Miller 1944, Remsen 1978, Garrett and Dunn 1981). A recent study reported breeders more widespread than recorded previously, including in the Colorado Desert (England and Laudenslayer 1989). Migrants appear in California in February. Most have left breeding grounds by August, although fall and winter records occasionally reported from breeding areas, and to the north and west (England and Laudenslayer 1989).

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Forages on ground on flat desert floor with scattered clumps of cactus, yucca, thorny scrub. In Arizona, commonly foraged in interspersions of open ground and dense shrubs with cholla (Phillips et al. 1964). Feeds on caterpillars, beetles, other insects, and other invertebrates. Pecks and probes in soil and litter (Bent 1948).

Cover: Seeks cover in stands of thorny shrubs and cactus in flat desert areas.

Reproduction: Nests in cholla, yucca, paloverde, thorny shrub, or small tree. Nest usually placed 0.2 to 6 m (0.5 to 20 ft) above ground, averaging about 1.5 m (5 ft).

Water: No information found, but lives in desert.

Pattern: Frequents flat desert areas with scattered stands of thorny shrubs and cactus for cover, foraging, and nesting.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, diurnal activity.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Mostly migrates to southern Arizona, southwestern New Mexico, or Mexico to winter.

Home Range: No information found. Emlen (1974) reported density in an Arizona desert area of 0.2 per 40 ha (100 ac).

Territory: No information found.

Reproduction: Breeds from late February into early August. Clutch size 3 or 4, rarely 5. May raise 2 broods, occasionally 3, per season (Bent 1948).

Niche: Little life history information available. A California Species of Special Concern. May be fewer than 200 pairs remaining in California population (Remsen 1978). Potentially serious threats to this species include harvesting of Joshua tree and other yuccas, grazing by domestic livestock, urbanization, and off-road vehicle activity within its limited breeding range (Emlen 1974, Remsen 1978).

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