

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

LE CONTE'S THRASHER

Toxostoma lecontei

Family: MIMIDAE
B400

Order: PASSERIFORMES

Class: AVES

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

An uncommon to rare, local resident in southern California deserts from southern Mono Co. south to the Mexican border, and in western and southern San Joaquin Valley. Occurs primarily in open desert wash, desert scrub, alkali desert scrub, and desert succulent shrub habitats; also occurs in Joshua tree habitat with scattered shrubs. Although formerly found north to Fresno Co., rarely recorded north of Kern Co. since the 1950s (Grinnell and Miller 1944, McCaskie et al. 1979, 1988, Garrett and Dunn 1981).

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Feeds on a variety of insects and other terrestrial arthropods; occasionally on seeds, small lizards, other small vertebrates (Bent 1948, Sheppard 1970). Mostly forages on ground by probing and digging in soil and litter with bill.

Cover: Uses scattered desert shrubs and cactus for cover; frequently saltbush and cholla.

Reproduction: Commonly nests in a dense, spiny shrub or densely branched cactus in desert wash habitat. Nest usually placed 0.6 to 2.6 m (2-8 ft) above ground.

Water: Apparently does not require drinking water (Sheppard 1970).

Pattern: Frequents desert washes and flats with scattered shrubs and large areas of open, sandy, or alkaline terrain in desert wash, desert scrub, alkali desert scrub, and desert succulent shrub habitats.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, diurnal activity. Avoids activity in hottest part of day in warm season (Sheppard 1970).

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Not migratory.

Home Range: Home range averaged 40 ha (100 ac) in saltbush-cholla scrub (Sheppard 1970).

Territory: Territorial throughout year. Nesting territory averaged 6 ha (15 ac) in saltbush-cholla scrub; defended most actively from early December to early February (Sheppard 1970).

Reproduction: Breeding season extends from late January into early June, with a peak from mid-March to mid-April. Clutch size usually 3 eggs, range 2-4. Frequently attempts 2 or

3 broods per yr. Incubation 14-20 days; fledging begins at 14-18 days (Sheppard 1970). Both sexes incubate and tend altricial young (Harrison 1978), which leave parents' territory at about 4 wk (Sheppard 1970).

Niche: Often exceptionally wary of humans; vulnerable to off-road vehicle activity, other disturbance, and removal of shrubs for agricultural or other development (Remsen 1978).

Comments: A California Species of Special Concern (Remsen 1978). Numbers have declined in recent decades

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