

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

NASHVILLE WARBLER

Vermivora ruficapilla

Family: PARULIDAE

Order: PASSERIFORMES

Class: AVES

B426

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

An uncommon to common, summer resident and migrant. Absent in winter except along coast where it is rare. Breeds in mountain ranges from the Sierra Nevada north, and in coastal ranges north of Napa Co. Breeding suspected but unconfirmed in mountains south of the Sierra Nevada (Garrett and Dunn 1981). Common spring, and uncommon fall, migrant in coastal and desert lowlands in south. Uncommon migrant in lowlands of northern California. Mostly breeds in ponderosa pine, montane hardwood, montane hardwood-conifer, mixed conifer, and montane chaparral habitats. There is postbreeding, upslope dispersal into higher elevation coniferous forests (Gaines 1977b). Found as a migrant in lowland woodland and riparian habitats. Rare to uncommon migrant on Channel and Farallon Islands (DeSante and Ainley 1980, Garrett and Dunn 1981).

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Apparently feeds almost entirely on insects; gleans from all canopy levels and hawks in air. In a Sierra Nevada mixed conifer-oak forest, strongly preferred feeding in black oak. After oak leaves matured, commonly used softer shrubs, especially deer brush (Airola 1979, Airola and Barrett 1985).

Cover: Cover provided by forests of oak and conifer with shrub understory and ground vegetation. Higher elevation conifer forests are used less in late summer. Migrants find cover in many lowland woodland habitats.

Reproduction: Nests on ground under dense brush in sparse to open woodlands.

Water: Has been observed drinking at desert waterholes (Smyth and Coulombe 1971).

Pattern: Nests in brushy openings of woodlands and forests. Forages in open to medium-density woodlands and forests.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, diurnal activity. Nocturnal migrant.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Usually arrives in California in April and quickly becomes common on breeding areas. Gradually leaves mountains in September. A few linger occasionally in coastal locations into early winter. There are a few records of overwintering along the coast.

Home Range: No information found.

Territory: Lawrence (1948) reported average territory as 0.2 ha (0.5 ac) in a

deciduous-coniferous forest in Ontario.

Reproduction: Breeds from mid-April to mid-August with peak mid-May through June. Pair breeds solitarily. Lays 3-5 eggs (usually 4); incubated by female for 11-12 days. Altricial young tended by both parents; leave nest at about 11 days (Harrison 1978). Young breed the following year.

Niche: Subject to predation from small mammals, accipiters, and snakes. Nests frequently parasitized by cowbirds (Verner and Boss 1980).

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B426

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