

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

VIRGINIA'S WARBLER

Vermivora virginiae

Family: PARULIDAE
B427

Order: PASSERIFORMES

Class: AVES

Written by: D. Gaines
Reviewed by: L. Mewaldt
Edited by: R. Duke, S. Granholm

DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

A rare to uncommon, very local, summer resident along the eastern slope of southern Sierra Nevada and in several desert ranges. Breeds in arid, shrubby, mixed conifer, pinyon-juniper, montane chaparral, and possibly montane riparian habitats from about 2200-2800 m (7000-9000 ft). A rare fall migrant (late August-late September) in brushy habitats along the coast from Los Angeles Co. south, and a very rare spring and fall transient in wooded habitats in deserts. Specific breeding localities include White Mts., Inyo Mts., Clark Mt., New York Mts., northeastern San Bernardino Mts. (upper Arrastre Creek and upper Santa Ana River drainage), along eastern slope of Sierra Nevada from Monitor Pass, Mono Co., south at least to Symmes Creek, Inyo Co., and probably other localities in the southeastern Sierra Nevada and higher desert ranges (Johnson 1976, Gaines 1977b, Remsen 1978, Garrett and Dunn 1981).

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Gleans insects and other invertebrates from shrubs and small trees; occasionally hawks flying insects.

Cover: Shrubs, small trees, and ground vegetation provide cover.

Reproduction: Builds open-cup nest of mosses, lichens, strips of bark, grasses, and rootlets on ground, in depression in dead leaves or loose soil. Nest usually concealed in shrubby cover at base of a shrub or tuft of herbage.

Water: No additional information found.

Pattern: Nesters frequent arid slopes with moderate to dense stands of tall shrubs with scattered trees. Characteristic shrubs include mountain mahogany, manzanita, serviceberry, and snowberry, trees include pinyon pine, limber pine and white fir. Also may nest in riparian thickets of willow or wild rose along streams in desert ranges (e.g., Wyman Canyon in White Mts., Mono Co.).

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, diurnal activity.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Usually arrives from Mexican wintering areas by early May and departs by August.

Home Range: In breeding season, home range probably same as territory. In southern Arizona, Marshall (1957) reported 23 pairs or singing males per 65.8 linear km (40.9 linear mi) of pine oak woodland.

Territory: One territory in Arizona was 91 x 136 m (300 x 450 ft) (Marshall 1957).

Reproduction: Egg laying occurs in May and June; peak probably in June. A monogamous, solitary breeder. Female builds nest and lays 3-5 eggs, usually 4. Incubation lasts approximately 12 days. Both sexes apparently care for altricial young (Bailey and Niedrach 1938, Bent 1953).

Niche: Jays and shrikes prey on eggs and nestlings (Bent 1953). Little life history information available.

Comments: Some authorities believe this species may be conspecific with the Nashville warbler.

REFERENCES

- Bailey, A. M., and R. J. Niedrach. 1938. Nesting of Virginia's warbler. *Auk* 55:176-178.
- Bent, A. C. 1953. Life histories of North American wood warblers. U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 203. 734pp.
- Gaines, D. 1977b. Birds of the Yosemite Sierra. California Syllabus, Oakland. 153pp.
- Garrett, K., and J. Dunn. 1981. Birds of southern California. Los Angeles Audubon Soc. 408pp.
- Johnson, N. K. 1976. Breeding distribution of Nashville and Virginia's warbler. *Auk* 55:176-178.
- Judson, W. B. 1898. Nesting of the Virginia's Warbler. *Osprey* 3:54-55.
- Marshall, J. T., Jr. 1957 birds of pine-oak woodland in southern Arizona and adjacent Mexico. *Pac. Coast Avifauna* No. 32. 125pp.
- Remsen, J. V., Jr. 1978. Bird species of special concern in California. Calif. Dept. of Fish and Game, Sacramento. Wildl. Manage. Admin. Rep. No. 78-1. 54pp. *Auk* 65:204-210.
- Smyth, M., and H. M. Coulombe. 1971. Notes on the use of desert springs by birds in California. *Condor* 73:240-243.
- Verner, J., and A. S. Boss. 1980. California wildlife and their habitats: Western Sierra Nevada. U.S. Dep. Agric., For. Serv., Berkeley. Gen. Tech. Rep. PSW-37. 439pp.

B427

Life history accounts for species in the California Wildlife Habitat Relationships (CWHR) System were originally published in: Zeiner, D.C., W.F.Laudenslayer, Jr., K.E. Mayer, and M. White, eds. 1988-1990. California's Wildlife. Vol. I-III. California Department of Fish and Game, Sacramento, California. Updates are noted in accounts that have been added or edited since original publication.