

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

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LUCY'S WARBLER  
Family: PARULIDAE  
B428

*Vermivora luciae*

Order: PASSERIFORMES      Class: AVES

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#### DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

An uncommon to common, summer resident and breeder along the Colorado River, fairly common locally in a few other desert areas, and rare near Salton Sea. It occurs in desert wash and desert riparian habitats, especially those dominated by mesquite; also ranges into saltcedar and other thickets. It is a very rare transient in other southern interior locations, and a rare fall transient along the coast, mainly in San Diego Co. but as far north as San Francisco Bay area (Grinnell and Miller 1944, McCaskie et al. 1979, 1988, Garrett and Dunn 1981).

#### SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

**Feeding:** Eats almost entirely insects gleaned from foliage, twigs, and branches. In riparian habitats along the Colorado River in Arizona, ate mostly eruciform larvae (60%) and coleopterans (32%) (Laudenslayer 1981).

**Cover:** Cover provided mostly by thickets of mesquite, also by saltcedar, paloverde, ironwood, and other riparian trees and shrubs.

**Reproduction:** Nest is a tiny cup; often hidden in a natural cavity, woodpecker hole, sometimes behind loose bark, in old verdin nest, or in bank. Nest usually 0.3 to 4.5 m (1-15 ft) above ground.

**Water:** Has been observed bathing at a desert spring.

**Pattern:** Frequents open to dense thickets of mesquite and other trees and shrubs in desert wash and desert riparian habitats.

#### SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

**Activity Patterns:** Yearlong, diurnal activity. Nocturnal migrant.

**Seasonal Movements/Migration:** Usually arrives in breeding areas in March and departs in August. Most coastal transients appear in September and October.

**Home Range:** No data found. In mesquite shrubland, singing males were spaced uniformly such that a strip about 180 m (600 ft) long "belonged to each" (Bent 1953).

**Territory:** Territory varied from 1.32 ha (3.30 ac) to 1.55 ha (3.88 ac) in honey mesquite shrubland along the Colorado River (Laudenslayer 1981).

**Reproduction:** Mostly breeds from April through July. Pair nests solitarily. Female lays 3-7 eggs, usually 4 or 5 (Harrison 1978). May raise 2 broods, or more, in a year (Bent 1953).

Niche: Little life history information available. Nests may be destroyed by woodrats, snakes, Gila woodpeckers; sometimes parasitized by brown-headed cowbirds (Bent 1953). One of the few warblers in North America to nest in a cavity (Ehrlich et al. 1988).

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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.