

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

COMMON YELLOWTHROAT

Geothlypis trichas

Family: PARULIDAE

Order: PASSERIFORMES

Class: AVES

B461

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

A common summer resident, fairly common winter resident, and transient. A common resident on central and southern coast; less common on north coast, where there are only 2 winter records north of Sonoma Co. (McCaskie et al. 1979). Less common as a breeder in interior, especially in Central Valley (McCaskie et al. 1979). Generally uncommon in interior in winter. Primarily a transient in desert areas, through Sierra Nevada, and other mountain ranges. Some remain to breed in deserts (Garrett and Dunn 1981) and Sierra Nevada (Verner and Boss 1980). Mostly breeds and winters in wet meadow, fresh emergent wetland, and saline emergent wetland habitats; also breeds in valley foothill riparian, and occasionally in desert riparian, annual grassland, and perennial grassland habitats. In migration, found in other moist habitats with low, dense cover. A fairly common transient on Farallon and Channel Islands, especially in fall (DeSante and Ainley 1980, Garrett and Dunn 1981).

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Eats insects, especially caterpillars and other larvae; also spiders and a few seeds. Gleans wetland herbage and shrubs (Bent 1953).

Cover: Mostly seeks cover in thick tangles in fresh and brackish wetlands. Occasionally breeds in dense shrubs and lush fields (Garrett and Dunn 1981). Many brushy habitats used in migration.

Reproduction: Nest usually placed on or within 8 cm (3 in) of ground. May be over water, in emergent aquatic vegetation, dense shrubs, or other dense growth.

Water: Inhabits wetlands, especially in summer and winter. May drink water.

Pattern: Frequents low, dense vegetation near water.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, diurnal activity. Nocturnal migrant.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Resident in southern California (Garrett and Dunn 1981) and San Francisco Bay area. Absent or uncommon in winter from interior breeding locations and from north coast. Occurrence on Farallon and Channel Islands suggests breeders from north of California migrate through, mostly in fall.

Home Range: Home range of a polygynous male was 1.4 ha (3.4 ac); 10 home ranges held by monogamous pairs averaged 0.5 ha (1.3 ac), varying from 0.3 to 0.7 ha (0.8 to 1.8 ac), in Michigan marsh and riparian habitats (Stewart 1953). Kendeigh (1945) reported that 7 pairs were spaced uniformly over 2.0 to 2.4 ha (5-6 ac) in a New York brushfield.

Territory: Probably equal to home range (Airola 1980). Brewer (1955) reported 5 territories averaged 0.2 ha (0.6 ac), range 0.1 to 0.4 ha (0.2 to 1.1 ac), in an Illinois swamp. Average territory size was 0.3 ha (0.7 ac) in Minnesota, and 0.7 ha (1.7 ac) in Michigan (Hofslund 1960). Foster (1977) recorded 86 territories on and near San Francisco Bay varying from 0.2 to 2.0 ha (0.6 to 4.4 ac). average 0.67 ha (1.5 ac).

Reproduction: Breeds from early April to mid-July, with peak activity in May and June. Usually monogamous; occasionally polygynous. Lays 3-6 eggs, average 4. Female incubates for 12 days. Altricial young tended by both parents until fledging at 9-10 days (Harrison 1978).

Niche: Subject to predation from snakes, accipiters, and small mammals. Parasitized frequently by brown-headed cowbirds (Bent 1953, Ehrlich et al. 1988).

Comments: *G. t sinuosa*, the saltmarsh common yellowthroat, is a California Species of Spacial Concern. Inhabits emergent wetland. Resident and summer visitant in San Francisco Bay area, and winters south along coast to San Diego Co. (Grinnell and Miller 1944).

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