

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

WILSON'S WARBLER

Wilsonia pusilla

Family: PARULIDAE
B463

Order: PASSERIFORMES

Class: AVES

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

A common migrant and summer visitor the length of the state. Frequents coastal belt and higher mountains of interior, primarily in thickets associated with moisture (Brown et al. 1979). Breeds in aspen and montane riparian habitats up to lodgepole pine, and in coastal valley foothill riparian habitats. In migration, found in almost all woodland and shrub habitats. Common in fall and abundant in spring on Farallon Islands (DeSante and Ainley 1980). Uncommon in southern mountains and locally common on southern coast in summer (Garrett and Dunn 1981). More common as a breeder in the north. Absent in breeding season from eastern and southern deserts, floor of Central Valley, and Modoc Plateau (Small 1974). A common to abundant migrant in lowlands throughout the state in spring, and in mountains as well as lowlands in fall. Rare in winter along coast and interior.

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Mostly eats insects gleaned from foliage low in canopy or in understory. Also flycatches in lower canopy. Eats small amounts of seeds, berries, and other fruits.

Cover: Riparian willow, alder, and other shrub thickets provide cover in breeding season. Woodlands and forests with shrub understory, and chaparral habitats, provide cover in migration.

Reproduction: Nests near water or wet meadow, usually on ground under dense shrub cover, but sometimes up to 0.9 m (3 ft) above ground in dense shrubs.

Water: Observed drinking at a desert waterhole in migration (Smyth and Coulombe 1971).

Pattern: Frequents coast and mountain habitats providing dense shrubs near water in summer. Other brush and woodland habitats may be used in migration.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, diurnal activity. Nocturnal migrant.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: The major wave of migrants from Mexico arrives in late April and early May. Fall migration is most evident in late August and early September. Wintering individuals reported occasionally, mostly on southern coast.

Home Range: In an oak-bay-laurel habitat in Marin Co., Stewart (1973b) found individuals ranging 125-300 m (410-984 ft) from the nest.

Territory: Stewart (1973b) reported 24 territories averaging 0.5 ha (1.3 ac), varying from 0.2 to 1.3 ha (0.5 to 3.2ac).

Reproduction: Breeds from late April into early August, with peak activity in June. Monogamous; lays 4-6 eggs, usually 5. Female incubates 11-13 days. Altricial young tended by both parents until fledging at 10-13 days (Harrison 1978).

Niche: Subject to predation from accipiters, small mammals, and snakes. Brown-headed cowbirds regularly parasitize this species, and are responsible in part for extirpation in many formerly occupied lowland areas (Garrett and Dunn 1981).

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