

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

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SUMMER TANAGER  
Family: THRAUPIDAE  
B469

*Piranga rubra*  
Order: PASSERIFORMES

Class: AVES

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#### DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

An uncommon (formerly common) summer resident and breeder in desert riparian habitat along lower Colorado River; also occurs very locally elsewhere in southern California deserts. Found in additional desert and other localities in migration. Breeds in mature, desert riparian habitat dominated by cottonwoods and willows (Grinnell and Miller 1944, McCaskie et al. 1979, 1988, Garrett and Dunn 1981).

#### SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

**Feeding:** Eats insects, spiders, and small fruits. Gleans from foliage and bark, and hawks flying insects. Eats many bees and wasps; often takes larvae from hives and nests (Bent 1958).

**Cover:** Cottonwoods and willows, especially older, dense stands along rivers and streams, provide nesting, feeding, and other cover.

**Reproduction:** Builds nest 3-6 m (10-20 ft) above ground on a large, horizontal limb of a cottonwood or willow or other riparian deciduous trees.

**Water:** No additional information found.

**Pattern:** Frequents cottonwood-willow associations of riparian habitats for breeding, feeding, cover, and other activities.

#### SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

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

**Seasonal Movements/Migration:** Arrives on summer breeding grounds in April and usually departs by September. Transients occur elsewhere in interior mostly in May and June and September into November. Occurs along coast rarely but regularly from September to March and May to June.

**Home Range:** No data found.

**Territory:** In deciduous forest and edge habitat in Kansas, Fitch and Fitch (1955) estimated territory at 1.7 ha (4.2 ac). May hold a feeding territory in winter (Ehrlich et al. 1988).

**Reproduction:** Breeding season lasts from May into early August with a peak in June. Clutch size 3-5, usually 4 (Bent 1958). Incubation apparently about 12 days (Terres 1980). Altricial young tended by both parents.

Niche: A California Species of Special Concern. Much less common now than in the 1940s, primarily because of loss and fragmentation of mature cottonwood and willow stands, especially along the Colorado River (Grinnell and Miller 1944, Remsen 1978).

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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.