

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

WOOD STORK

Mycteria americana

Family: CICONIIDAE
B603

Order: CICONIIFORMES

Class: AVES

Written by: T. Kucera, 1998

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, SEASONALITY

The wood stork is a locally common post-breeding visitor (several hundred birds) from late May to October at the south end of the Salton Sea (Small 1994). A small resident population also occurs at the San Diego Wild Animal Park in San Diego County. Numbers appear to have declined in California since the 1950s. According to Small (1994), most birds in California are immatures.

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Feeds largely on fish in freshwater and saltwater sloughs, lagoons, shallow ponds, and marshes (Ehrlich et al. 1988, Small 1994). Forages by moving its open bill in the water until contacting a prey item, and quickly snapping the bill closed. Moves its feet frequently, presumably to move fish (Ehrlich et al. 1988).

Cover: Open, shallow water for wading provides cover.

Reproduction: Nests colonially, with up to 25 nests in a tree, along the Atlantic coast from South Carolina to Texas, and along the Pacific Coast from northern Mexico, into Central and South America (Coulter and Bryan 1994, Rodgers and Schwikert 1997).

Water: A wading bird, always associated with water.

Pattern: Inhabitant of shallow, relatively warm waters with fish for prey.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Active at all times of day; active all year.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Breed to the south in Mexico, Central and South America, and along the coast of the southeastern United States. Appear in California after breeding, May through October (Small 1994)

Home Range: Not known.

Territory: Not territorial; nests colonially (Ehrlich et al. 1988).

Reproduction: Lays two to four eggs in a stick nest in a cyprus tree standing in water, or occasionally a shrub. Colonial nester, with up to twenty-five nests in a tree, some nests touching. Chicks are fed regurgitated fish (Ogden 1985).

Niche: Predator on fish and on aquatic invertebrates or small vertebrates.

REFERENCES

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- Rodgers, J. A. and S. T. Schwikert. 1997. Breeding success and chronology of wood storks *Mycteria americana* in northern and central Florida, USA. *Ibis* 139:76-91.
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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.