

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

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RED-NECKED PHALAROPE

*Phalaropus lobatus*

Family: SCOLOPACIDAE  
B655

Order: CHARADRIIFORMES

Class: AVES

Written by: T. Kucera, 1998

#### DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, SEASONALITY

Common to abundant spring (March-May) and fall (July-October) transient the length of the state. Spring migration is mainly over the open ocean, with fewer individuals appearing on lakes in the southern desert and east of the Sierra Nevada. Fall migrants more numerous and widespread inland, especially on alkaline lakes. Tens of thousands may occur on Mono Lake from June to September. Many fall migrants also in coastal lagoons, bays, and estuaries the length of the state. Regular winter flocks near San Diego and the Salton Sea (Small 1994). Breed in the arctic (Hayman et al. 1986).

#### SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

**Feeding:** Main diet components are aquatic insects, crustaceans, molluscs, and zooplankton (Ehrlich et al. 1988). Brine flies and brine shrimp important in California during migration. Feeds on open ocean, near coast and offshore, bays and estuaries, salt evaporating ponds, cismontane lakes, desert pools, and shallow alkaline lakes (Small 1994).

**Cover:** Tied to aquatic and marine habitats; phalaropes are the most pelagic of the shorebirds. Very tame; most approachable of all waders (Hayman et al. 1986).

**Reproduction:** Nests in freshwater marshes in grass-sedge borders (Ehrlich et al. 1988) in the arctic and subarctic.

**Water:** Has salt glands, and therefore can drink seawater (Ehrlich et al. 1988).

**Pattern:** Found in a wide variety of marine, alkaline, and freshwater habitats during spring and fall.

#### SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

**Activity Patterns:** Yearlong activity; may feed at night and during the day (Hayman et al. 1986).

**Seasonal Movements/Migration:** Make some of the longest migrations in the world. Summer in the arctic and sub-arctic and winter from the Pacific Coast of California to Peru (Hayman et al. 1986).

**Home Range:** Not known.

**Territory:** Non-territorial on breeding grounds (Ehrlich et al. 1988). May feed in flocks of thousands during migration.

**Reproduction:** Monogamous or serially or simultaneously polyandrous. Exhibit reversed sexual dimorphism; female lays 2-4 eggs and takes no part in incubation or caring for young (Oring 1986, Ehrlich et al. 1988).

Niche: Little information on predators; probably taken by a variety of raptors such as the peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*). On breeding range, subject to predation from avian and mammalian predators.

#### REFERENCES

- Ehrlich, P. R., D. S. Dobkin, and D. Wheye. 1988. *The birder's handbook*. Simon and Schuster, New York.
- Hayman, P., J. Marchant, and T. Prater. 1986. *Shorebirds: an identification guide to the waders of the world*. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.
- Oring, L. W. 1986. Avian polyandry. *Current Ornithology* 3:309-351.
- Small, A. 1994. *California birds: their status and distribution*. Ibis Publishing Co., Vista, CA.

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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.