

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

HARRIS'S SPARROW

Zonotrichia querula

Family: EMBERIZIDAE
B799

Order: PASSERIFORMES

Class: AVES

Written by: T. Kucera, 1998

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, SEASONALITY

The Harris's sparrow is a rare winter visitor in California. It is a summer resident of the northern boreal forest and Arctic tundra of northern Canada, and is the only passerine that breeds endemically in Canada. Most birds winter in the south-central United States (Norment and Shackleton 1993). In California, most records are from coastal and near-coastal areas, although it is also recorded in some interior areas in Siskiyou and Modoc counties, and the eastern deserts of Mono and Inyo counties (Small 1994).

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Feeds on the ground on small seeds and fruits when available in winter in a variety of dense thickets and weedy fields, and may be seen at bird feeders (Small 1994, Norment and Shackleton 1993).

Cover: Usually found in thick cover in riparian areas, weedy fields, and residential gardens.

Reproduction: Not well known; one of the last North American passerines to have its nest and eggs described (Norment and Shackleton 1993). Monogamous. Nests in shrubby vegetation in forest-tundra zone of northern Canada.

Water: No information.

Pattern: A bird of brushy cover and weedy fields in winter.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, diurnal activity.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Breeds in forest-tundra zone of northern Canada. Fall and winter transients in California occur from September to April (Small 1994).

Home Range: No information. On the breeding range, density recorded as 13 pairs/km sq. (Norment 1992). Birds may forage up to 500m away from defended territory. In winter, may feed in flocks or singly

Territory: Territorial in breeding season. Territory sizes averaged 2 ha (Norment 1992).

Reproduction: Predominantly monogamous; extra-pair copulations not documented (Norment and Shackleton 1993).

Niche: Little information; shrikes observed preying on adults in winter (Baumgartner 1968).

REFERENCES

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- Norment, C. J. and S. A. Shackleton. 1993. Harris' sparrow. *The birds of North America* 64:1-20.
- Small, A. 1994. California birds: their status and distribution. Ibis Publishing Co., Vista, CA.

B799

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.