

# California Wildlife Habitat Relationships System

## California Department of Fish and Wildlife

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BLACK-AND-WHITE  
WARBLER  
Family: EMBERIZIDAE  
B772

*Mniotilta varia*  
Order: PASSERIFORMES

Class: AVES

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### DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

Rare migrant or vagrant, mostly found in the coastal region of the southern two-thirds of the state and the Channel Islands. Birds are also found in the interior desert oases and riparian areas. Casual visitors in winter along the Colorado River, the Pacific coast and in the vicinity of the Salton Sea. In winter, this warbler occurs in riparian woodlands and to a lesser extent in exotic residential plantings and woodlands.

### SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

**Feeding:** Black-and-white warblers forage in a manner similar to nuthatches; along tree trunk and larger branches. They primarily eat invertebrates gleaned from bark, but will occasionally take insects in the air.

**Cover:** Dense riparian vegetation and residential-park plantings provide cover for these warblers.

**Reproduction:** Black-and-white warblers do not breed in California. They nest primarily east of the Rocky Mountains from the southern states northward into Canada. Breeding occurs in mesic sites in deciduous forest habitats. The nest is commonly on the ground, in a depression, at the base of a tree or shrub, next to a log or under a small rock overhang (Harrison 1978). Nest cup lined with dead leaves, hair, or fine grasses.

**Water:** No data.

**Pattern:** In California, transients concentrate on offshore islands, in trees on projecting coastal points, at river mouths, and in desert oases.

### SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

**Activity Patterns:** Year-long diurnal activity. Nocturnal migrant.

**Seasonal Movements/Migration:** Migratory through or vagrant to the state. Most spring records are for the deserts and most fall documentation is for the coast.

**Home Range:** No data for California.

**Territory:** No data for California.

**Reproduction:** Black-and-white warblers do not breed in California. Where breeding occurs, it begins in mid-April to early May. Average clutch size is 4 to 5 eggs. Females incubate eggs for about 11 days. Both parents attend the altricial young and feed them insects brought in their bills. Young leave nest at 8 to 12 days of age (Harrison 1978).

**Niche:** Black-and-white warbler adults and their eggs are prey for raccoons, numerous species of snakes (Bent

1953), various weasels, skunks, accipiters, crows and jays. Consumption of insects by warblers probably is beneficial. Cowbirds frequently parasitize black-and-white warbler nests (Friedmann 1963).

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