

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

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SAMBAR DEER

*Cervus unicolor*

Family: CERVIDAE  
M179

Order: ARTIODACTYLA

Class: MAMMALIA

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#### DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

The sambar deer is an uncommon resident of dense valley foothill hardwood and grassland habitats on the Hearst Ranch in San Luis Obispo Co. This introduced deer is not known from other locations in California.

#### SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

**Feeding:** Feeds primarily on grasses, forbs, and browse (Barrett 1966). Richardson (1971) found that sambar deer in Texas fed heavily on browse in winter, switching to grasses in summer.

**Cover:** Seeks cover in dense stands of woodlands (Barrett 1966, Schaller 1967).

**Reproduction:** Needs dense woods for mating and raising young.

**Water:** No data found.

**Pattern:** Prefers dense woods for cover and reproduction, interspersed with open grassy areas for grazing.

#### SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

**Activity Patterns:** Active yearlong; primarily feeds nocturnally.

**Seasonal Movements/Migration:** None reported in California.

**Home Range:** Females are found in small groups, and males usually are solitary (Barrett 1966, Wheeler 1979). Size of home range unknown (Nowak and Paradiso 1983).

**Territory:** Schaller (1967) observed that males in India established small territories during the rut, where they were joined by females for varying periods.

**Reproduction:** The rut occurs in the fall, with parturition following in the spring. Little else is known about the mating habits of sambar; probably similar to other cervids.

**Niche:** Native of Asia, from India into China. This ungulate of dense forests may compete with other exotic ungulates on the Hearst Ranch, as well as with livestock and native black-tailed deer. Potential predators are mountain lions, which could take adults or young, and bobcats and coyotes, which probably would take mostly young.

#### REFERENCES

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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.