

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

DESERT SPINY LIZARD

Sceloporus magister

Family: PHRYNOSOMATIDAE
R020

Order: SQUAMATA

Class: REPTILIA

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

In California, the desert spiny lizard is widely distributed throughout the Sonoran and Colorado deserts. Its elevational range extends from sea level to 2130 m (7000 ft) (Macey and Papenfuss 1991). This species occurs in a variety of habitats, especially Joshua tree, palm oasis, desert succulent shrub, and desert wash, usually in rocky areas. It is active from April to October (Stebbins 1954, Oliver 1955, Tanner and Krough 1973).

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: This lizard eats primarily insects; ants, beetles, flies, grasshoppers; other lizards and some plant material (Stebbins 1954).

Cover: Where rocks are present they are used for cover. Yucca, trees, and various shrubs are used for perches and cover when rocks are not present (Stebbins 1954).

Reproduction: This species presumably lays eggs in nests constructed in friable, sandy, well-drained soil.

Water: Water probably not required.

Pattern: This species occurs in a variety of habitats that provide rocks, Yucca, trees or shrubs for perches. This lizard spends much of its time on elevated perches, from which it forages and engages in social communication.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: This lizard becomes active early in the spring, usually by April, and remains active until October. Higher-elevation populations become active a little later. The lizards are diurnal and remain active, or at least visible, on conspicuous elevated perches throughout the day. During the hottest weather they may retreat to cover in the middle of the day.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: None.

Home Range: This species achieves densities of 6-50 per ha (2-20 per ac) in creosote habitats.

Territory: This species has a complex social organization and is probably territorial.

Reproduction: This species breeds from May to June. Clutch size averages 10 and ranges from 7-18 eggs (Stebbins 1954, Tanner and Krogh 1973).

Niche: There are no reports of predation on this species but it is probably eaten by predatory birds and snakes. The young are probably taken by predatory lizards (*Gambelia* and *Crotaphytus*).

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