

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

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LONG-TAILED BRUSH LIZARD

*Urosaurus graciosus*

Family: PHRYNOSOMATIDAE  
R025

Order: SQUAMATA

Class: REPTILIA

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#### DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

The long-tailed brush lizard is widely distributed throughout the Mojave, Sonoran and Colorado deserts at elevations up to 1070 m (3500 ft) (Stebbins 1985) in a variety of habitats, especially desert wash, desert scrub, and desert riparian. Found in desert flats in association with creosote, cat's claw, galleta grass and other desert shrubs and some loose, wind-blown sand. Occupies most of its time in bushes or clumps of grass. Due to its very cryptic nature, no definitive information on abundance exists; casual observations near Barstow indicated 1 lizard for each 4 creosote bushes searched. Becomes active in mid-April near Barstow and remains abroad until mid-summer or early fall (Stebbins 1954).

#### SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

**Feeding:** This lizard eats beetles, ants, bees, hemipterans, homopterans, termites and spiders. Plant material is occasionally taken (Stebbins 1954).

**Cover:** These lizards spend days and nights in bushes and clumps of grass. They are able to match the color of the background, and depend upon crypsis rather than physical cover for protection (Stebbins 1954).

**Reproduction:** Eggs are presumably laid in nests constructed in friable or sandy soil.

**Water:** Probably not required.

**Pattern:** These lizards spend most of their time in bushes or clumps of grass, seldom coming to the ground. They prefer desert flats with some sand in the substrate and a variety of shrub types.

#### SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

**Activity Patterns:** These lizards are not very active, but rather wait for prey to approach their perches in bushes or grass clumps. They can move rapidly within the vegetation and seem to remain alert to potential prey all day, even during the hottest hours. They become active by mid-April and remain abroad until mid-summer and occasionally early fall.

**Seasonal Movements/Migration:** Apparently none.

**Home Range:** Normal activity may be restricted to one or several bushes or clumps of grass.

**Territory:** Males of all closely related species defend territories, and it is likely that this species does as well.

Reproduction: Eggs are laid from May to July. Clutches range from 1-6 and average 4 eggs (Stebbins 1954, Fitch 1970).

Niche: Individuals are probably eaten by *Crota phytus*, *Gambelia*, several species of lizard-eating snakes including *Masticophis*, and by avian predators.

#### REFERENCES

- Fitch, H. S. 1970. Reproductive cycles in lizards and snakes. Univ. Kans. Mus. Nat. Hist. Misc. Publ. 52:1-247.
- Stebbins, R. C. 1954. Amphibians and reptiles of western North America. McGraw-Hill, New York. 536pp.
- Stebbins, R. C. 1985. A field guide to western reptiles and amphibians. 2nd ed., revised. Houghton Mifflin, Boston. 336pp.

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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.