

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

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BAJA CALIFORNIA BRUSH LIZARD

*Urosaurus nigricaudus*

Family: PHRYNOSOMATIDAE  
R027

Order: SQUAMATA

Class: REPTILIA

Written by: R. Marlow

Reviewed by: T. Papenfuss

Edited by: S. Granholm

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#### DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

This species has a limited distribution in the extreme south of the state, extending into Baja California. It is found in woodland, chaparral and desert habitats, particularly desert wash, in the mountains of San Diego Co. north nearly to the Riverside Co. line. It frequents rocky areas, canyons and rocky outcrops. It is nowhere common in California. It usually becomes active by mid-March and remains active through the summer into the early fall (Stebbins 1954).

#### SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

**Feeding:** This small-scaled lizard eats beetles, ants, flies, thrips, aphids, termites, hemipterans and spiders (Stebbins 1954).

**Cover:** This lizard is a good climber and is found most frequently in association with rock piles, rock outcrops or canyon walls. It shelters under and among the rocks in cracks and crevices (Stebbins 1954).

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

**Water:** Water is apparently not required.

**Pattern:** This species inhabits arid and semiarid environments with a good mix of rocks, rock outcrops, canyons and boulder piles.

#### SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

**Activity Patterns:** This small-scaled lizard is diurnal. It is abroad all day in the spring, but activity in summer may be restricted to morning and late afternoon. This species emerges in early spring, usually by mid-March near Poway and Julian, and may remain active until September.

**Seasonal Movements/Migration:** This species is not known to migrate.

**Home Range:** No data.

**Territory:** This species has a complex social system that, for males at least, includes territorial defense.

**Reproduction:** Courtship begins shortly after spring emergence, and egg-laying may begin by mid-May. Clutches average 6 (range 4-8) eggs and as many as 4 clutches may be laid during a season (Stebbins 1954, Fitch 1970). The young hatch about 2 months after the eggs

are laid (Stebbins 1954).

Niche: This lizard is probably taken by *Crotaphytus* where they occur and possibly by *Sceloporus magister*. It is probably taken by loggerhead shrikes and other avian predators. Favorable weather and rainfall probably associated with the production of multiple clutches.

Comments: In CWHR, R027 was once assigned to *U. microscutatus*, the small-scaled brush lizard. *U. microscutatus* has now been lumped with *U. nigricaudus*, a species not originally in CWHR because of its restriction to southern Baja California. The name *U. nigricaudus* has been recognized by taxonomists as the senior synonym (Crother et al. 2003).

#### REFERENCES

- Crother, B. I., J. Boundy, J. A. Campbell, K. DeQuiroz, D. Frost, D. M. Green, R. Highton, J. B. Iverson, R. W. McDiarmid, P. A. Meylan, T. W. Reeder, M. E. Seidel, J. W. Sites Jr., S. G. Tilley and D. B. Wake. 2003. Scientific and standard English names of amphibians and reptiles of North America: update. *Herpetological Review* 34(3):196-203.
- 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.

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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.