

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

PYGMY SHORT-HORNED LIZARD

Phrynosoma douglasii

Family: PHRYNOSOMATIDAE
R031

Order: SQUAMATA

Class: REPTILIA

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

The short-horned lizard is the most widely distributed lizard in North America and occurs in the widest range of habitats; but in California it is at the edge of its range and is found only in the northeastern corner of the state in Siskiyou and Modoc cos. It ranges into juniper, lower elevation mixed conifer and eastside pine, and oak-pinyon woodlands (Stebbins 1954). In northeastern Oregon this species reaches very high population densities but nothing is known about California populations, which probably do not reach high densities.

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: All horned lizards are specialized to feed on ants. This species also takes grasshoppers, beetles and other insect prey (Stebbins 1954, Pianka and Parker 1975). Lizards can often be found in the vicinity of ant nests or ant trails feeding intermittently.

Cover: This species often occurs where little fine sand is available for burrowing, in contrast to other species of horned lizards. This species may not burrow (Stebbins 1954). It occurs in a wide variety of habitats and may utilize surface objects for shelter.

Reproduction: Little information is available on habitat requirements for reproduction. This species is live-bearing; cover for the birthing process is required.

Water: Nothing is known about water requirements but probably does not require permanent water. Captives will drink.

Pattern: This species occurs over the widest range of habitats of any lizard in North America (Stebbins 1954). It seems able to adapt to habitats ranging from desert to woodlands, requiring only the presence of ants.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Little information is available on seasonal or daily activity patterns of this species. Seasonally, in California, it probably becomes active in early to late spring (later in the north and at higher elevations) and remains active through summer into early fall. It may also restrict activity during the hottest times of the year. Daily activity may occur at any time when temperatures are mild to warm. Activity consists largely of sitting next to ant nests or trails or moving between them. This pattern is general for all horned lizards (Stebbins 1954, Pianka and Parker 1975).

Seasonal Movements/Migration: None.

Home Range: Little is known about home ranges of horned lizards, but this species is

"probably relative sedentary" (Pianka and Parker 1975). In Utah displaced lizards were able to home up to 400 m (Pianka and Parker 1975).

Territory: No data.

Reproduction: No studies of reproduction in California populations have been made. In Utah courtship and copulation begin in May and last through June. The young are born in mid-summer with an average litter of 16 ranging from 8-36 (Stebbins 1954, Goldberg 1971, Pianka and Parker 1975).

Niche: Species probably competes with other ant eaters including birds and other lizards. They are preyed upon by loggerhead shrikes (Pianka and Parker 1975) and probably other avian predators including roadrunners and prairie falcons, snake predators including members of the genus *Masticophis*, and by leopard lizards. Nothing reported about parasites and diseases.

REFERENCES

- Goldberg, S. R. 1971. Reproduction in the short-horned lizard *Phrynosoma douglassi* in Arizona. *Herpetologica* 27:311-314.
- Pianka, E. R., and W. S. Parker. 1975. Ecology of horned lizards: a review with special reference to *Phrynosoma platyrhinos*. *Copeia* 1975:141-162.
- Stebbins, R. C. 1954. Amphibians and reptiles of western North America. McGraw-Hill, New York. 536pp.

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