

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

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ORANGE-THROATED WHIPTAIL

*Aspidoscelis hyperythra*

Family: TEIIDAE  
R038

Order: SQUAMATA

Class: REPTILIA

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#### DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

*Aspidoscelis hyperythra beldingi* is the only representative of *Aspidoscelis hyperythra* regularly occurring in California. The orange-throated whiptail is uncommon to fairly common (Bostic 1965) over much of its range in Orange, Riverside, and San Diego cos. west of the crest of the Peninsular Ranges, especially in areas with summer morning fog. Also occurs in southwestern San Bernardino Co. near Colton. In California its elevational range extends from near sea level to 1040 m (3410 ft) (Jennings and Hayes 1994). This species inhabits low-elevation coastal scrub, chamise-redshank chaparral, mixed chaparral, and valley-foothill hardwood habitats.

#### SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

**Feeding:** Forages actively on the surface and scratches through surface debris. Takes a variety of small arthropods (Stebbins 1972), especially termites, which are taken in large numbers when available.

**Cover:** An extremely active species. Individuals take cover in dense vegetation when pursued. During periods of inactivity individuals seek cover under surface objects such as rocks, logs, decaying vegetation, and boards, or in rock crevices.

**Reproduction:** Little information on habitat requirements for breeding and egg-laying. Eggs are probably deposited in loose, well-aerated soil under or near surface objects, or at the base of dense shrubs.

**Water:** No information on water requirements. Does not require permanent water.

**Pattern:** Prefers washes and other sandy areas with patches of brush and rocks (Stebbins 1972).

#### SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

**Activity Patterns:** Diurnal activity from early spring to mid- or late summer. Juveniles active through fall, even to December (Bostic 1966, Stebbins 1972).

**Seasonal Movements/Migration:** None.

**Home Range:** Home range of 6 males averaged 0.03 ha (0.07 ac), while that of 5 females averaged 0.06 ha (0.15 ac) (Bostic 1965). This value is smaller than that for *C. tigris*, but larger than that of other species of the genus (Stamps 1977).

**Territory:** Like most *Cnemidophorus* (Stamps 1977), this species has extensive home range overlap (Bostic 1965) and is probably not territorial. Individuals may defend food or

water resources by posturing (Stebbins 1972).

Reproduction: Breeding activities begin in April and egg laying continues to mid-July. Hatchlings emerge in August and early September. The mean clutch size is small (2.3 eggs/clutch), but individuals mature rapidly and females may produce more than one clutch per year (Bostic 1966).

Niche: Active adults and juveniles are taken by a variety of diurnal snakes and predatory birds. Inactive individuals and eggs are probably taken by snakes and nocturnal mammals, especially raccoons and skunks. The active foraging pattern of this species may minimize competition for food resources with other small diurnal lizards.

#### REFERENCES

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Life history accounts for species in the California Wildlife Habitat Relationships (CWHHR) 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.