

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

LONG-NOSED SNAKE
Family: COLUBRIDAE
R060

Rhinocheilus lecontei
Order: SQUAMATA

Class: REPTILIA

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

The long-nosed snake is common in the desert regions and locally in southern coastal California. It is uncommon throughout much of the rest of its range including the interior coast ranges from Contra Costa County south, the Great Basin, and the southern Sierra Nevada foothills. This species ranges widely in southern California and is also found in desert regions east of the Sierra. There is also a small isolated population in Sutter Co. A snake primarily of grasslands, arid brushlands, and coastal chaparral habitats, the long-nosed snake is not expected in forested types. Elevation sea level to 1620 m (5400 ft).

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Long-nosed snakes prey heavily on lizards but also take rodents and other small prey. Stebbins (1954) listed mammals, lizards and lizard eggs, and insects as among the food items taken. Captive individuals have also eaten small snakes.

Cover: Seldom found under surface objects, long-nosed snakes are good burrowers. Nussbaum et al. (1983) report that disturbed individuals burrow rapidly into loose soil, and that they often lie covered with sand with only their head exposed. They may also seek cover in rock crevices (Stebbins 1954).

Reproduction: Little is known about habitat requirements for reproduction in this species. Females are thought to deposit egg clutches in loose, moist, well-aerated soil. Abandoned mammal burrows may also be utilized as nest sites.

Water: No information on water requirements. This is a snake of arid lands, seldom encountered near stream courses. Standing water is not an important habitat element.

Pattern: Inhabits deserts, plains and brushland, seldom found near water.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Nocturnal and crepuscular, occasional diurnal activity has been reported. Individuals are most commonly encountered from April thru June (Klauber 1941). A period of winter inactivity occurs at all localities.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Predictable seasonal movements have not been reported for this species in California.

Home Range: The nature of the home range in this species is unknown.

Territory: No evidence for the territorial defense of resources has been reported.

Reproduction: Five to 8 eggs are deposited in July. Hatchlings emerge in late August or September.

Niche: Long-nosed snakes appear in the diet of hawks (Nussbaum et al. 1983), and they are taken as prey by other snakes (Cunningham 1959). Competitive interactions between this somewhat fossorial species and other snakes (some of them also good burrowers) with which they co-occur are largely unknown.

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