

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

---

WESTERN GROUND SNAKE

*Sonora semiannulata*

Family: COLUBRIDAE  
R066

Order: SQUAMATA

Class: REPTILIA

Written by: R. Marlow  
Reviewed by: T. Papenfuss  
Edited by: S. Granholm

#### DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

In California, the groundsnake is widely distributed in a variety of arid and semiarid habitats in the Mojave and Colorado deserts up to 1400 m (4600 ft) in elevation. It frequents hillsides and flats with or without rocks, usually where there is fine, wind-blown sand. It is found under rocks and other cover objects or at the base of bushes or grass hummocks. In some places, it occurs in thick vegetation (Stickel 1938, 1943, Stebbins 1954). This species is active in spring and summer.

#### SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

**Feeding:** This snake eats spiders, centipedes, crickets, grasshoppers, insect larvae and other arthropods (Stebbins 1954).

**Cover:** The groundsnake makes use of rocks and other ground cover when available, but also occurs in habitats where such cover is rare. Usually it burrows in fine, wind-blown sand at the base of bushes or grass hummocks (Stebbins 1954).

**Reproduction:** No data.

**Water:** Permanent water is probably not required.

**Pattern:** This species occurs at lower elevations in a variety of desert habitats in which fine wind-blown sand is found (Stebbins 1954).

#### SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

**Activity Patterns:** Nocturnal, but occasionally individuals are abroad at dusk. Active from spring to late summer.

**Seasonal Movements/Migration:** This snake probably does not migrate.

**Home Range:** No data.

**Territory:** No data.

**Reproduction:** No data.

**Niche:** No additional information.

#### REFERENCES

Frost, D. R. 1983. *Sonora semiannulata*. Cat. Amer. Amphibians and Reptiles 333.

- Stebbins, R. C. 1954. Amphibians and reptiles of western North America. McGraw-Hill, New York. 536pp.
- Stickel, W. H. 1938. The snakes of the genus *Sonora* in the United States and lower California. *Copeia* 1938:182-190.
- Stickel, W. H. 1943. The Mexican snakes of the genera *Sonora* and *Chionactis* with notes on the status of other colubrid genera. *Proc. Biol. Soc. Wash.* 56:109-128.

R066

---

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.