

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

BAJA CALIFORNIA COLLARED LIZARD

Crotaphytus vestigium

Family: CROTAPHYTIDAE

Order: SQUAMATA

Class: REPTILIA

R093

Written by: T. Kucera, 1998

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

The Baja California collared lizard inhabits the eastern face of the peninsular ranges and adjacent rocky slopes from the northern slope of the San Jacinto mountains to the Mexican border and south into Baja California, Mexico (Sanborn and Loomis 1979, McGuire 1996). It is generally restricted to rocky outcroppings on more rugged portions of alluvial fans, desert hillsides, canyons, and lava flows. It is most common in xeric, rocky areas with little vegetation, including desert succulent shrub, desert scrub, and desert wash habitats. Little has been written about its natural history. The Baja California collared lizard is active in the spring and summer and to a lesser extent in the fall.

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Little is known of the diet of this species. The diet of the closely related Mojave black-collared lizard (*C. bicinctores*) consists largely of arthropods and small vertebrates (Stebbins 1985, McGuire 1996). Plant material is also occasionally consumed.

Cover: This species prefers rocky areas and seeks cover under rocks and in cracks and crevices and rodent holes (Stebbins 1985), occasionally bounding bipedally from stone to stone when disturbed (McGuire 1996).

Reproduction: Little is known about the reproductive requirements of this species. The closely related Mojave black-collared lizard lays eggs and presumably constructs its own nest but there are no reports. The closely related *C. collaris* nests in rocky areas (Yedlin and Ferguson 1973) and sometimes lays eggs in tunnels under rocks (Fitch 1956).

Water: No information on water requirements. Probably does not require water, as it occurs in arid habitats.

Pattern: The Baja California collared lizard occupies slopes, rock outcrops, gullies, washes and other rocky areas with small vertical perches and sparse vegetation.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: This species is diurnal and may be active all day. It hibernates in winter, and may aestivate. It may become active as early as March (McGuire 1996).

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

Home Range: Nothing is known about the size of home ranges of the Baja California collared lizard.

Territory: Nothing is known about territoriality in this species. Among the closely related Mojave black-collared lizard, adult males behave aggressively toward each other but will tolerate

subordinate males (Stebbins 1985).

Reproduction: Little is known of reproduction in the Baja California collared lizard. In the closely related Mojave black-collared lizard, courtship occurs in early spring. Eggs are laid in June and July; neonates have been observed in eastern Oregon in August (Brooking 1934). In Utah, females reached reproductive maturity at 85 mm SVL (Andre and MacMahon 1980). Mean clutch size was 5.4, and ranged from 3 to seven. Larger females produced larger clutches. Occasionally 2 clutches are laid (Johnson et al. 1948, Stebbins 1985).

Niche: Baja California collared lizards are probably eaten by Masticophis, avian predators such as raptors, loggerhead shrikes (*Lanus ludovicianus*), and greater roadrunners (*Geococcyx californianus*), and perhaps mammalian predators (McGuire 1996). An American kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) was observed with a *C. vestigium* in its talons in Baja California, Mexico (McGuire 1996).

General Comments: Collared lizards have been subject to taxonomic confusion for several decades. McGuire (1996) revised the taxonomy of the *Crotaphytidae* based on morphological and genetic data, elevating the Mojave black-collared lizard to specific status, separate from *C. bicinctores* of the Great Basin and *C. collaris* that occurs further east and south.

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