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Wildlife Habitats - California Wildlife Habitat Relationships System

About the CWHR Habitat Classification Scheme

The CWHR habitat classification scheme has been developed to support the CWHR System, a wildlife information system and predictive model for California's regularly-occurring birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians. When first published in 1988, the classification scheme had 53 habitats. These habitats, except the non-vegetated Barren habitat, are described in detail in the CWHR publication entitled:

A Guide to Wildlife Habitats of California. 1988.

Edited by Kenneth E. Mayer and William F. Laudenslayer, Jr.
State of California, Resources Agency,
Department of Fish and Game
Sacramento, CA. 166 pp.

The entire original publication is available online with updates (see below).

At present, there are 59 wildlife habitats in the CWHR System: 27 tree, 12 shrub, 6 herbaceous, 4 aquatic, 8 agricultural, 1 developed, and 1 non-vegetated ([download Habitat Range shapefiles \(.zip\)](#)). Please note: the 59 habitats described below were designed for use with a predictive model for terrestrial vertebrate wildlife species. They do not represent a comprehensive classification scheme for the conservation and mapping of California's terrestrial vegetation* or its marine and estuarine habitats**.

- **Stages** are defined for virtually all habitats. A stage is a combination of size and cover class for tree-dominated habitats, age and cover class for shrub habitats, height and cover class for herb habitats, and depth and substrate for aquatic habitats. A field sampling protocol is well-established for determining stages in all vegetated habitats.
- **Special habitat elements** are also defined. They include live and decadent vegetation elements such as snags, physical elements such as banks and burrows, aquatic elements, vegetative and animal diet elements and human-made elements.

The predictive model for each species has expert-applied suitability ratings for three life-requisites – breeding, cover and feeding. For each species, each habitat stage is rated as high, medium, low or unsuitable for each of these life requirements. Each special habitat element is also assessed as essential, secondarily essential, preferred or not rated for the species.

* Notes on Classification and Mapping of Terrestrial Vegetation in California

- Information on classification and mapping of terrestrial vegetation is available from the [Vegetation Classification and Mapping Program \(VegCAMP\)](#), CDFW Biogeographic Data Branch.
- Field sampling for CWHR habitat stages has been incorporated into the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) Rapid Assessment Protocol, to increase the utility of the resulting vegetation maps for wildlife modeling and conservation. Information and links to field forms are available on the [link opens in new windowCNPS website](#).
- Crosswalks to the CWHR habitat classification scheme are included in all of California's major vegetation and land cover mapping efforts.

** Notes on Classification of Marine and Estuarine Habitats in California

- A classification scheme for the conservation and management of marine and estuarine habitats was developed in cooperation with the CWHR Program in 2002. It includes descriptions for 22 marine and 19 estuarine habitats. At present, it does not include suitability ratings to habitat stages or special habitat elements for the terrestrial amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals currently in the CWHR System.
- The new classification includes crosswalks to other important, recent classifications regarding coastal waters. Included are crosswalks to Wetlands of the Central and Southern California Coast and Coastal Watersheds; a methodology for their classification and description (Ferren et al., 1996), Baylands Ecosystem Habitat Goals: a report of habitat recommendations (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 1999), A classification scheme for deep sea floor habitats (Greene et al., 1999), and Wildlife-habitat relationships in Oregon and Washington (Johnson and O'Neil, 2001). Also included are crosswalks to a national scheme for marine and estuarine ecosystems and habitat classification published by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in 2002 and a classification for habitats of the Channel Islands drafted in 2000 by the Channel Island National Marine Sanctuary (CINMS).

[link opens in new windowRevision to Marine and Estuarine Habitats of the California Wildlife Habitat Relationships System \(2002\).\(PDF\)](#)

A Guide to Wildlife Habitats of California (1988)

Guide Section

Updates

Guide Section

[link opens in new window](#)

[Contributing Authors, Acknowledgements, and Preface \(PDF\)](#)

[link opens in new window](#) [Introduction and Scope \(PDF\)](#)

Includes:

- How to Use the Guide
- How to Classify Habitats
- Special Habitat Elements
- Available Habitat Stages

[link opens in new window](#) [Crosswalk Between WHR and California Vegetation Classifications \(PDF\)](#)

[link opens in new window](#) [Literature Cited \(PDF\)](#)

[link opens in new window](#) [Plants and Animals Referenced in Text \(PDF\)](#)

Updates

[link opens in new window](#) [Revised Classification Rules \(2005\) \(PDF\)](#)

[link opens in new window](#) [Wooded Habitat Sampling Datasheet \(PDF\)](#)

[link opens in new window](#) [Analysis of Wooded Habitat Sampling Data \(PDF\)](#)

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[link opens in new window](#) [Habitat Element Checklist \(PDF\)](#)

[link opens in new window](#) [Available Habitat Stages for Agricultural Habitats \(PDF\)](#)

[link opens in new window](#) [Definition of Added Human Element - Mine \(PDF\)](#)

[link opens in new window](#) [Clarification of the Measurement of California Wildlife Habitat Relationships \(CWHR\) System Size Class 5 and 6 for Tree Habitats \(2007\) \(PDF\)](#)

[link opens in new window](#) [CWHR Crosswalked with CNPS Vegetation Classification \(2005\) \(PDF\)](#)

[link opens in new window](#) [CWHR Crosswalked with CalVeg Classification \(2005\) \(PDF\)](#)






















[link opens in new window](#) [UNESCO Formations Within CWHR \(1998\) \(PDF\)](#)

[link opens in new window](#) [CWHR Crosswalked with DWR Land Use Types \(2008\) \(PDF\)](#)



















Habitat Types







Tree Dominated Habitats

HABITAT TYPE	PRIMARY SPECIES REFERENCED IN TEXT	1988 Text Account	Range Map	Photo
Subalpine Conifer (SCN)	Engelmann Spruce, Subalpine Fir, Mountain Hemlock	 Subalpine Conifer Description - link opens in new window	 Subalpine Conifer Map - link opens in new window	 Subalpine Conifer Photo - link opens in new window
Red Fir (RFR)	Red Fir, White Fir, Lodgepole Pine	 Red Fir Description - link opens in new window	 Red Fir Map - link opens in new window	 Red Fir Photo - link opens in new window
Lodgepole Pine (LPN)	Lodgepole Pine, Aspen, Mountain Hemlock	 Lodgepole Pine Description - link opens in new window	 Lodgepole Pine Map - link opens in new window	 Lodgepole Pine Photo - link opens in new window
Sierran Mixed Conifer (SMC)	Douglas Fir, Ponderosa Pine, White Fir New! <i>updated description of range</i>	 Sierran Mixed Conifer Description - link opens in new window	 Sierran Mixed Conifer Map - link opens in new window	 Sierran Mixed Conifer Photo - link opens in new window
White Fir (WFR)	White Fir, Douglas Fir, Sugar Pine New! <i>corrected range map</i>	 White Fir Description - link opens in new window	 White Fir Map - link opens in new window	 White Fir Photo - link opens in new window
Klamath Mixed Conifer (KMC)	White Fir, Douglas-Fir, Ponderosa Pine New! <i>updated description</i>	 Klamath Mixed Conifer Description - link opens in new window	 Klamath Mixed Conifer Map - link opens in new window	 Klamath Mixed Conifer Photo - link opens in new window













HABITAT TYPE	PRIMARY SPECIES REFERENCED IN TEXT	1988 Text Account	Range Map	Photo
Douglas Fir (DFR)	Douglas Fir, Tanoak, Ponderosa Pine	 Douglas Fir Description - link opens in new window	 Douglas Fir Map - link opens in new window	 Douglas Fir Photo - link opens in new window
Jeffrey Pine (JPN)	Jeffrey Pine, Ponderosa Pine, Sugar Pine	 Jeffrey Pine Description - link opens in new window	 Jeffrey Pine Map - link opens in new window	 Jeffrey Pine Photo - link opens in new window
Ponderosa Pine (PPN)	Ponderosa Pine, Jeffrey Pine, Douglas Fir	 Ponderosa Pine Description - link opens in new window	 Ponderosa Pine Map - link opens in new window	 Ponderosa Pine Photo - link opens in new window
Eastside Pine (EPN)	Ponderosa Pine, Jeffrey Pine, White Fir	 Eastside Pine Description - link opens in new window	 Eastside Pine Map - link opens in new window	 Eastside Pine Photo - link opens in new window
Redwood (RDW)	Redwood, Grand Fir, Sitka Spruce	 Redwood Description - link opens in new window	 Redwood Map - link opens in new window	 Redwood Photo - link opens in new window
Pinyon-Juniper (PJN)	Pinyon Species, Juniper Species, Mountain Mahogany Species	 Pinyon-Juniper Description - link opens in new window	 Pinyon-Juniper Map - link opens in new window	 Pinyon-Juniper Photo - link opens in new window
Juniper (JUN)	Juniper Species, White Fir, Jeffrey Pine	 Juniper Description - link opens in new window	 Juniper Map - link opens in new window	 Juniper Photo - link opens in new window


HABITAT TYPE	PRIMARY SPECIES REFERENCED IN TEXT	1988 Text Account	Range Map	Photo
Aspen (ASP)	Aspen, Willows, Alders	 Aspen Description - link opens in new window	 Aspen Map - link opens in new window	 Aspen Photo - link opens in new window
Closed-Cone Pine-Cypress (CPC)	Sargent Cypress, Monterey Cypress, Monterey Pine	 Closed Cone Pine-Cypress Description - link opens in new window	 Closed Cone Pine-Cypress Map - link opens in new window	 Closed Cone Pine-Cypress Photo - link opens in new window
Montane Hardwood-Conifer (MHC)	Ponderosa Pine, Incense Cedar, California Black Oak	 Montane Hardwood-Conifer Description - link opens in new window	 Montane Hardwood-Conifer Map - link opens in new window	 Montane Hardwood-Conifer Photo - link opens in new window
Montane Hardwood (MHW)	Canyon Live Oak, California Black Oak, Oregon White Oak	 Montane Hardwood Description - link opens in new window	 Montane Hardwood Map - link opens in new window	 Montane Hardwood Photo - link opens in new window
Blue Oak Woodland (BOW)	Blue Oak, Interior Live Oak, California Buckeye	 Blue Oak Woodland Description - link opens in new window	 Blue Oak Woodland Map - link opens in new window	 Blue Oak Woodland Photo - link opens in new window
Valley Oak Woodland (VOW)	Valley Oak, California Walnut, California Sycamore	 Valley Oak Woodland Description - link opens in new window	 Valley Oak Woodland Map - link opens in new window	 Valley Oak Woodland Photo - link opens in new window







HABITAT TYPE	PRIMARY SPECIES REFERENCED IN TEXT	1988 Text Account	Range Map	Photo
Coastal Oak Woodland (COW)	Coast Live Oak, Engelmann Oak, Island Oak New! <i>updated description of dominants</i>	 Coastal Oak Woodland Description - link opens in new window	 Coastal Oak Woodland Map - link opens in new window	 Coastal Oak Woodland Photo - link opens in new window
Blue Oak-Foothill Pine (BOP)	Foothill Pine, Blue Oak, Interior Live Oak	 Blue Oak-Foothill Pine Description - link opens in new window	 Blue Oak-Foothill Pine Map - link opens in new window	 Blue Oak-Foothill Pine Photo - link opens in new window
Eucalyptus (EUC)	Blue Gum, Red Gum	 Eucalyptus Description - link opens in new window	 Eucalyptus Map - link opens in new window	 Eucalyptus Photo - link opens in new window
Montane Riparian (MRI)	Black Cottonwood, Bigleaf Maple, White Alder	 Montane Riparian Description - link opens in new window	 Montane Riparian Map - link opens in new window	 Montane Riparian Photo - link opens in new window
Valley Foothill Riparian (VRI)	Cottonwood, Sycamore, Valley Oak	 Valley Foothill Riparian Description - link opens in new window	 Valley Foothill Riparian Map - link opens in new window	 Valley Foothill Riparian Photo - link opens in new window
Desert Riparian (DRI)	Tamarisk, Mesquite, Fremont Cottonwood	 Desert Riparian Description - link opens in new window	 Desert Riparian Map - link opens in new window	 Desert Riparian Photo - link opens in new window

HABITAT TYPE	PRIMARY SPECIES REFERENCED IN TEXT	1988 Text Account	Range Map	Photo
Palm Oasis (POS)	Fan Palm, Velvet Ash, California Sycamore	 Palm Oasis Description - link opens in new window	 Palm Oasis Map - link opens in new window	 Palm Oasis Photo - link opens in new window
Joshua Tree (JST)	Joshua Tree, Juniper Species, Mojave Yucca	 Joshua Tree Description - link opens in new window	 Joshua Tree Map - link opens in new window	 Joshua Tree Photo - link opens in new window










Shrub Dominated Habitats










HABITAT TYPE	PRIMARY SPECIES REFERENCED IN TEXT	1988 Text Account	Range Map	Photo
Alpine Dwarf-Shrub (ADS)	Oceanspray, Greene Goldenweed, Mountain Heather	 Alpine Dwarf-Shrub Description - link opens in new window	 Alpine Dwarf-Shrub Map - link opens in new window	 Alpine Dwarf-Shrub Photo - link opens in new window
Low Sage (LSG)	Low Sagebrush, Black Sagebrush, Rabbitbrush Species	 Low Sage Description - link opens in new window	 Low Sage Map - link opens in new window	 Low Sage Photo - link opens in new window
Bitterbrush (BBR)	Bitterbrush Species, Big Sagebrush, Rubber Rabbitbrush	 Bitterbrush Description - link opens in new window	 Bitterbrush Map - link opens in new window	 Bitterbrush Photo - link opens in new window
Sagebrush (SGB)	Sagebrush Species, Rabbitbrush Species, Horsebrush	 Sagebrush Description - link opens in new window	 Sagebrush Map - link opens in new window	 Sagebrush Photo - link opens in new window

HABITAT TYPE	PRIMARY SPECIES REFERENCED IN TEXT	1988 Text Account	Range Map	Photo
Montane Chaparral (MCP)	Ceanothus Species, Manzanita Species, Bitter Cherry	 Montane Chaparral Description - link opens in new window	 Montane Chaparral Map - link opens in new window	 Montane Chaparral Photo - link opens in new window
Mixed Chaparral (MCH)	Scrub Oak, Ceanothus Species, Manzanita Species	 Mixed Chaparral Description - link opens in new window	 Mixed Chaparral Map - link opens in new window	 Mixed Chaparral Photo - link opens in new window
Chamise-Redshank Chaparral (CRC)	Chamise, Redshank, Ceanothus Species	 Chamise-Redshank Chaparral Description - link opens in new window	 Chamise-Redshank Chaparral Map - link opens in new window	 Chamise-Redshank Chaparral Photo - link opens in new window
Coastal Scrub (CSC)	Coyotebush, California Buckwheat, Sage Species	 Coastal Scrub Description - link opens in new window	 Coastal Scrub Map - link opens in new window	 Coastal Scrub Photo - link opens in new window
Desert Succulent Shrub (DSS)	Octillo, Mojave Yucca, Desert Agave	 Desert Succulent Shrub Description - link opens in new window	 Desert Succulent Shrub Map - link opens in new window	 Desert Succulent Shrub Photo - link opens in new window
Desert Wash (DSW)	Paloverde Species, Desert Ironwood, Mesquite	 Desert Wash Description - link opens in new window	 Desert Wash Map - link opens in new window	 Desert Wash Photo - link opens in new window

HABITAT TYPE	PRIMARY SPECIES REFERENCED IN TEXT	1988 Text Account	Range Map	Photo
Desert Scrub (DSC)	Creosotebush, Catclaw Acacia, Desert Agave	 Desert Scrub Description - link opens in new window	 Desert Scrub Map - link opens in new window	 Desert Scrub Photo - link opens in new window
Alkali Desert Scrub (ASC)	Allscale, Saltbush Species, Shadscale	 Alkali Desert Scrub Description - link opens in new window	 Alkali Desert Scrub Map - link opens in new window	 Alkali Desert Scrub Photo - link opens in new window










Herbaceous Dominated Habitats




HABITAT TYPE	PRIMARY SPECIES REFERENCED IN TEXT	1988 Text Account	Range Map	Photo
Annual Grassland (AGS)	Wild Oats, Soft Chess, Brome Species New! updated range map and description of range	 Annual Grassland Description - link opens in new window	 Annual Grassland Map - link opens in new window	 Annual Grassland Photo - link opens in new window
Perennial Grassland (PGS)	California Oatgrass, Hairgrass, Sweet Vernalgrass New! updated range map and description of range	 Perennial Grassland Description - link opens in new window	 Perennial Grassland Map - link opens in new window	 Perennial Grassland Photo - link opens in new window
Wet Meadow (WTM)	Sedge Species, Rush Species, Tufted Hairgrass	 Wet Meadow Description - link opens in new window	 Wet Meadow Map - link opens in new window	 Wet Meadow Photo - link opens in new window

HABITAT TYPE	PRIMARY SPECIES REFERENCED IN TEXT	1988 Text Account	Range Map	Photo
Fresh Emergent Wetland (FEW)	Cattail, Bulrush, Redroot Nutgrass	 Fresh Emergent Wetland Description - link opens in new window	 Fresh Emergent Wetland Map - link opens in new window	 Fresh Emergent Wetland Photo - link opens in new window
Saline Emergent Wetland (SEW)	Cordgrass, Pickleweed, Bulrush	 Saline Emergent Wetland Description - link opens in new window	 Saline Emergent Wetland Map - link opens in new window	 Saline Emergent Wetland Photo - link opens in new window
Pasture (PAS)	Bermuda Grass, Ryegrass, Tall Fescue	 Pasture Description - link opens in new window	 Pasture Map - link opens in new window	 Pasture Photo - link opens in new window













Aquatic Habitats















See also: ["Notes on Classification of Marine and Estuarine Habitats"](#)




HABITAT TYPE	PRIMARY SPECIES REFERENCED IN TEXT	1988 Text Account	Range Map	Photo
Riverine (RIV)	Water Moss, Algae, Duckweed	 Riverine Description - link opens in new window	 Riverine Map - link opens in new window	 Riverine Photo - link opens in new window
Lacustrine (LAC)	Plankton, Duckweed, Water Lilies	 Lacustrine Description - link opens in new window	 Lacustrine Map - link opens in new window	 Lacustrine Photo - link opens in new window
Estuarine (EST)	Plankton, Algae, Eel Grass	 Estuarine Description - link opens in new window	 Estuarine Map - link opens in new window	 Estuarine Photo - link opens in new window

HABITAT TYPE	PRIMARY SPECIES REFERENCED IN TEXT	1988 Text Account	Range Map	Photo
Marine (MAR)	Plankton, Algae, Kelp	 Marine Description - link opens in new window	 Marine Map - link opens in new window	 Marine Photo - link opens in new window





Developed Habitats

HABITAT TYPE	PRIMARY SPECIES REFERENCED IN TEXT	1988 Text Account	Range Map	Photo
Cropland (CRP)	Tomatoes, Corn, Wheat <i>** Replaced by DGR, IGR, IRH, IRF, RIC **</i>	 Cropland Description - link opens in new window	 Cropland Map - link opens in new window	 Cropland Photo - link opens in new window
Dryland Grain Crops (DGR)	Cereal Rye, Barley, Wheat	 Dryland Gran Crops Description - link opens in new window	 Dryland Grain Crops Map - link opens in new window	 Dryland Grain Crops Photo - link opens in new window
Irrigated Grain Crops (IGR)	Corn, Dry Beans, Safflower	 Irrigated Grain Crops Description - link opens in new window	 Irrigated Grain Crops Map - link opens in new window	 Irrigated Grain Crops Photo - link opens in new window
Irrigated Hayfield (IRH)	Alfalfa, Hay	 Irrigated Hayfield Description - link opens in new window	 Irrigated Hayfield Map - link opens in new window	 Irrigated Hayfield Photo - link opens in new window

HABITAT TYPE	PRIMARY SPECIES REFERENCED IN TEXT	1988 Text Account	Range Map	Photo
Irrigated Row and Field Crops (IRF)	Tomatoes, Cotton, Lettuce	 Irrigated Row and Field Crops Description - link opens in new window	 Irrigated Row and Field Crops Map - link opens in new window	 Irrigated Row and Field Crops Photo - link opens in new window
Rice (RIC)	Rice	 Rice Description - link opens in new window	 Rice Map - link opens in new window	 Rice Photo - link opens in new window
Orchard - Vineyard (OVN)	Apples, Oranges, Grapes <i>** Replaced by DOR, EOR, VIN **</i>	 Orchard - Vineyard Description - link opens in new window	 Orchard - Vineyard Map - link opens in new window	 Orchard - Vineyard Photo - link opens in new window
Deciduous Orchard (DOR)	Almonds, Walnuts, Peaches	 Deciduous Orchard Description - link opens in new window	 Deciduous Orchard Map - link opens in new window	 Deciduous Orchard Photo - link opens in new window
Evergreen Orchard (EOR)	Oranges, Avocados, Lemons	 Evergreen Orchard Description - link opens in new window	 Evergreen Orchard Map - link opens in new window	 Evergreen Orchard Photo - link opens in new window
Vineyard (VIN)	Grapes, Kiwi Fruit, Boysenberries	 Vineyard Description - link opens in new window	 Vineyard Map - link opens in new window	 Vineyard Photo - link opens in new window

HABITAT TYPE	PRIMARY SPECIES REFERENCED IN TEXT	1988 Text Account	Range Map	Photo
Urban (URB)	Grass Lawns, Ornamental Trees, Hedges	 Urban Description - link opens in new window	 Urban Map - link opens in new window	 Urban Photo - link opens in new window

Non-vegetated Habitats

HABITAT TYPE	PRIMARY SPECIES REFERENCED IN TEXT	1988 Text Account	Range Map	Photo
Barren (BAR)	Rock, Gravel, Soil	 Barren Description - link opens in new window	 Barren Map - link opens in new window	 Barren Photo 1  Barren Photo 2

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