



How to Help

Bewick's Wrens

In the Western United States, the Bewick's Wren is a common resident in brushy areas, thickets and scrub in open country, open and streamside woodland, and dry, brushy chaparral. Once widespread in the East, it now persists there in only four isolated breeding populations scattered in the Appalachian Mountains and along the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. In the West, birds can be helped by providing foraging habitat and nest boxes. In the East, competition with the more numerous House Wrens for nesting sites make it difficult to attract and help Bewick's Wrens.

What Bewick's Wrens Need

Food: Bewick's Wren forage in dense vegetation where they glean insect eggs, larvae, and adults and other small invertebrates from leaves, branches, and trunks of shrubs and trees. Insects comprise about 97 percent of the diet (beetles, leaf bugs, stink bugs, boll weevils, grasshoppers, etc). They seldom feed more than 10 feet off the ground and may forage on the ground in areas of sparse vegetation. Their feeding territory ranges from 2-10 acres, depending on the extent and density of vegetation patches.

Nesting: Breeds in open woodlands, upland thickets, and hills, in any suitable cavity, including centers of brush piles, rock crevices, outbuildings, fence posts, bird houses, and abandoned automobiles. Nests are usually well concealed, and 0-30 feet off the ground.

Shelter: Roosts at night in niches in trees, buildings, or in thick vegetation.

Other: House Wrens and House Sparrows are aggressive nest site competitors and nest predators, and may drive Bewick's Wrens from otherwise appropriate habitat. House cats often catch wrens, especially inexperienced young birds.

How You Can Help

- In open areas and yards, plant or maintain large patches of dense native bushes and shrubs. Provide a mix of short, medium and tall bushes and shrubs. Appropriate species include juniper, pines, oak, and mesquite with preferably native shrubs in the understory.
- In woodlands, maintain an open forest canopy and protect bushes and shrubs of understory from over-browsing by deer.
- Avoid use of pesticides that kill wren prey species and may poison wrens.
- Provide suet feeders or mealworm feeders.
- In areas where House Wrens are not found, provide a nest box mounted 5-10 feet high on a tree in or near a brushy area.
- Nest boxes should be at least 4 x 4 inches wide and 10 inches deep with a 1 1/8 inch entrance hole.
- Maintain fencerows between farm field or property boundaries with shrubs and grasses.
- Build and maintain a brush pile in the corner of the yard.
- In the East, nest boxes may encourage House Wrens rather than Bewick's Wrens. Do not encourage House Wrens where Bewick's Wrens are known to nest.
- Remove House Sparrow nests if they try to use wren boxes
- Keep cats indoors where they are safe from outdoor dangers and won't threaten wrens.