

[↶ \(/bow/species\)](/bow/species) [Passeriformes](#) [Icteridae\(/bow/species/icteri1/cur/introduction\)](/bow/species/icteri1/cur/introduction) [Agelaius\(/bow/species/icteri1/cur/species#genusAgelaius\)](/bow/species/icteri1/cur/species#genusAgelaius)

[↻ \(/bow/species/surprise-me\)](/bow/species/surprise-me) [◀ \(/bow/species/resbla1/cur/distribution\)](/bow/species/resbla1/cur/distribution) [▶ \(/bow/species/tasbla/cur/distribution\)](/bow/species/tasbla/cur/distribution)

SPECIES

Tricolored Blackbird *Agelaius tricolor*

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▼ [Account navigation](#)

[Introduction \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/introduction\)](/bow/species/tribla/cur/introduction)

[Appearance \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/appearance\)](/bow/species/tribla/cur/appearance)

[Systematics \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/systematics\)](/bow/species/tribla/cur/systematics)

[Distribution \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/distribution\)](/bow/species/tribla/cur/distribution)

[Historical Changes to the Distribution](#)

[Habitat \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/habitat\)](/bow/species/tribla/cur/habitat)

[Movements and Migration \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/movement\)](/bow/species/tribla/cur/movement)

[Diet and Foraging \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/foodhabits\)](/bow/species/tribla/cur/foodhabits)

[Sounds and Vocal Behavior \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/sounds\)](/bow/species/tribla/cur/sounds)

[Behavior \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/behavior\)](/bow/species/tribla/cur/behavior)

[Breeding \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/breeding\)](/bow/species/tribla/cur/breeding)

[Demography and Populations \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/demography\)](/bow/species/tribla/cur/demography)

[Conservation and Management \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/conservation\)](/bow/species/tribla/cur/conservation)

[Priorities for Future Research \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/priorities\)](/bow/species/tribla/cur/priorities)

[Acknowledgments \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/acknowledgments\)](/bow/species/tribla/cur/acknowledgments)

[About the Author\(s\) \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/aboutauthors\)](/bow/species/tribla/cur/aboutauthors)

[Multimedia \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/multimedia?media=photos\)](/bow/species/tribla/cur/multimedia?media=photos)

[Tables and Appendices \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/appendices\)](/bow/species/tribla/cur/appendices)

[Revision History \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/history\)](/bow/species/tribla/cur/history)

[References \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/references\)](/bow/species/tribla/cur/references)

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Distribution

Breeding Range

The geographic range is restricted to California's Central Valley and surrounding foothills, coastal and inland localities in southern and central California, and more locally in northeastern California, Oregon, central Washington, western Nevada, and northwestern Baja California. See [Figure 1](#)

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[Figure 3 \(https://cdn.download.ams.birds.cornell.edu/api/v1/asset/67307441?](https://cdn.download.ams.birds.cornell.edu/api/v1/asset/67307441?hstc=65717809.d62c3717dbc9ea6541391fdd382a65f0.1612817515370.1612817515370.1612820843263.2&hssc=65717809.2.1612820843263&hsfp=17167136)

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and [Figure 4](#) ([https://cdn.download.ams.birds.cornell.edu/api/v1/asset/67307511?](https://cdn.download.ams.birds.cornell.edu/api/v1/asset/67307511?hstc=65717809.d62c3717dbc9ea6541391fdd382a65f0.1612817515370.1612817515370.1612820843263.2&hssc=65717809.2.1612820843263&hsfp=17167136)

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California: Historically and currently, most California colonies have been located in the Sacramento and San

Joaquin valleys and their surrounding foothills ([40](#) ([/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF21349](#)), [9](#)

([/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF21360](#)), [41](#) ([/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF35587](#)), [42](#)

([/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF70114](#)), [17](#) ([/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF64390](#)), [18](#)

([/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF63058](#)), [11](#) ([/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF70125](#)), [14](#)

([/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF70104](#))). Since 1980, breeding colonies have been reported in 46

California counties (see [Figure 4](#) ([https://cdn.download.ams.birds.cornell.edu/api/v1/asset/67307511?](https://cdn.download.ams.birds.cornell.edu/api/v1/asset/67307511?hstc=65717809.d62c3717dbc9ea6541391fdd382a65f0.1612817515370.1612817515370.1612820843263.2&hssc=65717809.2.1612820843263&hsfp=17167136)

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Species breeds locally, mostly west of the Cascade Range, Sierra Nevada, and southeastern deserts from Humboldt and Shasta counties south to extreme southwestern San Bernardino County, western Riverside County, and western and southern portions of San Diego County. In central California, breeding extends east into grassland-dominated regions of the lower foothills of the Sierra Nevada ([14](#)

([/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF70104](#)), [43](#) ([/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF72686](#))). Also breeds

in marshes of the Klamath Basin in Siskiyou and Modoc counties and the Honey Lake Basin in Lassen County in northeastern California.

Gaps in breeding distribution have been emerging owing to urbanization in southern California and wholesale conversion of native nesting and foraging habitats to nut orchards and vineyards in the Central Valley, Sierra foothills, and Coast ranges. Statewide surveys in 2008, 2011, 2014, and 2017 showed that the rate and intensity of the species' population decline varied among bioregions ([17](#) ([/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF64390](#)), [18](#) ([/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF63058](#)), [44](#) ([/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF70118](#))). The central coastal region had the greatest proportional decline, followed by the San Joaquin Valley with only a single colony in Kings County and only 515 birds observed in 2014 from San Joaquin County ([11](#)

([/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF70125](#))) where the species was formerly an abundant breeder. The

number of birds in southern California increased, due primarily to a single large colony in Los Angeles County and no breeding reported from Orange County ([44](#) ([/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF70118](#))). The number of birds in the central Sierra Nevada foothills may have increased in the past decade, and this region is currently a stronghold of species' range in California ([14](#) ([/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF70104](#))).

Oregon. Breeds most consistently in southern Klamath County at Agency Lake, Klamath Falls, Lower Klamath, and Alkali Lake and in southern Jackson County, near Medford, Eagle Point, White City, Phoenix, and Talent ([45](#)

([/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF56692](#)), [46](#) ([/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF55734](#))). Small

colonies breed locally and intermittently at several other isolated locations, including: Willamette Valley in the Columbia River bottomlands in northeastern Portland (Multnomah County); near Clarno and Wamic (Wasco County); John Day Fossil Beds National Monument (Wheeler County); DeChutes County; near Stanfield (Umatilla County), in north-central Oregon, as well as Summer Lake (Lake County) in southern Oregon. Most retreat to California for the winter, but some remain year-round in the Rogue Valley, Klamath Basin, and elsewhere in central Oregon ([45](#) ([/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF56692](#)), [46](#)

([/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF55734](#)), CBC data).

Washington. A small colony nested in Grant County in 1998, the state's first documented breeding record, and a few birds have persisted in the area since then ([47](#) ([/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF12532](#))).

Nevada. A single small colony near Minden and Gardnerville (Douglas County) has nested intermittently since the mid-1980s ([48 \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF63955\)](#)).

Baja California. Formerly bred in central and northwestern portion of Baja California south to El Rosario ([49 \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF40970\)](#), [50 \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF18784\)](#)), but species is now local within this area ([51 \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF62109\)](#), [52 \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF70108\)](#)). Recent surveys have shown that the Baja California population has declined to several hundred individuals ([53 \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF64389\)](#), [54 \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF61689\)](#)) and the species' range appears to be contracting northward and upward in elevation ([55 \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF70107\)](#)).

Winter Range

During winter, withdraws from Oregon (only a few remain in Jackson and Klamath counties or in central Oregon; [45 \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF56692\)](#), [46 \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF55734\)](#)), portions of northern California outside of the Central Valley, and Nevada. Also withdraws from Santa Barbara County and eastern San Diego County. Resident in Baja California (R. Erickson, personal communication) and within remainder of breeding range. Was believed to largely withdraw in winter from southern San Joaquin Valley and northern Sacramento Valley and was considered rare in the Sacramento Valley north of Sacramento County. However, recent field work has shown that thousands of birds winter throughout the Sacramento Valley, most often in association with livestock (RJM). Species still concentrates in and around the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta, Merced County, and coastal areas, including Monterey and Marin counties, but in numbers far lower than only a decade ago (RJM). Small flocks may appear at other coastal locations from Sonoma County south to Santa Cruz County and sporadically north to Del Norte County ([41 \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF35587\)](#), [42 \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF70114\)](#)), nearly always in association with dairies (RJM).

Historical Changes to the Distribution

Although there have been significant changes in abundance, seasonal distribution, and use of nesting substrates, the overall the range of the species has changed little since the mid-1930s ([1 \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF21364\)](#), [8 \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF57587\)](#), [40 \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF21349\)](#), [56 \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF49322\)](#), [42 \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF70114\)](#), [10 \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF63685\)](#)). Breeding colonies were reported from sea level in San Diego and Santa Cruz counties to about 1,280 m at Klamath Lake, Oregon ([1 \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF21364\)](#)). High-elevation colonies in California were reported at 1,158 m near Tehachapi (Kern County) ([5 \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF35588\)](#)), and at 1,219 m near Susanville (Lassen County) ([8 \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF57587\)](#)). Historical breeding colonies in Jackson and Klamath counties, Oregon ([57 \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF35591\)](#), [58 \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF21368\)](#)).

Since 1980, confirmed breeding in Klamath, Multnomah, and Umatilla counties, Oregon ([40 \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF21349\)](#), [45 \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF56692\)](#)). Formerly common in marshes of northwestern Baja California ([59 \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF21352\)](#)), but observed rarely by Thayer and Bangs ([60 \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF21369\)](#)) and Huey ([61 \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF40033\)](#)), and only a few hundred individuals are reported to persist ([53 \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF64389\)](#), [54 \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF61689\)](#)). Generally numbers elsewhere have been greatly reduced, with the species now absent from portions of its range where it was formerly abundant, especially in southern California and San Joaquin and Kings counties in the San Joaquin Valley ([18 \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF63058\)](#)).

It is possible that the Tricolored Blackbird population has expanded from its historical distribution into the foothills surrounding the Central Valley in response to an increase in nesting habitat (Himalayan Blackberry copses and emergent wetlands) at stock ponds, irrigated pastures, and ditches, as well as the creation of mixtures of grassland, irrigated pasture, and grain fields for foraging ([62 \(/bow/species/tribla/cur/references#REF70122\)](#)), but early workers rarely surveyed birds here, so historic data are limited.



<https://cdn.download.ams.birds.cornell.edu/api/v1/asset/66289361?>

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Year-round Breeding
Migration Non-Breeding

Figure 1. Distribution of the Tricolored Blackbird.

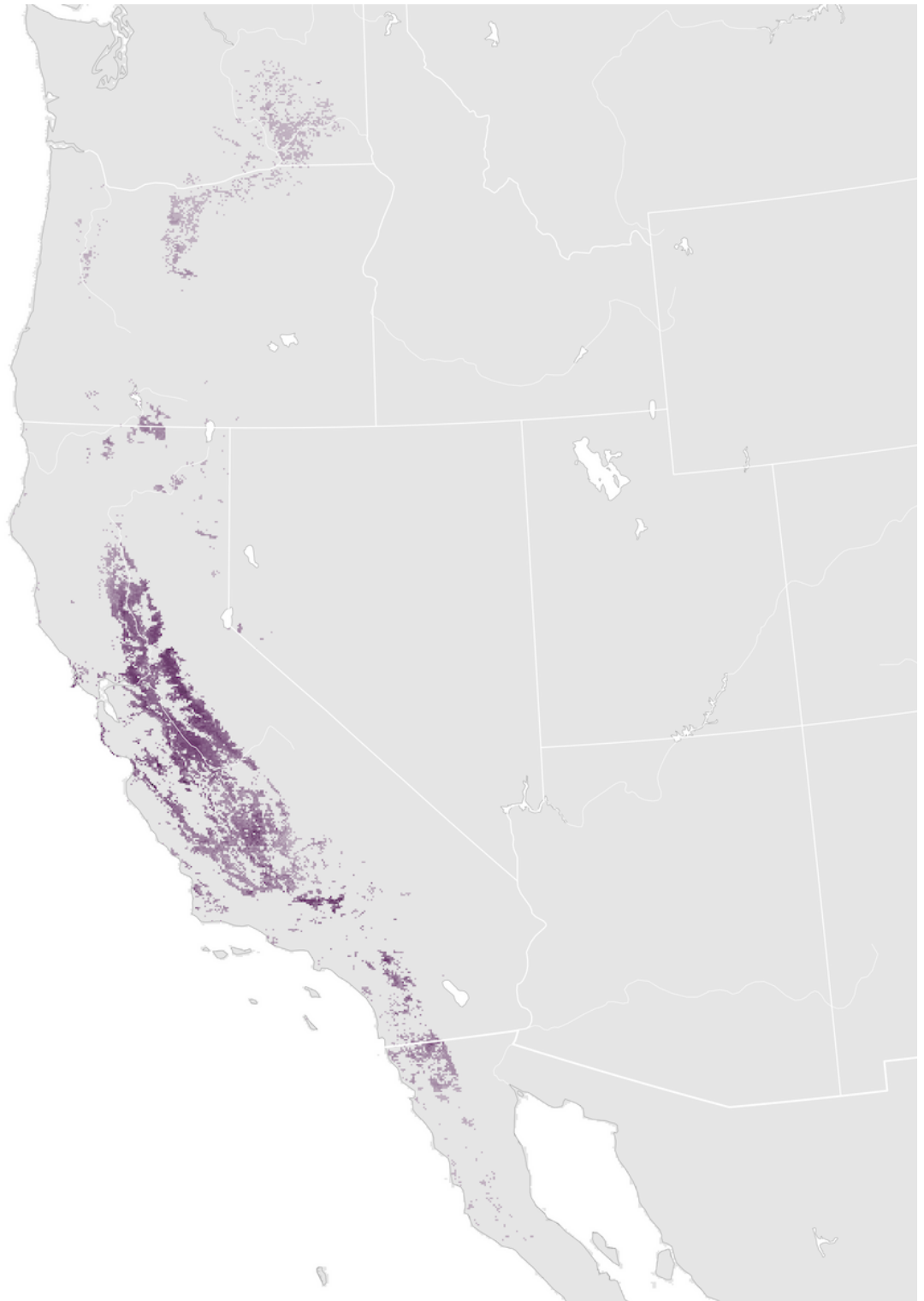


eBird range map for Tricolored Blackbird

Generated from eBird observations (Year-Round, 1900-present)

[Explore more on eBird \(https://ebird.org/map/tribla?_hstc=65717809.d62c3717dbc9ea6541391fdd382a65f0.1612817515370.1612817515370.1612820843263.2&_hssc=65717809.2.1612820843263&_hsfp=1716713697\)](https://ebird.org/map/tribla?_hstc=65717809.d62c3717dbc9ea6541391fdd382a65f0.1612817515370.1612817515370.1612820843263.2&_hssc=65717809.2.1612820843263&_hsfp=1716713697)

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The Cornell Lab of Ornithology Data provided by eBird
(Lightbox-embed-map)

Tricolored Blackbird *Agelaius tricolor*

Abundance

Relative abundance is depicted for each season along a color gradient from a light color indicating lower relative abundance to a dark color indicating a higher relative abundance. Relative abundance is the estimated number of individuals detected by an eBirder during a traveling count at the optimal time of day. [Learn more \(https://ebird.org/science/status-and-trends/faq?_hstc=65717809.d62c3717dbc9ea6541391fdd382a65f0.1612817515370.1612817515370.1612820843263.2&_hssc=65717809.2.1612820843263&_hsfp=1716713697#abundance\)](https://ebird.org/science/status-and-trends/faq?_hstc=65717809.d62c3717dbc9ea6541391fdd382a65f0.1612817515370.1612817515370.1612820843263.2&_hssc=65717809.2.1612820843263&_hsfp=1716713697#abundance)

RELATIVE ABUNDANCE

Modeled area (0 abundance)

No prediction

Learn more (https://ebird.org/science/status-and-trends/faq?_hstc=65717809.d62c3717dbc9ea6541391fdd382a65f0.1612817515370.1612817515370.1612820843263.2&_hssc=65717809.2.1612820843263&_hsfp=1716713697#no-prediction)

eBird data from 2005-2020. Estimated for 2019.

Fink, D., T. Auer, A. Johnston, M. Strimas-Mackey, O. Robinson, S. Ligocki, W. Hochachka, C. Wood, I. Davies, M. Iliff, L. Seitz. 2020. eBird Status and Trends, Data Version: 2019; Released: 2020. Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, New York. <https://doi.org/10.2173/ebirdst.2019> (<https://doi.org/10.2173/ebirdst.2019>)

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[Ornithological Notes \(/bow/content/ornith-notes\)](/bow/content/ornith-notes)

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