



OUT of the DROUGHT

How recent rain from winter storms has brought relief to California wildlife and habitat.

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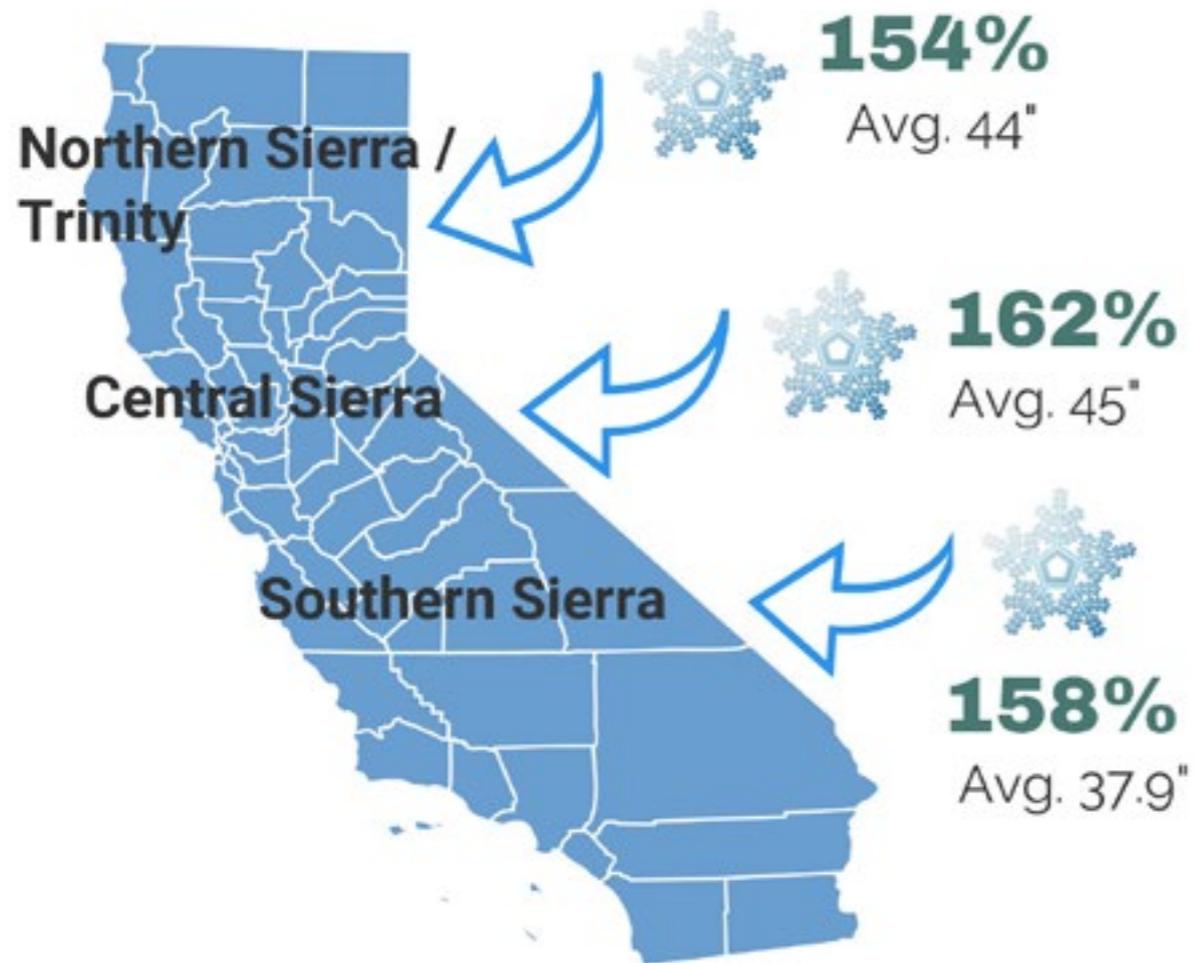
Bone dry. In essence, the phrase serves as a reminder that water is life. Without it, elements left behind are parched, lifeless, dust, bone. Droughts have a measurable effect on the lives of people who live in affected areas, as well as many wildlife species.

California has been experiencing an extreme level of drought in recent years, according to data from the [National Integrated Drought Information System \(NIDIS\)](#), an effort led by the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration \(NOAA\)](#).

Wringing out the Drought.

Recent California Weather Brings Relief to People and Wildlife.

The California Department of Water Resources data from recent Sierra Mountain snow pack surveys show conditions well above average levels.



Source: California Department of Water Resources

RELIEF

The [California Department of Water Resources](#) (CDWR) explains in a [statement](#) on their website that drought can have significant impacts on public health, safety, the economy, and the environment.

Recent rains and snow in California have brought a much-needed relief to the drought situation. A Sierra Nevada snow pack [survey](#) conducted in February, which determines how much water the melted snow will yield to the state, has shown current conditions indicate levels are above their average for this time of year.

A [report](#) issued by the [California Department of Fish and Wildlife](#) (CDFW) states that drought affects nearly all animals in the state, and, even though most are generally acclimated to dry conditions, extended periods without sufficient water can imperil sustainability. Some of the species impacted by these excessive droughts are listed as threatened or endangered like [Southern California Steelhead](#), [Amargosa Voles](#), and [Sierra Nevada Yellow-legged Frogs](#).



The CDFW has created a [variety of programs and projects](#) in response to drought related pressures. The CDFW manages threatened fish like the Southern California Steelhead and the [Unarmored Threespine Stickleback](#), through monitoring, rescues, relocation, hatchery improvements, and habitat restoration. For terrestrial vertebrate wildlife species dependent on water or wetland habitat, the CDFW monitored and analyzed

358 species, identifying 48 species at high risk, like bats and rodents. Actions taken include habitat restoration and working with private landowners to ensure safe land management practices.

WILDLIFE IMPACT



The California Department of Wildlife has identified a total of 105 species most at risk due to drought conditions.

48 were given Priority I status meaning they are at high risk.

57 were given Priority II status meaning they are vulnerable.



Amphibians

Total = 35
17 Endangered



Reptiles

Total = 7
3 Endangered



Birds

Total = 24
*7 Endangered**



Mammals

Total = 39
*6 Endangered***

* Listed or candidate for listing.

** Priority I (3). Priority II (Mostly bats; 3 listed or candidate for listing).

RESPONSE

The CDFW asked farmers to delay harvest in some areas to benefit endangered [Tricolored Blackbirds](#).

The [California Wildlife Habitat Relationships \(CWHR\)](#) program was created by the CDFW to gather, store, and share data for 712 species of mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, and amphibians known to live in the state of California. The CWHR staff has been able to use the data they have obtained to better preserve habitat and protect vulnerable species.

According to the CDFW, they have done this through actions like creating maps that evaluate habitat sustainability and by compiling lists of the species that reach priority status for conservation. The CWHR has also been able to assist in other wildlife conservation efforts including the [State Wildlife Action Plan \(SWAP\)](#), the [Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool \(CHAT\)](#), and the [Areas of Conservation Emphasis \(ACE\)](#) project.

The agencies monitoring drought conditions in California are [optimistic](#) about the recent rain and snowfall the state has received. Wildflowers are [blooming](#), areas burned by last year's wildfires are [rebounding](#), and lakes and reservoirs [are filling back up](#). For now, at least, the California residents and wildlife appear to have a bit of relief from the unfavorable drought conditions.

