

ARIZONA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT
HERITAGE DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Animal Abstract

Element Code: AMAFB04021
Data Sensitivity: No

CLASSIFICATION, NOMENCLATURE, DESCRIPTION, RANGE

NAME: *Ammospermophilus leucurus tersus*
COMMON NAME: Prospect Valley White-tailed Antelope Squirrel
SYNONYMS:
FAMILY: Scuriridae

AUTHOR, PLACE OF PUBLICATION: Goldman. November 19, 1929., Journal of Washington Academy of Science, 19:435.

TYPE LOCALITY: Lower end of Prospect Valley, 4500 ft., Grand Canyon, Hualapai Indian Reservation, Arizona.

TYPE SPECIMEN: Goldman, Coconino County, Arizona (National Museum of Natural History).

TAXONOMIC UNIQUENESS: Nine subspecies are recognized under *Ammospermophilus leucurus* (Belk and Smith 1991, Wilson and Reeder 2005). There are four subspecies in Arizona, including *Ammospermophilus leucurus leucurus*, *A.l. tersus*, *A.l. escalante*, and *A.l. cinnamomeus* (Hoffmeister 1986).

DESCRIPTION: This member of the squirrel family has a conspicuous white stripe not bordered by black on each side from shoulder to rump. The tail which they carry up over their back is white on the underside and gives a flash of white as the squirrel moves away, much like the white rump of the antelope. This squirrel is small, has a short body and its hind foot length is medium. The dorsum of its winter pelage is dark and brownish, and it has a small skull and short nasal passages. Measurements for the species include: head and body 5 1/2-6 1/2 in. (140-165 mm); tail 2-3 in. (51-76 mm); weight 3-5 1/2 oz. (85-156 g) (Burt and Grossenheider 1976). Whitaker (1997) reports lengths for the species as 7 5/8-9 3/8 in. (194-239 mm), and tail as 2 1/8-3 3/8 in. (54-87 mm).

AIDS TO IDENTIFICATION: *Ammospermophilus leucurus tersus* averages smaller than both *escalante* and *cinnamomeus*, and is darker than *leucurus*.

ILLUSTRATIONS: Color photo of species (Whitaker 1997: plate 161).
Color drawing of species (Burt and Grossenheider 1976: plate 11).

TOTAL RANGE: South side of the Colorado River, Prospect Valley, Arizona.

RANGE WITHIN ARIZONA: See "Total Range".

SPECIES BIOLOGY AND POPULATION TRENDS

BIOLOGY: Prospect Valley White-tailed Antelope Squirrels are diurnal and do not hibernate. They are adapted to tolerate high temperatures including high body temperatures. They are not well adapted for low temperatures. These squirrels cool themselves in part by salivating and spreading the saliva over the face region. Because of their use of water, they are unable to survive on metabolic water alone and need some succulent food in their diet. Loss of water in the excretion of nitrogenous wastes is held to a minimum due to the efficiency of the kidneys. They have several burrows, one or more of which contains a nest, with others for retreat or escape. During the summer the squirrels occupy burrows individually, except for the association of females and unweaned young. In the winter however, the animals live several in a burrow, conserving heat during the night by huddling. They are not territorial, but a linear dominance hierarchy occurs among members of local groups. Annual mortality is high.

REPRODUCTION: Four to ten young are born in spring after a gestation of about 30-35 days. The young remain in the burrow for another month before emerging. Females seemingly produce but one litter a year. Since hibernation is not a part of their life history, the young are not under pressure to accumulate winter reserves. It has been noted that squirrels in Arizona can be pregnant or lactating in April and May. One juvenile taken on August 20 appeared to be only 1 ½ to 2 months old. If so it would have been born in late June or early July. (Hoffmeister 1986)

FOOD HABITS: They are opportunistic feeders, making use of what is available. Their diet consists of seeds, green vegetation, insects, reptiles and mammals. They not only hoard food items in their burrows, but also make caches in the ground like many tree squirrels. Whether they successfully relocate these caches is not known.

HABITAT: Pinyon-juniper, with sparse vegetation.

ELEVATION: 2,000 - 6,500 ft. (610-1,981 m).

PLANT COMMUNITY: Lower sonoran zone.

POPULATION TRENDS: Unknown.

SPECIES PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT STATUS: None
STATE STATUS: 2 (AZGFD, AWCS 2022)
[1B (AGFD, SWAP 2012)]
OTHER STATUS: Not Forest Service Sensitive (USDA, FS 2007, 2013)
[Forest Service Sensitive (USDA, FS Region 3 1999)]

MANAGEMENT FACTORS: Unknown.

PROTECTIVE MEASURES TAKEN: Unknown.

SUGGESTED PROJECTS:

LAND MANAGEMENT/OWNERSHIP: The land containing *Ammospermophilus leucurus tersus* is owned by the National Park Service and the BIA-Hualapai Indian Reservation.

SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION

REFERENCES:

- Arizona Game and Fish Department. 2012. Arizona's State Wildlife Action Plan 2012-2022. Arizona Game and Fish Department, Phoenix, Arizona. 233 pages
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<https://www.departments.bucknell.edu/biology/resources/msw3/>

MAJOR KNOWLEDGEABLE INDIVIDUALS:

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

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