

ARIZONA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT
HERITAGE DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Animal Abstract

Element Code: AMAFF11022

Data Sensitivity: No

CLASSIFICATION, NOMENCLATURE, DESCRIPTION, RANGE

NAME: *Microtus montanus arizonensis*

COMMON NAME: Arizona Montane vole, Arizona Montane mouse, Mountain vole, Montane vole,

SYNONYMS:

FAMILY: Cricetidae

AUTHOR, PLACE OF PUBLICATION: V. Baily, 1898, Proc. Biol. Soc. Washington, 12:87.

TYPE LOCALITY: Springerville, Apache Co. Arizona, 1980.

TYPE SPECIMEN: USNM (24778/32179)

TAXONOMIC UNIQUENESS: One of 17 species in the genus *Microtus* found in North America. Two other *Microtus* occur in Arizona, *M. longicaudus* (Longtailed vole) and *M. mexicanus* (Mexican vole), although there has been research to suggest that *M. mexicanus* in Arizona, is a subspecies of *M. mogollonensis*. There are 15 subspecies of *M. montanus* distributed throughout North America. Only *M.m. arizonensis* is found in Arizona.

DESCRIPTION: A medium sized vole with four pairs of mammae, two pairs inguinal and two pairs pectoral. Tail length 24-64 mm (1-2.5 in) , which is less than 1/3 of the head and body length. Total length is 140-220 mm (5.5-8.6 in) and total weight is 18-90 g (1-5.5 oz). Color is grizzled brown to blackish above, often with buff tint, the black hairs of venter tipped with white; white to gray below. Incisive foramina tapered or constricted posteriorly; temporal ridges well developed and coalescing, or nearly so in adults. Auditory bullae small; prelamdoidal breadth usually 9.3 mm or less. Most adult males have oily skin glands on their hips.

AIDS TO IDENTIFICATION: *Microtus montanus* differs from *M. longicaudus* in its relatively short tail (29-39% of body and head length, rather than 40% or more), and narrower skull. Differs from *M. mexicanus* in having a longer tail (greater than 29% of head and body length rather than less than 29%) and having four pairs of mammae rather than two. In some ways is more like *M.m. amosus* and *M.m. ruvularis* in south-central Utah nearly 300 miles to the northwest.

ILLUSTRATIONS:

Color photo of species (Wilson and Ruff, 1999)

Color photo of species (Whitaker, Jr. 1996: plate 127)

TOTAL RANGE: The montane vole (*M. montanus*) is distributed throughout North America, occurring from British Columbia and Montana southward to east-central California, Arizona and New Mexico. Sub-species *M.m. arizonensis* occurs in central-eastern Arizona and adjacent New Mexico.

RANGE WITHIN ARIZONA: East-central Arizona in the White Mountains and Blue Range in Apache and Greenlee counties.

SPECIES BIOLOGY AND POPULATION TRENDS

BIOLOGY: Montane voles live in burrows and runways in tall dense grass. They tend to be diurnally active throughout the year. Typical of microtines, populations tend to fluctuate dramatically exhibiting a 3-4 year cycle. Males and females both maintain territories although male territories are larger and while completely excluding other males, include several females. Females have smaller territories but will drive away only other females and only during estrus. When population numbers are low, the female will voluntarily move to a new territory after weaning her young. When numbers are high though, she will force the young out. This usually results in high mortality for the inexperienced young. Predators include owls, hawks, weasels, snakes, coyotes, and bobcats.

REPRODUCTION: Primary breeding season in Arizona is March to early September, but breeding can happen all year-round depending on population density. A nest of dried grasses is constructed within a burrow excavated in moist soil. Females are sexually mature at about 3 weeks and can breed shortly after giving birth to a litter. Gestation period is about 21 days. Average litter size is about 6, ranges 1-10. Young wean at 3 weeks. They average 2 to 3 litters a year. First litter can reproduce that year. Green vegetation stimulates reproduction, while dead vegetation inhibits it.

FOOD HABITS: These voles mainly eat grasses, sedges, leaves and plant stems, but occasionally take insects.

HABITAT: In Arizona they seem to prefer dense damp to wet grassy areas at high (alpine like) elevations. They make runways through the tall grass. Often found in marshy areas or near streams. For the species, as its name implies, it is found primarily in the mountains, and its elevational distribution extends above timberline.

ELEVATION: 6,900-9,500 ft (2103-2896 m), mostly above 7,500 ft. Based on records in the Heritage Data Management System, elevation in Arizona ranges from 6,950-11,300 ft (2118-3444 m) (AGFD, unpublished data accessed 2004).

PLANT COMMUNITY: Moist grassy habitats in montane coniferous forests. However, it is most common in open mesic grassland.

POPULATION TRENDS: Unknown

SPECIES PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT STATUS: None (USDI, FWS 1991)
[3C USDI, FWS 1985, 1989]

STATE STATUS: None (AZGFD, AWCS 2022)
[1B (AGFD SWAP 2012)]

OTHER STATUS: Endangered (NMGF, 1996)
Forest Service Sensitive (USDA, FS Region
3 2007, 2013)
None (USDA, FS Region 3, 1999)
[Forest Service Sensitive USDA, FS Region
3 1988]

MANAGEMENT FACTORS: Alteration of water courses and over grazing can have negative effects on vole populations.

PROTECTIVE MEASURES TAKEN: Unknown

SUGGESTED PROJECTS: Surveys need to be performed to determine the status of this subspecies as well as life history.

LAND MANAGEMENT/OWNERSHIP: BIA – Fort Apache Reservation; USFS – Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest; Private.

SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION

REFERENCES:

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MAJOR KNOWLEDGEABLE INDIVIDUALS:**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

Among the diseases carried by the montane vole are tularemia and girardia. *Microtus montanus* has been used extensively in laboratories as an experimental model for the study of human disease, especially African trypanosomiasis.

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