

California Wildlife Habitat Relationships System
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
California Interagency Wildlife Task Group

MERRIAM'S CHIPMUNK

Tamias merriami

Family: SCIURIDAE
M060

Order: RODENTIA

Class: MAMMALIA

Written by: T. Harvey, C. Polite

Reviewed by: M. White

Edited by: M. White

DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

Permanent, locally common resident of chaparral, hardwood, and coniferous habitats that support substantial brush understory. Occurs below 2700 m (8900 ft) in the South Coast, Transverse, Peninsular, and southern Sierra Nevada Ranges.

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Merriam's chipmunks are herbivorous. They eat acorns, and other seeds and nuts of conifers, manzanita, juniper, and various chaparral species. They search for, and gather, food on the ground, in shrubs, and on stumps, logs, and snags. They may cache food for later use.

Cover: Prefer heavy brush with associated oaks and rock outcrops as well as logs, stumps, snags, rocks, and litter. Burrows also provide cover.

Reproduction: Nests are built in logs, stumps, snags, and in burrows.

Water: Will drink water when it is available (Miller and Stebbins 1964).

Pattern: Heavy brush associated with oaks, rock outcrops, logs, stumps, snags, and litter required by Merriam's chipmunks.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Diurnal activity; hibernate in winter.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Non-migratory.

Home Range: No data found.

Territory: Solitary; probably defend immediate vicinity of burrow.

Reproduction: Merriam's chipmunks breed from mid-January through June, with peak activity in April. Gestation period about 30 days. Litter size averages 4; range 3-8 (Miller and Stebbins 1964). Females produce 1 litter per yr. Individuals are sexually mature within first yr.

Niche: Potential predators include long-tailed weasels, bobcats, coyotes, domestic cats, and various hawks and owls. Merriam's chipmunks occupy the lowest altitudinal zone of any chipmunk on the western slope of the Sierra Nevada. Potential competition for food may occur with black bears, mule deer, wild pigs, and several species of deer mice, kangaroo rats, and woodrats.

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