

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

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CHAPARRAL CHIPMUNK

*Tamias obscurus*

Family: SCIURIDAE  
M061

Order: RODENTIA

Class: MAMMALIA

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#### DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

The chaparral chipmunk occurs in the San Bernardino, Eagle, San Jacinto, and Santa Rosa Mts. of southern California, and in extreme south-central California near the Mexican border in Imperial and San Diego cos. It is abundant in pinyon-juniper, chamise-redshank and mixed chaparral, and ponderosa pine habitats within its range. Elevational range is from 760-2600 m (2500-8500 ft). The species is uncommon to common in a variety of other habitats, including valley foothill hardwood and Joshua tree.

#### SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

**Feeding:** Food items reported include pinyon nuts, acorns, manzanita and juniper fruits. Probably eats a variety of seeds and fruits of grasses, forbs, and shrubs. Forages on the ground, and in shrubs and trees. May use feeding stations on logs and rocks.

**Cover:** Probably uses rocks, logs, brush, and trees for cover. Retreats to shade in when hot.

**Reproduction:** Probably nests in logs and underground burrows.

**Water:** Water sources other than food are not necessary, but are used if available.

**Pattern:** In Joshua tree habitat, it occurs mainly where there are rocks and junipers.

#### SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

**Activity Patterns:** Diurnal. Seasonal pattern unknown. Probably active year-round in most of its range.

**Seasonal Movements/Migration:** None reported.

**Home Range:** No data found. Probably similar to *T. merriami*.

**Territory:** No data found. Probably similar to *T. merriami*.

**Reproduction:** Breeds January to June. Most females lactate in May. Litter size averages about 4 (Miller and Stebbins 1964).

**Niche:** This small, diurnal omnivore is similar to *T. merriami*, from which it has recently been separated (Callahan 1977). It occupies a wider range of habitats than most California chipmunks and, like *T. minimus* exhibits ecological release, using a wider range of habitats when it occurs alone than when it occurs with other chipmunks. North of San Geronio Pass, *T. obscurus* is replaced by *T. merriami* in plant communities higher than pinyon-juniper

woodland (at about 2100 m/7000 ft). South of San Geronio Pass, the species are distributed in an opposite pattern: *T. obscurus* replaces *T. merriami* in plant communities higher than pinyon-juniper woodlands. In the Santa Rosa Mts., where *T. obscurus* occurs alone, it occupies the full range of suitable habitats, from the upper edge of desert succulent shrub through yellow pine forest (Callahan 1977). Predators probably include raptors, weasels, coyotes, foxes, and bobcats.

#### REFERENCES

- Callahan, J. R. 1976. Systematics and biogeography of the *Eutamias obscurus* complex (Rodentia, Sciuridae). Ph.D. Thesis, Univ. Arizona, Tucson. 198pp.
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- Miller, A. H., and R. C. Stebbins. 1964. The lives of desert animals in Joshua Tree National Monument. Univ. California Press, Berkeley. 452pp.
- Ryan, R. M. 1968. Mammals of Deep Canyon, Colorado Desert, California. Desert Museum, Palm Springs. 137pp.

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Life history accounts for species in the California Wildlife Habitat Relationships (CWHR) System were originally published in: Zeiner, D.C., W.F.Laudenslayer, Jr., K.E. Mayer, and M. White, eds. 1988-1990. California's Wildlife. Vol. I-III. California Department of Fish and Game, Sacramento, California. Updates are noted in accounts that have been added or edited since original publication.