

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

MOUNTAIN POCKET GOPHER

Thomomys monticola

Family: GEOMYIDAE
M085

Order: RODENTIA

Class: MAMMALIA

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

In California, the mountain pocket gopher occurs at elevations above 1520 m (5000 ft) in the Sierra Nevada, from Fresno Co. north to Shasta and Lassen cos. Occurs also in southeastern Siskiyou Co. and western Modoc Co. Abundant in alpine dwarf-shrub, perennial grassland, and wet meadow habitats. Deep soils at the margins of mountain meadows are preferred (Ingles 1952). Uncommon to common in a wide variety of habitats, including annual grassland and open forests and brushlands.

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Feeds underground on roots, tubers, and bulbs, and above ground on stems and leaves of forbs and grasses. Shrubs and tree seedlings occasionally are eaten. Gophers may damage young conifers. Food, such as roots of *Lewisia* and small *Brodiaea*, may be stored in underground cavities.

Cover: Burrows are dug in friable soil. Complex underground tunnel systems are constructed, breaking surface where plants are taken and earth is pushed up in mounds.

Reproduction: A nest of dried vegetation is constructed in an underground nest chamber.

Water: Water is obtained from food.

Pattern: Deep, friable soils with moderate herbaceous cover are preferred.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Active throughout the day, although more active at night.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Non-migratory.

Home Range: At Huntington Lake, home ranges were up to 0.2 ha (0.5 ac), but as small as 8 m² (85 ft²) (Ingles 1952).

Territory: Adult males are aggressively solitary toward other males. Adult male territories usually include several female territories.

Reproduction: Breeds from May to July. Gestation period unknown, but probably 3-4 wk. Litter size averages 3-4 (range 2-8) (Verner and Boss 1980). Usually 1 litter per yr. Probably breeds the spring following birth.

Niche: Predators include owls, hawks, coyotes, foxes, skunks, badgers, bobcats, weasels, and snakes. Of these, owls probably are the most important. Burrowing activities

aid in mixing and building of soils, and percolation of water. To protect populations, overgrazing should be avoided.

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