

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

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WHITE-EARED POCKET MOUSE

*Perognathus alticolus*

Family: HETEROMYIDAE  
M089

Order: RODENTIA

Class: MAMMALIA

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#### DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

The white-eared pocket mouse historically has been found in isolated, montane areas in the Tehachapi Mts., and in the San Bernardino Mts. in the vicinity of Strawberry Peak. Its elevational range is 1070-1800 m (3500-5900 ft). The white-eared pocket mouse is poorly known, but appears to be a scarce resident in ponderosa and Jeffrey pine habitats, and uncommon in mixed chaparral and sagebrush habitats. It recently has been captured in a fallow field dominated by Russian thistle. Apparently no specimens have been collected since 1938 in the San Bernardino Mts.; this population may no longer exist.

#### SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

**Feeding:** Feeds on plant seeds, probably preferring various grass seeds, and perhaps some insects. Forages on open ground and beneath shrubs.

**Cover:** Burrows are constructed in loose soil. The closely related Great Basin pocket mouse is more common in denser shrub habitats.

**Reproduction:** A nest of dried grass is built in a chamber of the underground burrow.

**Water:** No data found. Probably does not require free water.

**Pattern:** Grinnell (1933) stated that the species occupies dry, open pine forest where bracken fern grows. Current pattern is unclear.

#### SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

**Activity Patterns:** Nocturnal. Aestivates in very hot weather, and hibernates in very cold weather.

**Seasonal Movements/Migration:** None.

**Home Range:** No data found.

**Territory:** No data found.

**Reproduction:** No data found. Reproduction of related *P. parvus* is March to April, with peak in June. Gestation likely 21-28 days. Litter size ranges 3-8 with average of 5. Weaning likely within 3 wk.

**Niche:** Likely predators include foxes, coyotes, weasels, owls, and snakes.

**Comments:** The white-eared pocket mouse, like the yellow-eared pocket mouse, probably

represents a relict distribution of *P. parvus* in California. *P. parvus* is endemic to sagebrush habitats; *P. alticola* and *P. xanthonotus* also inhabit chaparral-sagebrush habitats. Inferences about life history of *P. alticola* and *P. xanthonotus* from data on *P. parvus* probably are correct and are used extensively above. James Sulentic and David Huckaby of California State University, Long Beach investigated *P. alticola*, and captured only 3 specimens in extensive trapping in 1979 and 1980. The species may be in danger of extinction.

#### REFERENCES

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- Williams, D. F. 1978. Karyological affinities of the species groups of silky pocket mice (Rodentia, Heteromyidae). J. Mammal. 59:599-612.
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