

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

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CALIFORNIA POCKET MOUSE

*Chaetodipus californicus*

Family: HETEROMYIDAE  
M095

Order: RODENTIA

Class: MAMMALIA

Written by: P. Brylski  
Reviewed by: H. Shellhammer  
Edited by: R. Duke

**DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY**

Distributed in California from San Francisco Bay south to the border of Mexico, east to the edge of the Great Valley. Also from Auburn south along the foothills of the Sierra Nevada, and west across the Tehachapi Mts. to the coast. The California pocket mouse inhabits a variety of habitats year-round, including coastal scrub, chamise-redshank and montane chaparral, sagebrush, annual grassland, valley foothill hardwood, valley foothill hardwood-conifer, and montane hardwood habitats. Ranges in elevation from sea level to 2400 m (7900 ft).

**SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS**

**Feeding:** The California pocket mouse feeds mainly on the seeds of annual grasses and forbs, and probably consumes leafy vegetation and insects seasonally. It forages mainly on the ground, but apparently also climbs up into shrubs.

**Cover:** Occurs in brushy areas but probably is attracted to grass-chaparral edge. Grazing of grassland by domestic stock eliminates cover necessary for predator avoidance.

**Reproduction:** Young born in burrows dug in soft soil.

**Water:** Obtained from moisture in seeds and leafy vegetation, and metabolically from foods.

**Pattern:** The California pocket mouse occurs in chaparral and in grassland, but probably reaches its greatest abundance where these 2 habitats occur in close proximity.

**SPECIES LIFE HISTORY**

**Activity Patterns:** Nocturnal. As with other pocket mice, shows reduced activity above ground during winter cold spells (Tinkle and Harmon 1970). Tucker (1966) induced torpor in laboratory animals by limiting food supply. Tucker (1962) noted that torpor could be ended by dropping temperature below 15°C (59°F).

**Seasonal Movements/Migration:** None.

**Home Range:** No data found.

**Territory:** Aggressively solitary. Territory probably equals home range.

**Reproduction:** Usually 4 young are born (range 2-7) between April and July (Eisenberg and Isaac 1963). Gestation period is 3-4 wk.

Niche: Predators include coyotes, bobcats, owls, and snakes. As a small-bodied granivore, the California pocket mouse probably competes with *Dipodomys heermanni* and *Peromyscus* spp.

#### REFERENCES

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- Tucker, V. A. 1962. Diurnal torpidity in the California pocket mouse. *Science* 136:380-381.
- Tucker, V. A. 1966. Diurnal torpor and its relation to food consumption and weight changes in the California pocket mouse, *Perognathus californicus*. *Ecology* 47:245-252.

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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.