

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

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YELLOW-CHEEKED CHIPMUNK

*Neotamias ochrogenys*

Family: SCIURIDAE  
M056

Order: RODENTIA

Class: MAMMALIA

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#### DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

A locally common, yearlong resident of redwood and mixed coniferous forests of the North Coast Ranges, from Humboldt Co. south to near the Marin Co. line and eastward as far as 40 km from the Pacific Coast (Sutton and Nadler 1974). This species occurs at elevations from sea level to 1280 m (4200 ft) (Gannon 1999).

#### SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

**Feeding:** Examination of cheek pouches indicates this species eats fungi in late winter and early spring. Other food items retrieved include western raspberry (*Rubus leucodermis*) in fall; buckthorn (*Rhamnus*) and blue blossom (*Ceanothus*) in September, October, January and March; wax myrtle (*Myrica californica*), California huckleberry (*Vaccinium ovatum*), poison oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum*), bull thistle (*Cirsium*) in September; Scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) in November; and oak acorns (*Lithospermum* or *Quercus*) in September, January, March, and April. Grass seeds and terrestrial insects are also consumed (Gannon 1999). Chipmunks forage on the ground in log-strewn forests, and in adjacent chaparral habitats. They may climb the trunks and on lower branches of trees and shrubs to gather food (Johnson 1943).

**Cover:** These chipmunks use dense undergrowth and burrows for cover.

**Reproduction:** Nests are located in burrows or in trees.

**Water:** No data found.

**Pattern:** These chipmunks probably require small areas of heavy understory in brush and forest habitats (Grinnell 1933).

#### SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

**Activity Patterns:** Diurnal activity. Probably hibernate from October through March or April.

**Seasonal Movements/Migration:** Non-migratory.

**Home Range:** No data found for *T. ochrogenys*. In Oregon, home ranges of the closely related *T. townsendii* varied from 0.5-1.0 ha (1.25-2.47 ac) (Gashwiler 1965).

**Territory:** No data found.

**Reproduction:** Mating occurs from mid-March into the summer months. Typical litter size is 3-4 young (Gannon 1999).

Niche: Until recently, *T. ochrogenys* was considered a race of *T. townsendii*. See Sutton and Nadler (1974); also see Burt and Grossenheider 1964 and 1976. Potential predators include spotted skunks, minks, long-tailed weasels, martens, domestic cats, great horned owls, and various hawks. Yellow-cheeked chipmunks are parapatric with *T. senex* to the north and *T. sonomae* to the east. Potential competition with ground squirrels and other ground-dwelling species with similar food and cover requirements, in part, may be reduced by *T. ochrogenys*' ability to use arboreal habitats.

## REFERENCES

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