

FIELD GUIDE TO NORTH AMERICAN MAMMALS

Bailey's Pocket Mouse
(Chaetodipus baileyi)

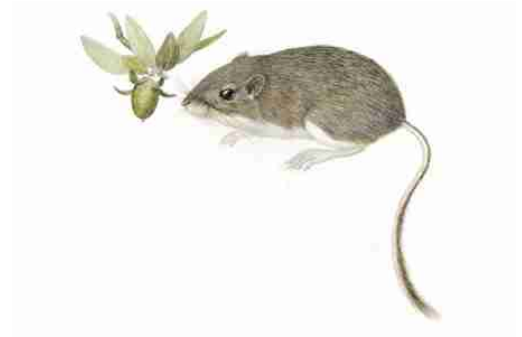
ORDER: Rodentia
FAMILY: Heteromyidae

Bailey's Pocket Mice are solitary, nocturnal, and live in burrows. Pocket Mice mostly eat seeds, using their "pockets," fur-lined, external cheek pouches, to bring seeds to their nests, where they store them in preparation for leaner times. The fur lining of the cheek pouches in members of the family Heteromyidae is an adaptation for desert life: the seeds the rodents carry do not absorb body water the way they would if they were carried in the mouth. Bailey's Pocket Mouse is the only Sonoran desert rodent able to eat jojoba seeds, which are toxic to most mammals.

Sexual Dimorphism:
Males are larger than females.

Length:
Average: 211 mm males; 201 mm females
Range: 206–240 mm males; 176–228 mm females

Weight:
Average: 28.2 g males; 24.5 g females



Credit: painting by Elizabeth McClelland from Kays and Wilson's Mammals of North America, © Princeton University Press (2002)



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Chihuahuan Pocket Mouse
(Chaetodipus eremicus)

ORDER: Rodentia
FAMILY: Heteromyidae

The Chihuahuan Pocket Mouse differs only slightly in appearance from the Desert Pocket Mouse (*Chaetodipus penicillatus*) but there is little overlap in their geographic ranges. The Chihuahuan Pocket Mouse is a bit larger and lighter than its cousin and is found in the Chihuahua desert in southern New Mexico, western Texas, and parts of northeastern Mexico (Chihuahua, Coahuila de Zaragoza, Durango and Zacatecas). Genetic markers have provided the evidence that this is indeed a different species from *C. penicillatus*, its western cousin.

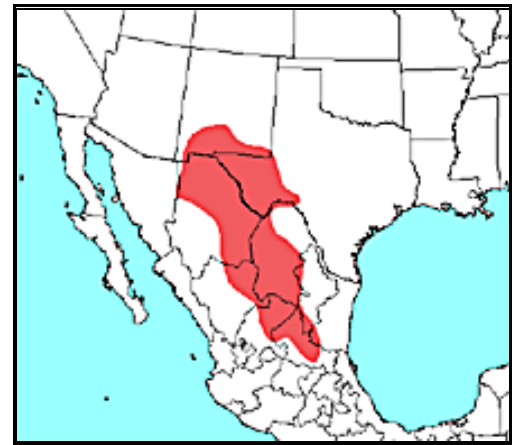


Chaetodipus eremicus – Chihuahuan pocket mouse
Credit: painting by Elizabeth McClelland from Kays and Wilson's *Mammals of North America*, © Princeton University Press (2002)

Also known as:
Eastern Desert Pocket Mouse

Length:
Range: 155–185 mm

Weight:
Range: 13–20 g



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Hispid Pocket Mouse
(Chaetodipus hispidus)

ORDER: Rodentia
FAMILY: Heteromyidae

"Hispid" refers to the coarseness of this pocket mouse's fur. Hispid Pocket Mice are larger and more robust than other pocket mice in their range, and like the others, they are solitary except in the breeding season. The gestation period is not known, but females in the northern part of the range may have two litters of 4–7 young a year. In the southern part of the range, mating activity has been seen year-round.

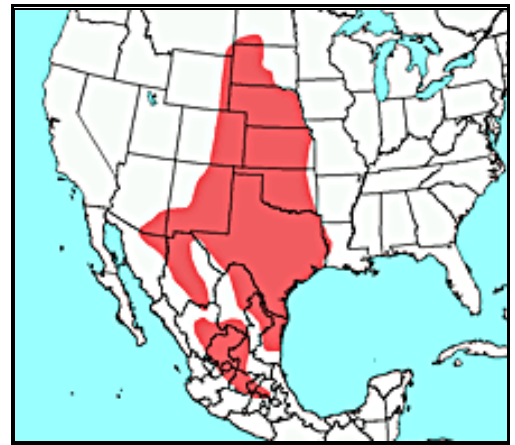


Credit: painting by Elizabeth McClelland from Kays and Wilson's Mammals of North America, © Princeton University Press (2002)

Sexual Dimorphism:
None

Length:
Range: 198–223 mm

Weight:
Range: 30–47 g



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Rock Pocket Mouse
(Chaetodipus intermedius)

ORDER: Rodentia
FAMILY: Heteromyidae

As their name indicates, Rock Pocket Mice dwell in rocky habitats, and only rarely live in areas with sandy or silty soils. Their inconspicuous burrows are located near or under rocks, in rocky gulches or canyons, or near boulders. The mouse pictured is sitting on a lava rock, probably in New Mexico, and the color of its fur blends with the dark rock. This is typical of pocket mice – their color often matches the background color of their habitat. Rock Pocket Mice breed from February or March through July, and young have been seen from April through August.



Credit: painting by Elizabeth McClelland from Kays and Wilson's Mammals of North America, © Princeton University Press (2002)

Also known as:
Intermediate Pocket Mouse

Length:
Average: 172 mm
Range: 157–188 mm

Weight:
Range: 10.5–19.9 g



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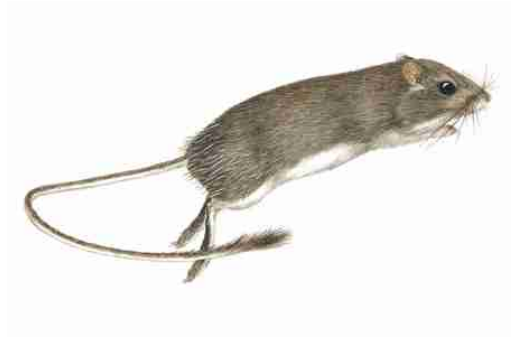
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Nelson's Pocket Mouse
(Chaetodipus nelsoni)

ORDER: Rodentia
FAMILY: Heteromyidae

Nelson's Pocket Mice live in the Chihuahuan Desert of north-central Mexico and adjacent parts of western Texas and southern New Mexico. They are found mostly in rocky areas where there are some shrubs to provide cover. Kangaroo rats, woodrats, and deermice are often found in the same habitat. Many species of pocket mice become inactive during the winter, but Nelson's Pocket Mouse remains active all year, feeding on shrub and grass seeds. Only about 14 percent live longer than one year.

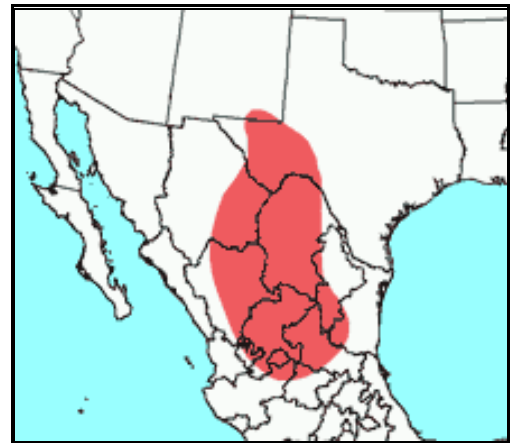


Credit: painting by Elizabeth McClelland from Kays and Wilson's Mammals of North America, © Princeton University Press (2002)

Sexual Dimorphism:
None

Length:
Range: 182–193 mm

Weight:
Range: 14–18 g



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Desert Pocket Mouse
(Chaetodipus penicillatus)

ORDER: Rodentia
FAMILY: Heteromyidae

The Desert Pocket Mouse is a common inhabitant of warm deserts throughout the United States and Mexico. It prefers sandy soil and avoids rocky settings, and like other pocket mice, comes out at night to search for seeds. It favors large seeds such as palo verde and mesquite, and uses the shrubs as shelter and protection from predators such as owls while it forages. In winter, these pocket Mice lower their body temperature and enter a state of inactivity known as torpor. They wake occasionally to nibble on the food they have stored. This saves energy and helps them get through the winter.



Chaetodipus penicillatus – Desert Pocket Mouse
Credit: painting by Elizabeth McClelland from Kays and Wilson's *Mammals of North America*, © Princeton University Press (2002)

Also known as:
Sonoran Desert Pocket Mouse

Length:
Average: 170 mm
Range: 155–185 mm

Weight:
Average: 16 g
Range: 13–20 g



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Merriam's Kangaroo Rat
(Dipodomys merriami)

ORDER: Rodentia
 FAMILY: Heteromyidae

Like all members of the family Heteromyidae, Merriam's Kangaroo Rat is found only in the New World. Many kangaroo rats have rather specific habitat preferences, but Merriam's Kangaroo Rat is not one of these. It can inhabit arid regions where the ground is predominantly rocks, gravel, sand, or clay. Like other kangaroo rats (and kangaroo mice), it specializes in bipedal locomotion, which means that it usually moves around by hopping on two feet, like a chubby little kangaroo. The hindquarters of kangaroo rats and mice are strong and well developed to support this method of locomotion. Some kangaroo rats can leap 2 m (more than 6 feet) at a single bound.

Sexual Dimorphism:
 Males are larger than females.

Length:
 Average: 247 mm
 Range: 195–282 mm

Weight:
 Range: 33.2–53.1 g



Credit: painting by Elizabeth McClelland from Kays and Wilson's Mammals of North America, © Princeton University Press (2002)



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Ord's Kangaroo Rat
(Dipodomys ordii)

ORDER: Rodentia
FAMILY: Heteromyidae

By occupying the short grass prairie of the Great Plains, and a variety of habitats where there are fine-textured, sandy soils, Ord's Kangaroo Rat has managed a truly enormous geographic distribution. The varied habitats that it occupies include semi-arid grasslands, mixed-grasslands, and scrublands. This ecological variation, together with the considerable geographic range, has contributed to the fact that more than 30 subspecies have been named. Ord's Kangaroo Rats are most active on cloudy nights. They usually stay in their burrows in bad weather and especially on clear, moonlit nights when owls can spot them most easily. Other predators include foxes, coyotes, badgers, and long-tailed weasels.



Credit: painting by Elizabeth McClelland from Kays and Wilson's Mammals of North America, © Princeton University Press (2002)

Sexual Dimorphism:

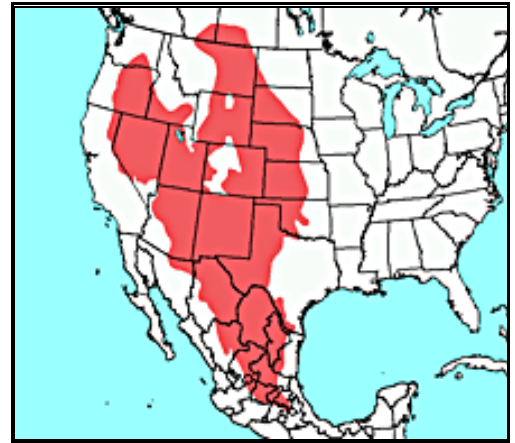
Males are larger than females.

Length:

Average: 243 mm males; 242 mm females
Range: 210–365 mm males; 208–360 mm females

Weight:

Average: 52 g



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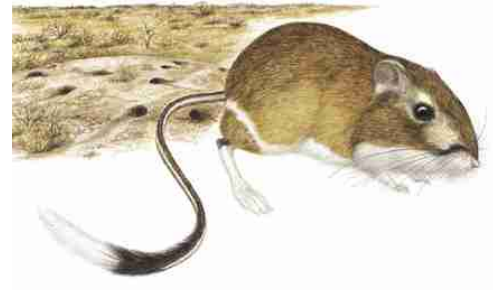


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Banner-tailed Kangaroo Rat
(Dipodomys spectabilis)

ORDER: Rodentia
FAMILY: Heteromyidae

The Banner-tailed Kangaroo Rat confines its activities to small areas near the large earthen mounds that contain its complex burrow systems. Usually gentle and timid, this Kangaroo Rat will fight furiously to defend its territory from invasion by other Banner-tailed Kangaroo Rats. Foot-drumming on top of the mounds is used as a warning signal. Like other kangaroo rats, it sandbathes, both to clean its fur and to scent-mark its territory. The white tip on the end of its long tail waves as the animal moves around, giving this Kangaroo Rat both its common name, Banner-tailed, and its Latin scientific name, "spectabilis," which means visible, worth seeing, notable, admirable, or remarkable.



Credit: painting by Elizabeth McClelland from Kays and Wilson's Mammals of North America, © Princeton University Press (2002)

Sexual Dimorphism:
Males are larger than females.

Length:
Average: 342 mm males; 338 mm females
Range: 315–349 mm males; 310–345 mm females

Weight:
Average: 126 g males; 120 g females
Range: 100–132 g males; 98–130 g females



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Plains Pocket Mouse
(Perognathus flavescens)

ORDER: Rodentia
 FAMILY: Heteromyidae

The color of the Plains Pocket Mouse varies with soil color. The black volcanic sands near Flagstaff, Arizona harbor mice with nearly black fur, and mice with nearly white fur match the white gypsum dunes of New Mexico. Plains Pocket Mice are shy and nocturnal. Bright moonlit nights suppress their activity, perhaps because it would expose them to predators such as owls. Although Plains Pocket Mice are seed-eaters, they also eat insects, either when those are abundant, or when seeds are scarcer. When they are in their burrows, they plug the entrance with soil, and sometimes add another plug farther into the tunnel.



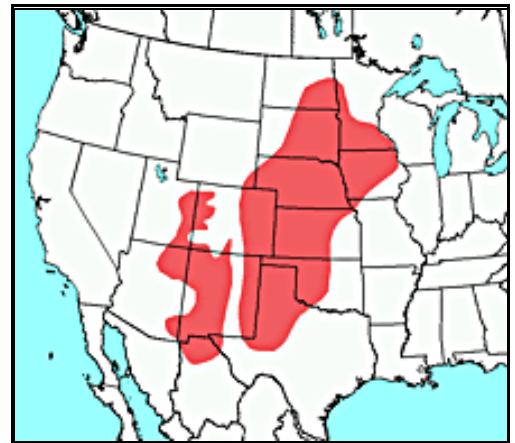
Credit: painting by Elizabeth McClelland from Kays and Wilson's Mammals of North America, © Princeton University Press (2002)

Also known as:
 Apache Pocket Mouse

Sexual Dimorphism:
 None

Length:
 Average: 132.3 mm
 Range: 117–155 mm

Weight:
 Average: 10.1 g
 Range: 7–16 g



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Silky Pocket Mouse
(*Perognathus flavus*)

ORDER: Rodentia
FAMILY: Heteromyidae

Conservation Status: The subspecies *P. flavus goodpasteri* (Goodpaster's silky pocket mouse) is Near Threatened.

The smallest *Perognathus* species of all, the Silky Pocket Mouse is among the smallest rodents in North America. These Mice are most active on cool, humid nights, typically foraging for fallen seeds by sifting sand with their tiny forepaws. Sometimes they climb the stems of grasses to harvest seeds that have not yet fallen. They carry nesting materials and seeds back to the burrow in their fur-lined cheek pouches, and store seeds within the burrow. The Mice do not hibernate in winter, but remain active within their burrows, fueled by a cache of seeds. Silky Pocket Mice have not often reproduced in captivity, so knowledge about their reproductive habits is somewhat sketchy. They are known to have one or two litters a year, depending on climate and food availability. Two to six young are born in a litter, after a gestation of about four weeks.

Also known as:
Baird's Pocket Mouse

Sexual Dimorphism:
None

Length:
Average: 113 mm
Range: 100–130 mm

Weight:
Range: 5–10 g



Perognathus flavus – indistinguishable visually from *P. merriami*; differentiated by territory
Credit: painting by Elizabeth McClelland from *Kays and Wilson's Mammals of North America*, © Princeton University Press (2002)



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Merriam's Pocket Mouse
(Perognathus merriami)

ORDER: Rodentia
 FAMILY: Heteromyidae

Merriam's Pocket Mice are found in short-grass prairie, desert scrub, and open, arid brushland. They are most common where the vegetation is dense enough to provide them with seeds and some protection from predators, but not so dense that it inhibits their movements. Grazed pastures suit their needs well. Their silky fur is yellowish-orange with a slight blackish tinge on the back, and their bellies are white to pale buff. A dark stripe runs just behind the nose, and a pale ring encircles each eye. They are very similar in appearance to Silky Pocket Mice and Plains Pocket Mice. They are docile, readily tamed, and easily kept in captivity.



Perognathus merriami – indistinguishable visually from *P. flavus*; differentiated by territory
 Credit: painting by Elizabeth McClelland from Kays and Wilson's *Mammals of North America*, © Princeton University Press (2002)

Sexual Dimorphism:
 None

Length:
 Average: 112 mm
 Range: 95–121 mm

Weight:
 Average: 8 g
 Range: 5–9 g



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