

Arizona Cotton Rat
(Sigmodon arizonae)

ORDER: Rodentia
FAMILY: Muridae

Conservation Status: *Sigmodon arizonae arizonae*, the Arizona cotton rat, is an Extinct subspecies; the Colorado River cotton rat, *S. arizonae plenus*, is Near Threatened.

All cotton rats have a strong connection with grass, which they feed upon, and in which they construct their runways. Within their range in southeast and central Arizona and western Mexico, Arizona cotton rats inhabit only grassy areas where there is enough water to support grasses, weeds, or brush. They are common around ponds and in irrigated fields. They give birth to fully-furred young who can run around within a few hours after they are born. Population booms sometimes occur shortly after periods of rain.

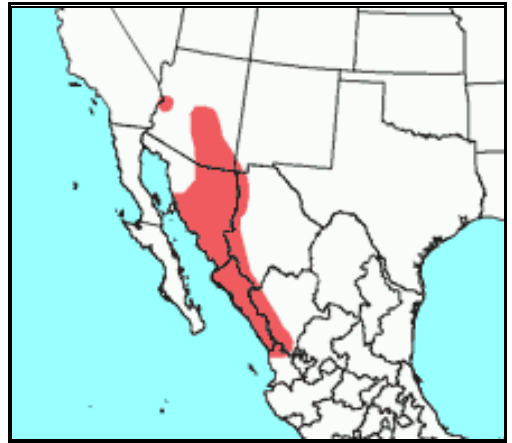
Length:
Range: 200–349 mm

Weight:
Average: 172 g
Range: 125–211 g



Sigmodon arizonae – right (with *S. fulviventor*)

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



FIELD NOTES

DATE: _____ LOCATION: _____

Tawny-bellied Cotton Rat
(Sigmodon fulviventor)

ORDER: Rodentia
 FAMILY: Muridae

Conservation Status: The Hot Springs cotton rat, *S. fulviventor goldmani*, is Extinct.

The tawny-bellied cotton rat is the largest of the *Sigmodon* species, and dominates other cotton rats where more than one species occurs. Its back fur has a speckled, "salt and pepper" look, and its underparts are buff-colored, giving it two common names: tawny-bellied and yellow-bellied. The tail is dark and has just enough hair to hide the scales. Like other cotton rats, and voles, the tawny-bellied cotton rat constructs grass-lined paths. Litters of 4 or 6 young are born in nests built from woven grasses. They leave the nest to run around when they are about a week old, and are sexually mature and ready to breed when they are about six weeks old.

Also known as:
 Yellow-bellied Cotton Rat

Sexual Dimorphism:
 None

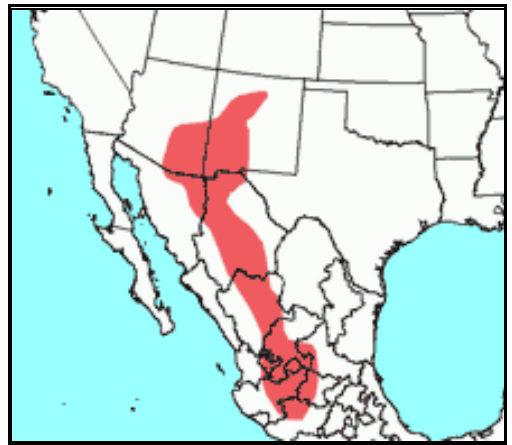
Length:
 Average: 246 mm
 Range: 223–270 mm

Weight:
 Range: 200–222 g



Sigmodon fulviventor – lower left (with *S. arizonae*)

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



FIELD NOTES

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Hispid Cotton Rat
(*Sigmodon hispidus*)

ORDER: Rodentia
FAMILY: Muridae

Conservation Status: Two subspecies, *S. hispidus eremicus* and *S. hispidus insulicola*, are Near Threatened.

The Hispid Cotton Rat's fur is sprinkled or streaked with blackish or dark brownish and grayish hairs. The Rats molt, losing and getting a new coat, three times in three months as they move through juvenile and subadult stages and into adulthood. Hispid Cotton Rats inhabit tall, dense grasses that protect them from birds of prey. Their range has recently expanded northward into central Virginia, Kentucky, northern Missouri, southern Nebraska, and northern New Mexico, and westward into western Colorado and the Imperial Valley of California. Where their range and the ranges of Prairie Voles and Pygmy Mice now overlap, the Hispid Cotton Rat appears to be competitively excluding these species.

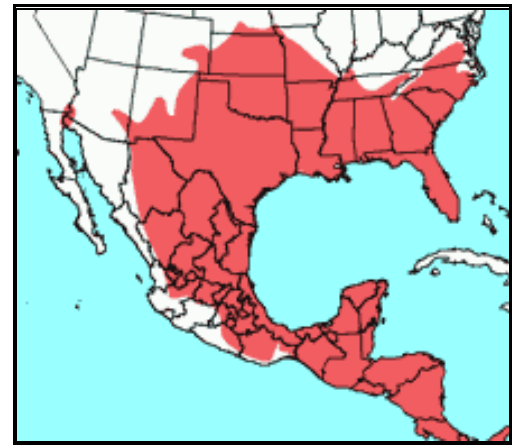
Sexual Dimorphism:
Males are larger than females.

Length:
Range: 224–365 mm

Weight:
Range: 110–225 g males; 100–200 g females



Sigmodon hispidus – upper right (with *S. ochrognathus*)
Credit: painting by Todd Zalewski from Kays and Wilson's *Mammals of North America*, © Princeton University Press (2002)



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Yellow-nosed Cotton Rat
(*Sigmodon ochrognathus*)

ORDER: Rodentia
FAMILY: Muridae

Voles and cotton rats usually live in different geographic regions, but both groups of small rodents eat grass and make runways. Yellow-nosed Cotton Rats are especially vole-like because they are small and live in grassy patches of habitat in mountains. They are found on isolated mountains at all elevations, sometimes using surface nests and sometimes building them underground. They have 2-6 young in a litter, at almost any season of the year except during the driest part of the summer. The young nurse for about 15 days, but in just over a week, they are also beginning to eat grass.

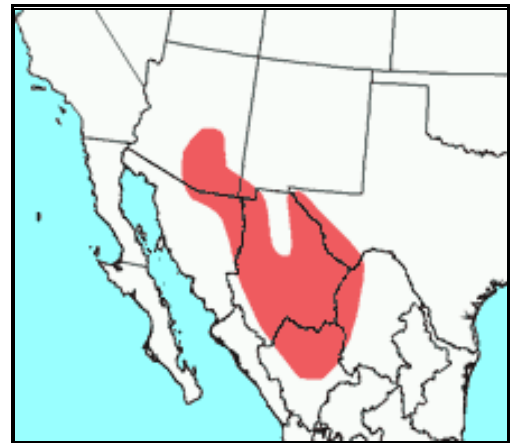
Sexual Dimorphism:
None

Length:
Range: 132-264 mm

Weight:
Range: 51-106 g



Sigmodon ochrognathus – lower left (with *S. hispidus*)
Credit: painting by Todd Zalewski from Kays and Wilson's *Mammals of North America*, © Princeton University Press (2002)



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