

Water Vole (*Microtus richardsoni*)



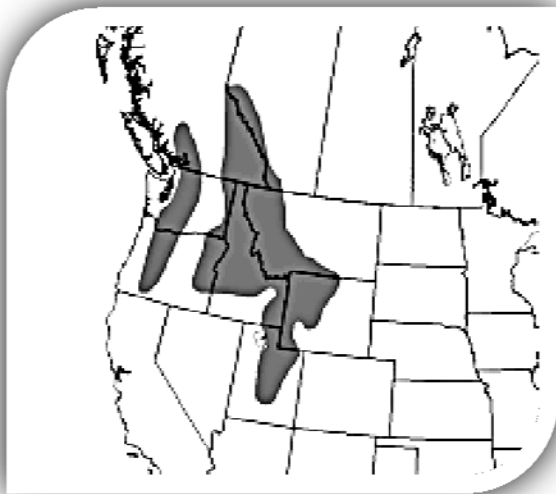
Taxonomy:

Family Cricetidae. Also called Richardson's vole, water rat, big-footed meadow mouse, and giant water vole. There are 4 recognized subspecies, including *Microtus richardsoni mylodonatus* the local subspecies.

Description:

Has long, grayish-brown or dark reddish-brown pelage on top with an underside that is usually gray or white. The tail has a dusky coloration on top and grayish below. Can be distinguished from other voles by its large hind feet.

Total length: 234-274 mm; Length of tail: 66-98 mm; Weight: 72-150 g (males) 68-140 g (females)



Distribution:

The water vole's range forms two disjunct bands: in the west, the range extends south from western British Columbia to the Blue and Cascade Mountains of Washington and Oregon. The eastern band extends from the Rockies of British Columbia southward into central Utah. They occur at high elevations along the Wasatch Front.

Ecology and Diet:

Are found in alpine and subalpine meadows close to water. Water voles are active throughout the day with peak activity occurring during periods of darkness and are active year round. They are capable swimmers and divers and feed on seeds, bulbs, roots, grasses and small arthropods.

Life History:

The breeding season lasts from June to August and with a gestation period of 22 days the young are born anytime from June to September. Litter size increase with reproductive experience and ranges from 2-10 offspring but usually the average is 5-6. The young are able to swim by day 17 and are fully weaned by day 21 and are sexually mature after 2 months.

Reference: Ludwig 1999.