

Rock squirrel (*Otospermophilus variegatus*)



Taxonomy:

Family Sciuridae. Eight subspecies are recognized. The regional subspecies is *Otospermophilus variegatus utah*.

Description:

Distinguished from other ground squirrels by its large size, variegated black, gray and white color, lack of stripes, and long bushy tail.

Total length: 430-540 mm; Tail: 172-252mm; Hind foot: 53-65mm; Ear: 15-29mm; Weight: 450-875 g.



Distribution:

Occurs from Colorado west to eastern Nevada and from northern Utah south into the Mexican state of Puebla. Common on the benches and foothills along the Wasatch Front.

Ecology and diet:

As the common name implies, these squirrels are commonly seen in rocky habitats such as boulder fields, talus, rocky hillsides, cliffs, and steep canyons. They are active during the daytime and nest in burrows under rocks and trees. The broad diet includes nuts, seeds, fruit, green vegetation, insects, and some small vertebrates.

Life History:

Mating occurs in the spring. Females have one or sometimes two litters of 3-5 offspring annually. Gestation length is undocumented. Individuals are sexually mature as yearlings. Maximum lifespan is estimated at 2-3 years.

References: Oaks et al. 1987.