

Masked Shrew (*Sorex cinereus*)



Taxonomy:

Family Soricidae. Also called Cinereus shrew, masked shrew, or common shrew. There are 8 subspecies including *Sorex cinereus streator* from the region.

Description:

The masked shrew is not distinctly marked. The back is brown, the underside is grayish white, and the tail has a blackish tip. In winter the pelage is darker overall.

Total Length: 75-125 mm; Tail Length: 28-50 mm; Weight: 2.2-5.4 g.



Distribution:

Found from Alaska southwards to northern Oregon and through the Rocky Mountains into parts of New Mexico. Can be found all across Canada and into the American northeast. Occurs at higher elevations in the mountains of the Wasatch Front.

Ecology and Diet:

The masked shrew is widely distributed and common in coniferous and northern deciduous forest biomes up to the timberline. It is found in a variety of habitats ranging from wet to quite dry, including forests, shrub thickets, and grassy and herbaceous areas. It feeds on insects and other invertebrates. It is rarely seen due to the fact that it is predominantly nocturnal.

Life History:

Breeding begins in the spring (April) and continues into the fall. Gestation time is unknown. Litter size ranges from 4-10, averaging 7. The newborns are about 15-17 mm long and are hairless, with fused eyelids. Their eyes open after 17 or 18 days, and they are weaned at approximately 20 days.

Reference: van Zyll de Jong 1999.