

Water shrew (*Sorex palustris*)



Taxonomy:

Family Soricidae. Also called American water shrew or northern water shrew. There are 10 subspecies including *Sorex palustris navigator* from the region.

Description:

Is the largest shrew in the region. Color is blackish gray above, silvery below. Tail is strongly bicolored, black above and silver below. Hind foot is large and fringed with stiff hairs.

Total length: 130-170 mm; Tail: 57-89 mm; Hind foot: 18-21 mm; Weight:: 8-18 g.



Distribution:

Southern Alaska south and east through the western mountains to south-central California, southern Utah, and northern New Mexico, and eastward from central Canada through the northern Great Lakes region to eastern Canada and the northeastern US. Common in the Wasatch Front at mid to high elevations.

Ecology and diet:

Water shrews are restricted to riparian habitat, usually along permanently flowing streams at mid to high elevations. Although mainly nocturnal, they are occasionally seen along streams during the day. Their diet consists

mostly of immature and adult aquatic insects, but includes other invertebrates, small aquatic vertebrates, and occasional fungi and plant matter.

Life History:

Births occur in the spring and summer. Gestation lasts about 3 weeks and a female may produce two or three litters of 3 to 10 young. Overwintering populations consist of young animals born the previous season. Most individuals reach sexual maturity during the late winter or early spring.

References: Beneski & Stinson 1987