

Bushy-tailed woodrat (*Neotoma cinerea*)



Taxonomy:

Family Cricetidae. Also called the pack rat or trade rat. Thirteen subspecies are recognized, including the regional subspecies *Neotoma cinerea acraia*.

Description:

Largest of the woodrats with a bushy tail that is almost 75% of body length. Tail is sharply bi-colored, white below and dusky above. Body is brownish-gray above and white below.

Total length: 273-470 mm; Tail: 120-223 mm; Hind foot: 30-52 mm; Weight: 166-585 g.



Distribution:

Southern Yukon south to the Sierra Nevada range, northeastern Arizona, and northern New Mexico. Elevational range from near sea level to 11,800 feet (3,600 m). Common at higher elevations along the Wasatch Front.

Ecology and diet:

Bushy-tailed woodrats have a broad diet that includes leaves, bark, seeds, and fruits. They live in sheltered rocky situations such as cave entrances or rock crevices in cliffs, talus slopes, and boulder fields, in habitats ranging from piñon-juniper woodland to alpine communities. In such areas they place sticks and other materials to build dens, forming

middens which, over multiple generations of use, can become very large. Woodrats urinate on middens, producing encrustations called amberat. Over time, the accumulated amberat preserves midden materials, some of which may be tens of thousands of years old.

Life History: Reproduction occurs between May through August. Females have 1-3 litters of 3-5 offspring annually. Gestation length is 27-32 days. Young are sexually mature as yearlings. Lifespan is approximately 3 years.

References: Smith 1997.