

Heather Vole (*Phenacomys intermedius*)



Taxonomy:

Family Cricetidae. There are 5 subspecies recognized including the local subspecies, *Phenacomys intermedius intermedius*.

Description:

Adults have long, silky hair that is speckled gray to brownish on top with a white to pale gray on the belly. There are distinguishable, stiff orange hairs in the ears. The tail is bicolored: dark gray above and white below, but the tail is sparsely haired.

Total length: 122-155 mm; Tail length: 26-41 mm; Weight: less than 30-40 g



Distribution:

Extends from northwestern British Columbia and southwestern Alberta south along the Cascade and Rocky Mountains into northern California and in select mountain ranges in Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, and Utah. Usually found at high elevations near or above the timberline.

Ecology and Diet:

Can be found in a variety of boreal habitats, including coniferous forest, riparian areas, as well as alpine and subalpine meadows. Heather voles prefer habitat with a shrub understory and are often times associated with low lying, wind blown bushes. They feed on the bark of heaths and willows as well as seeds and foliage.

Life History:

During the breeding season, which lasts from May to August, adults are solitary except for when they come together to mate. After a 19 day gestation period 2-9 young are produced per litter and a female can have up to 3 litters per year. The young are weaned after 18 days and reach sexual maturity after 4-6 weeks.

Reference: Hallett 1999.