

Southern Red-backed Vole (*Clethrionomys gapperi*)



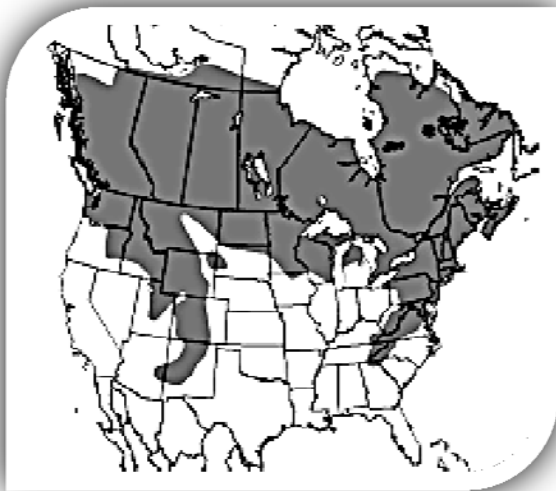
Taxonomy:

Family Cricetidae. Also known as red-backed mouse, boreal red-backed vole. There are 29 recognized subspecies, including *Clethrionomys gapperi galei* which occurs regionally.

Description:

Can easily be distinguished by a broad, reddish band stretching from its forehead to its rump. The nose, sides of the head and body are gray and the underbelly is usually silvery white to pale yellow. The tail is bicolored: dark brown on top and whitish below.

Total Length: 116-172 mm; Length of Tail: 30-50 mm; Weight: 6-42 g.



Distribution:

Occurs through much of Canada and northern US, south through the Rocky Mountain and Appalachian highlands. Locally, they are restricted to high elevations in the Wasatch and Uintah mountains.

Ecology and Diet:

These voles are active year-round and do not hibernate. They are most active at dusk and at night. Unlike some other voles they do not construct elaborate runways in the grass, instead they are semi-fossorial traveling in natural runways beneath logs rocks and the borrow systems of other small mammals. They are

omnivorous, opportunistic feeders eating nuts, seeds, berries, mosses, lichens, ferns, fungi, plants and arthropods.

Life History:

Breeding begins in late March and continues through November, but they do not breed during winter. Their gestation period lasts 17-19 days and give birth to 4-5 young per litter; 2-3 litters are produced annually. The young are weaned after 14 days and reach sexual maturity by 3 months.

Reference: Merritt 1999.