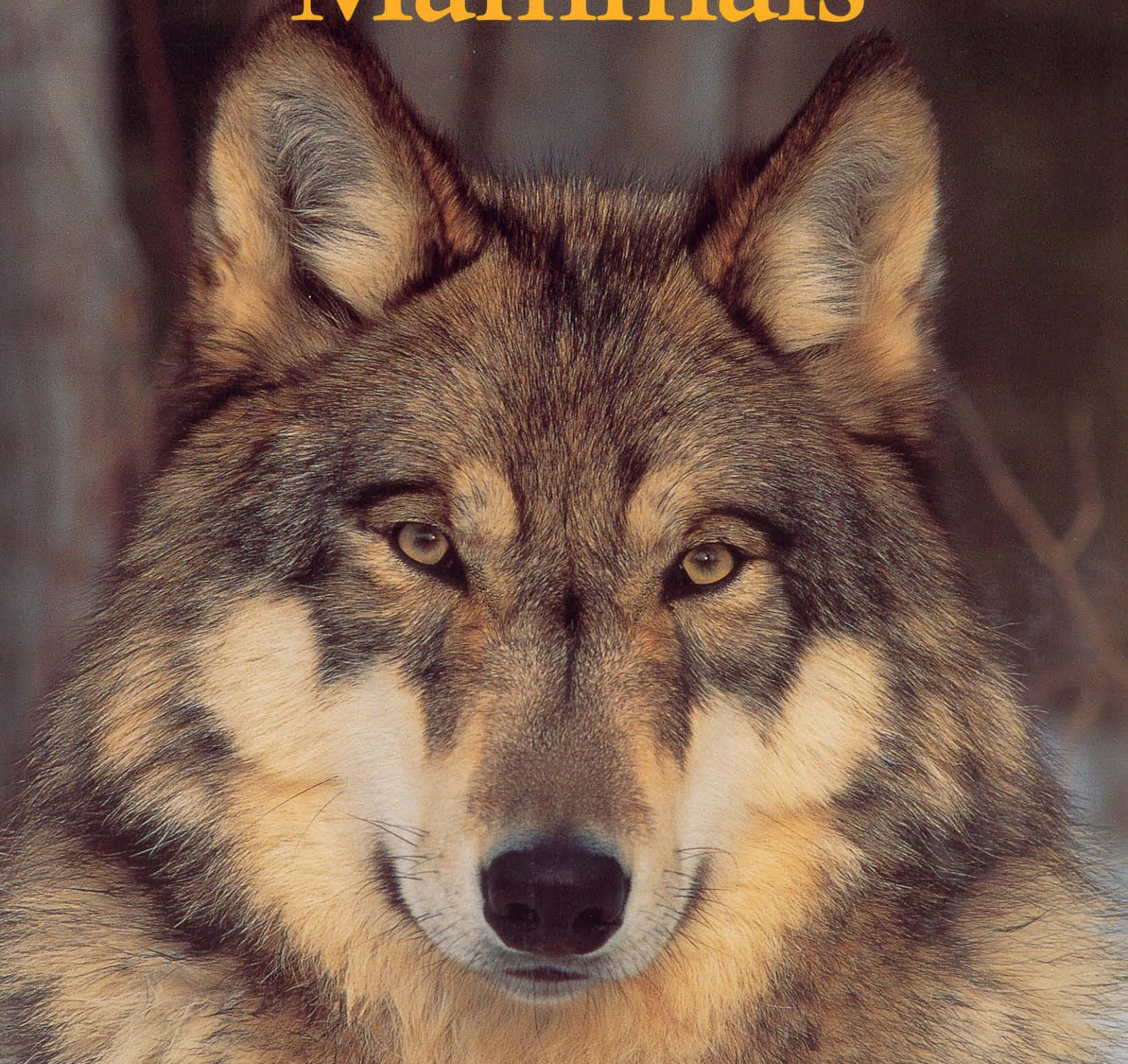


The Smithsonian Book of  
**North American  
Mammals**



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## Big-eared kangaroo rat | *Dipodomys elephantinus*

The big-eared kangaroo rat occurs only in the southern part of the Gabilan Range, in San Benito and Monterey counties, California, from the vicinity of the Pinnacles to near Hernandez. No fossils of *D. elephantinus* are known.

Like other kangaroo rats, big-eared kangaroo rats have small forefeet and enlarged hind feet. The tail is long, crested, about 1.5 times the length of the head and body, and the ventral stripe on the distal half of the tail is narrower than the lateral white stripes. The upperparts are cinnamon, the ears are mostly brownish, and the underparts are white.

Young are born during the spring and summer months. The

gestation period is about 30 days and litter size is about two. Young are born pink and helpless, but develop rapidly. Juveniles are grayer than adults, especially on the back.

Big-eared kangaroo rats occur on chaparral-covered slopes, where they forage at night. Food items are gathered with the forefeet and eaten or placed into the external fur-lined cheek pouches. Locomotion primarily is accomplished by hopping on the hind feet. In much of its range, this species occurs only under dense vegetation, but it occupies open habitats near Hernandez. Its occurrence in open habitats appears to coincide with the absence of other species of kangaroo rats. Where



*D. elephantinus* occurs with *D. heermanni*, the former occupies densely vegetated habitat and the latter occupies the more open habitat.

Other mammals occurring in the same habitat include cottontails, California pocket mice, California mice, woodrats, coyotes, foxes, and mule deer. Predators include owls, coyotes, and foxes. Parasites include protozoans, chiggers, and ticks.

#### Size

Males are slightly larger than females.  
 Total length: 310–336 (326) mm (males);  
 305–330 (323) mm (females)  
 Length of tail: 197 mm (males); 193 mm  
 (females)  
 Weight: 79–91 (85) g

#### Identification

*Dipodomys elephantinus* is moderately dark in color, has the longest ears of any kangaroo rat

(19 millimeters), and is one of the largest kangaroo rats in California; only desert and giant kangaroo rats, which occur in southern and eastern California, are larger. *D. heermanni* and *D. venustus* occur in the same area as *D. elephantinus*. From *D. heermanni*, *D. elephantinus* differs in larger size, larger ears, and darker coloration. *D. elephantinus* is paler and less conspicuously marked than *D. venustus*.

#### Other Common Names

Elephant-eared kangaroo rat

#### Status

Rare

#### References

*Mammalian Species* 255; Grinnell, 1922



*Dipodomys elephantinus*

The International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources has listed the big-eared kangaroo rat as a rare species, because its habitat is at risk from repeated brush fires and increasing human use. *T. L. Best*