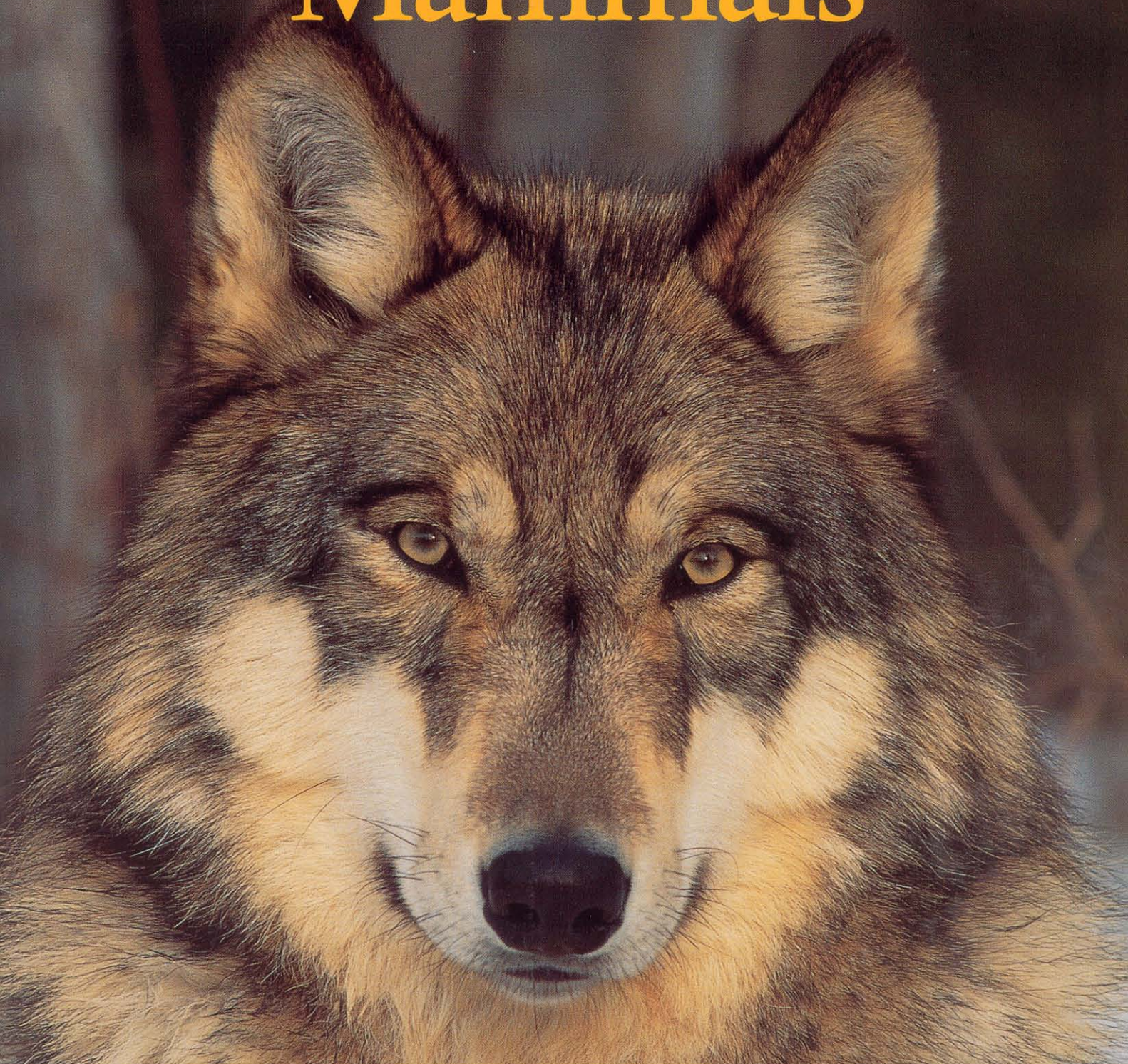


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Gray-footed chipmunk | *Tamias canipes*

Tamias canipes occurs in the Gallinas, Sacramento, Jicarilla, Capitan, White, and Guadalupe mountains of New Mexico, and in the Sierra Diablo and Guadalupe mountains in Texas. Its elevational range is about 1,600–3,600 meters. Fossils are known from Culberson County, Texas.

Gray-footed chipmunks are most active shortly after sunrise, at which time they do most of their feeding. They are found on rocky slopes where brush and timber offer shade and cover and cliffs afford runways, perches, and safe retreats. They are skillful at climbing rocks, cliffs, trees, and bushes. These chipmunks are shy; in thick brush and forests they are more often heard than seen. Their light “chipper” often is heard from bushes, and they may utter a slow, repeated, low “chuck-chuck-chuck” from a log, rock, or low branch of a tree. The call always ceases as soon as danger is suspected. When alarmed, they usually run to the ground and enter a burrow or disappear among rocks, brush, or crevices; occasionally they take to the trees. From these refuges, they soon reappear, care-



fully peer about, and return to gathering food. They either hibernate or remain in their dens feeding on their winter stores during cold weather; in late autumn they show no indication of becoming extremely fat as do other mammals that hibernate.

This species is a small, grayish chipmunk. The upperparts are marked with four whitish and five brownish stripes. The nape and shoulders usually have a wash of gray. The population of gray-footed chipmunks on a lava field in south-central New Mexico is darker than the population in the nearby Sacramento Mountains. The lava-dwelling population has more black hairs, but the total difference in color is not great. There is considerable geographic variation; those from the Sacramento Mountains are much larger and darker than those from the Guadalupe, Capitan, and Gallinas mountains.

One litter of about four young is produced each year, between mid-May and August. There is little time for August-born young to develop and gather winter stores of food before the weather turns cold.

Tamias canipes is primarily a forest-dwelling chipmunk, although some descend to lower life zones such as the lava field near Carrizozo, New Mexico. Its favorite haunts are downed logs at the edge of clearings. It also occurs in dense stands of timber and on brushy hillsides, particularly where crevices in rocks offer retreats. Except for deer mice, this chipmunk is the most common mammal in the Guadalupe Mountains, Texas, but in other parts of its range it is uncommon. In south-central New Mexico, *T. canipes* occurs in a variety of habitats. It ranges upward from pinyon-juniper to spruce-fir communities, but is most numerous in ponderosa pine and Douglas fir communities. In the Guadalupe Mountains, it inhabits coniferous forests. It also is found in small numbers below 2,100 meters elevation, where it is associated with rocky outcroppings.

Nests often are constructed in cavities of downed timber. One nest was found underground among roots of a decaying stump. Gray-footed chipmunks feed to some extent on seeds of spruces and firs, but acorns seem to form their principal food supply in late summer and autumn. Acorns are gathered and stored from the time they begin to ripen until they are all gone or buried by snow. Scattered acorn shells are the most



Tamias canipes

common mark of feeding grounds, and cheek pouches often contain one large or several small acorns. Sunflower, Douglas fir, and other seeds also are gathered and eaten or stored, as are currants, gooseberries, mushrooms, green vegetation, and insects. On a lava field in south-central New Mexico, the cheek pouches of one chipmunk were full of juniper berries. Mammals occurring in the same habitat include cottontails, rock squirrels, Texas antelope squirrels, pocket gophers, rock pocket mice, cactus mice, pinyon mice, white-throated, Mexican, and southern plains woodrats, porcupines, skunks, ring-tails, bobcats, mountain lions, black bears, coyotes, gray foxes, elk, and mule deer. Two protozoan parasites have been reported, but no other parasites are known. *T. L. Best*

Size

Males are slightly smaller than females.
Total length: 210–264 (237) mm
Length of tail: 91–115 (101) mm
Weight: 65–75 g

Identification

Tamias canipes is distinguished from all other chipmunks by the gray dorsal surfaces of the hind feet. Compared with *T. cinereicollis*, *T. canipes* has dorsal stripes that are mixed blackish and rusty; the centers are solid black

in *T. cinereicollis*. Compared with *T. quadrivittatus*, *T. canipes* has broader eye stripes, darker and grayer head, and shoulders with a grayish wash; the shoulder region is yellowish-orange in *T. quadrivittatus*.

Recent Synonyms

Eutamias canipes

Status

Common

Subspecies

Tamias canipes canipes, south-central New Mexico and western Texas
Tamias canipes sacramentoensis, south-central New Mexico

References

Mammalian Species 411; Bailey, 1931; Findley et al., 1975