

Endangered Species and Spaces

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3.11 Red-tailed Chipmunk *simulans* ssp: *Tamias ruficaudus simulans* (Howell)

Order: **Rodentia**
Family: **Sciuridae**

Status

Global Rank: G5T4T5
Provincial Rank: S2
COSEWIC: not considered

Provincial Listing: **Red list**



Distinguishing Features

Visually similar to the Least chipmunk, the Red-tailed Chipmunk is a little larger and more brightly coloured. Three prominent black dorsal stripes are separated by two medial grey stripes. Two lateral pale stripes are whitish, with lateral dark stripes are brownish. The forehead is brown. Cheeks have two prominent white stripes separated by three brown stripes. Under side is white. Dorsal side of the tail is rufous with a black submarginal band. Underside of tail is brick red. Average weight is 60 grams (Banfield, 1974).

Distribution

Columbia Basin: Fraker and Nagorsen (1998) confirmed the presence of this subspecies at only three sites in the southern Selkirk Mountains. Nagorsen also was able to confirm the identification of three historical specimens as *T. r. Simulans* from three more locations in the Selkirks, making a total of six known locations. It is likely that it occurs in more localities (Cannings et al. 1999).

British Columbia: Restricted to the southern Selkirk Mountains. Fraker and Nagorsen (1998) and Nagorsen and Fraker (1998) found only *T. amoenus* and *T. minimus* over a wide range of elevations in the Purcell Mountains near Invermere where Cowan and Guiguet (1965) believed this subspecies to occur on the basis of the records of Crowe (1943). It is possible that Crowe, using mainly pelage colour, misidentified his Invermere specimens and that additional work on chipmunk distribution in the Kootenays will show that this subspecies does not extend east of the Kootenay River floodplain at Creston (Cannings et al. 1999).

Global: Restricted to northwest Montana, northern Idaho, northeast Washington and the southern Kootenays in British Columbia.

Habitat

T. r. simulans is an inhabitant of various types of low- and mid-elevation coniferous forest such as western red cedar, western hemlock, ponderosa pine, and riparian communities. Most abundant in forest openings or at forest edges, where shrubby undergrowth is abundant. Where its range overlaps with the Yellow-pine Chipmunk (*T. amoenus*) in nearby Idaho, the Red-tailed Chipmunk seems to prefer denser cover. Nests are made in shrubs or trees, in crevices among boulders, under old log piles, or under ground (Cannings et al. 1999).

Threats

The overall numbers of this subspecies are probably stable in the absence of any known threats. Although the known range in British Columbia is very small, there are no apparent direct threats. Logging is a potential long-term threat, but as long as abundant coarse woody debris remains, chipmunks may thrive in logged areas (Cannings et al. 1999).

Biology

Like other chipmunks, the Red-tailed Chipmunk is active mainly April-October; individuals wake periodically in winter to feed from a food cache. This species feeds on seeds and fruit of various trees and shrubs, the leaves and flowers of various forbs, and probably also fungi (Cannings et al 1999).



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