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## Perognathus alticolus. By Troy L. Best

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#### Perognathus Wied, 1839

Perognathus Wied, 1839:368. Type species Perognathus fasciatus Wied, 1839.

CONTEXT AND CONTENT. Order Rodentia, Suborder Sciurognathi, Superfamily Geomyoidea, Family Heteromyidae, Subfamily Perognathinae, Genus Perognathus. The genus Perognathus is distinguished as follows: posterior one-third to one-half of sole of hind foot with sparse covering of short hairs; pelage relatively fine and soft, never with stiff, spine-like bristles on rump; no long, stiff, coarse hairs projecting across anterior margin of ear pinna; antitragus of ear pinna usually not lobed; mastoid bulla projecting posteriorly beyond the plane of the occiput; posteromedial border of mastoid bulla not projecting as a distinct indentation into the supraoccipital; interparietal width nearly always less than interorbital breadth (Williams et al., 1993). A key to the nine species of Perognathus follows (modified from Williams et al., 1993):

(1110	diffed from williams et al., 1993).	
1	Antitragus of ear pinna lobed	2
	Antitragus of ear pinna not lobed	3
2	Inner surface of ear pinna with white or yellowish hairs;	
	distal one-third of tail with blackish hairs dorsally; mas-	
	toid bulla forms small, sharp indentation in exoccipital;	
	occurring only in southern California in the transverse	
	ranges and the San Bernardino Mountains P. altico	lus
	Hairs of inner surface of ear pinna buffy rather than white	
	or yellowish; distal one-third of tail with mix of sooty	
	brown and black hairs dorsally; mastoid bulla with little	
	or no indentation into exoccipital; occurring on the Co-	
	lumbia Plateau, in the Great Basin, and the eastern slopes	
	of the Sierra Nevada	2110
3	Length of tail averages less than length of head and body	
	(a few individuals have tails longer than length of head	
	and body); not occurring west of eastern Utah or westcen-	
	tral Arizona, but found in Sonora along the Gulf of	
	California coast	4
	Length of tail averages greater than length of head and	4
	body (a few individuals have tails shorter than length of	
	head and body); not occurring east of central Arizona	^
	and southcentral Utah	9
4	Interparietal length < 2.9 mm; length of tail < 66 mm	
	(average ≤60 mm); interorbital breadth average ≤4.7	
	mm and ranges <5.0 mm; width of interparietal <4.2	
	mm, average ≤3.6 mm	5
	Interparietal length ≥ 2.9 mm; length of tail averages > 60	
	mm; interorbital breadth ≥4.5 mm, average ≥4.8 mm;	
	width of interparietal ≥3.15 mm, average ≥4.5 mm	6
5	Length of tail averages ≥56 mm; interorbital breadth av-	
	erages ≥4.5 mm; width of interparietals averages ≥3.3	
	mm; pelage sleek, not noticeably lax; dorsal color yel-	
	lowish, tinged with blackish from black-tipped hairs; slight	
	contrast between the darker mid-dorsal and paler dorso-	
	lateral color; pale postauricular spot relatively small	
	P. merric	mi
	Length of tail averages ≤55 mm; interorbital breadth av-	
	erages ≤4.5 mm; width of interparietals averages ≤3.3	
	mm; pelage lax, not sleek in appearance; dorsal color	
	min, penage iax, not sieck in appearance, dorsal color	

buffy yellow, with a pinkish hue and a tinge of blackish from black-tipped hairs; dark mid-dorsal area contrasting markedly with paler dorsolateral color; pale postauricular

6 Occurring on the Great Plains, or in the northern Chihuahuan Desert region in southern Arizona and New Mexico,

western Texas, and northern Chihuahua

spot relatively large

Occurring on the intermountain plateaus and in the basins of southcentral and southwestern Wyoming, eastern Utah, southern and western Colorado, eastern Arizona, and New Mexico Dorsum yellowish with an olive-yellow (olivaceous) tone; length of interparietal generally <3.0 mm; length of head and body averaging >68 mm; not occurring south and east of western Nebraska on the Great Plains, nor in southeastern Colorado along the eastern front of the Rocky Mountains Dorsum yellowish with yellowish-orange tone; length of interparietal generally >3.0 mm; length of head and body averaging <66 mm; not occurring north and west of a line extending from about the east base of the Rocky Mountains in northern Colorado, to southcentral North ... P. flavescens 8 Dorsum yellowish with an olive-yellow (olivaceous) tone; least interbullar distance (on dorsal surface of skull) averaging ≥4.3 mm; width of first upper molar ≤1.16 mm (average 1.10); not occurring south of the Uintah Basin of Utah and Colorado Dorsum yellowish with yellowish-orange tone; least interbullar distance averaging <4.0 mm, generally not >4.3mm; width of first upper molar ≥1.13 (average 1.22); not occurring north of the Uintah Basin of Colorado and Utah P. flavescens 9 Not occurring in California ..... Occurring in California 10 Greatest length of skull generally <23.0 mm; frontonasal length averaging less than ca. 15 mm; length of hind Greatest length of skull generally >23.0 mm; frontonasal length averaging >15.1 mm; length of hind foot ≥19 mm (average >20 mm) .... 11 Occurring in central California in the San Joaquin and Sacramento valleys, north of the Tehachapi Mountains P. inornatus Occurring in southern California from the Tehachapi Mountains southward 12 Occipitonasal length of adults (permanent upper premolar with moderate to heavy wear) generally >22.5 mm \_ Occipitonasal length of adults (permanent upper premolar with moderate to heavy wear) generally <22.1 mm ....



P. longimembris

Fig. 1. Perognathus alticolus inexpectatus from Kern Co., California. Photograph courtesy of J. M. Sulentich.

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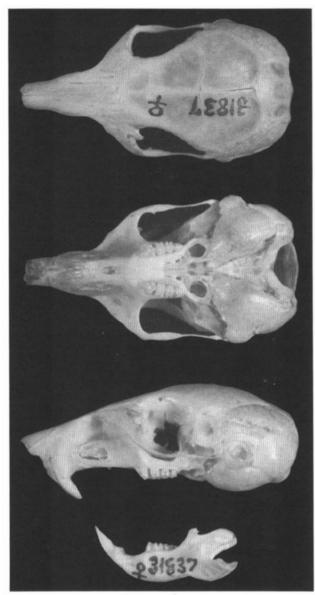


Fig. 2. Dorsal, ventral, and lateral views of cranium and lateral view of mandible of *Perognathus alticolus* from Squirrel Inn, 1,650 m, San Bernardino Mountains, San Bernardino Co., California (female, Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California, Berkeley 31837). Greatest length of cranium is 21.8 mm. Photographs by T. H. Henry.

### Perognathus alticolus Rhoads, 1894

#### White-eared Pocket Mouse

Perognathus alticolus Rhoads, 1894:412. Type locality Squirrel Inn, near Little Bear Valley, 5,500 feet, San Bernardino Co. (Miller and Kellogg, 1955:367), "San Bernardino Mts., California."

Perognathus alticola: Osgood, 1900:9. Alternative spelling of name.

**CONTEXT AND CONTENT.** Context noted in generic summary above. Two subspecies of *P. alticolus* are recognized (Hall, 1981):

P. a. alticolus Rhoads, 1894:412, see above.

P. a. inexpectatus Huey, 1926:121. Type locality "14 miles west of Lebec, Kern County, California, altitude 6,000 feet."

**DIAGNOSIS.** Perognathus alticolus (Fig. 1) can be distinguished from P. parvus by its smaller average size, white or yellowish hairs on the inner surface of the pinna, a tail with more blackish

hairs on the distal one-third of the dorsal surface, and a more pronounced indentation of the mastoid bulla into the border of the exoccipital. P. alticolus can be distinguished from all other species of Perognathus by its lobed antitragus and more prominent crest on the distal portion of the tail (Williams et al., 1993). Cranially, P. alticolus may be distinguished from P. flavescens and P. inornatus by the well-defined separation of the auditory bullae ventrally. The lower premolar of P. alticolus is similar to that of P. inornatus, but the mastoids of P. inornatus are much larger than those of P. alticolus. P. alticolus is larger than P. flavescens and P. inornatus, less yellow than P. flavescens, and more lined with black than P. inornatus (Rhoads, 1894).

GENERAL CHARACTERS. The size of P. alticolus is medium-large for the genus (Best, 1993; Williams et al., 1993). The pelage is soft and full. Dorsally, the white-eared pocket mouse is yellowish brown and heavily lined with blackish (Rhoads, 1894); underparts are white (Hall, 1981). Bases of the dorsal hairs are plumbeous for 75% of their length (Rhoads, 1894). The lateral line usually is faintly expressed. The tail is bicolored or tricolored; dorsally the color of the tail is like the upperparts anteriorly, but shades to dusky or black at the tip, and it is white ventrally (Hall, 1981). The length of the tail is equal to or slightly longer than length of the head and body, and the tail is slightly crested for the distal onethird. The antitragus of the ear pinna is lobed and the inner side of the ear pinna has white or yellowish hairs. The auditory bullae are relatively small, the posterior borders of the mastoid bullae are about even with the most posterior part of the supraoccipital, and the mastoid bulla forms small indentations in the border of the exoccipital at the back of the skull (Fig. 2). The ascending branches of the supraoccipital are relatively broad and the interorbital region is broad Compared with most subspecies of P. parvus, P. alticolus is small and its interparietal is compressed. The phallus and baculum are relatively short compared with P. parvus, and short, relative to length of head and body, for the genus (Williams et al., 1993).

Compared with P. a. alticolus, P. a. inexpectatus averages larger, has a darker, tricolored tail, and the black tip extends dorsally for at least one-half the length of the tail. In addition, the ears are dark, instead of pale as in P. a. alticolus, and more pointed (Huey, 1926). P. a. inexpectatus has a relatively small and square-shaped interparietal, whereas in P. a. alticolus the interparietal is relatively large and pentagon shaped (Sulentich, 1983). Average and range of measurements (in mm) of P. a. alticolus and P. a. inexpectatus (genders combined), respectively, are: total length, 155 (142-177), 155 (130-183); length of tail, 80 (70-95), 78 (61-97); length of hind foot, 21 (19-23), 21 (19-24); length of ear, 6 (5-6), 8 (7-9); greatest length of cranium, 24.1 (22.5-26.1), 23.9 (21.9-25.9); basiocranial length, 21.4 (20.0-25.3), 21.4 (20.4-23.0); greatest breadth of cranium, 12.3 (11.7-13.1), 12.6 (12.0-13.5); nasal length, 9.2 (8.2-11.0), 8.9 (7.3-9.9); maxillary length, 10.6 (8.0-13.9), 10.6 (10.0-11.4); least interorbital breadth, 5.7 (5.2-6.3), 5.4 (4.9-6.0); length of mandible, 12.8 (11.9-14.2), 12.8 (12.2-14.0); condylobasal length of cranium, 23.3 (20.9-25.2), 23.1 (21.1-25.3); length of maxillary toothrow, 3.5 (2.9-3.8), 3.2 (2.9-3.8); length of molar, 0.6 (0.4-0.8), 0.7 (0.5-0.8); width of molar, 1.1 (1.0-1.2), 1.1 (1.0-1.2); diameter of foramen magnum, 3.7 (3.3-4.1), 3.6 (3.0-4.1); separation of auditory bullae, 0.3 (0.0-0.6), 0.3 (0.1-0.8); greatest height of mastoid, 5.8 (4.9-6.6), 6.1 (5.4-6.7); greatest width of interparietal, 5.0 (4.5-5.7), 4.3 (3.4-5.4); greatest width of maxillary arch, 11.8 (10.8-13.0), 11.8 (10.4-13.0); greatest width of auditory bullae, 6.1 (5.6-6.6), 6.3 (5.4-6.9); posterior margin of the premaxillae and nasals, 0.5 (0.4-0.9), 0.5 (0.0-1.0); greatest height of mandible, 4.8 (4.0-5.5), 4.8 (4.3-5.2); constriction of occipital, 1.3 (1.0-1.5), 1.1 (0.8-1.3-Sulentich, 1983).

The white-eared pocket mouse is the most sexually dimorphic species of *Perognathus*. Males are significantly larger than females in total length, length of body, length of tail, length of hind foot, basal length of cranium, greatest length of cranium, spread of maxillary arch, interorbital width, nasal length, intermaxillary width, alveolar length, basioccipital length, greatest depth of cranium, greatest width of cranium, zygomatic width, and nasal width. Average measurements (in mm) of adult males and females, respectively, are: total length, 163.6, 149.5; length of body, 77.6, 72.5; length of tail, 86.0, 77.1; length of hind foot, 21.9, 20.7; length of ear, 5.9, 5.6; basal length of cranium, 15.3, 14.6; greatest length of cranium, 24.9, 23.8; maxillary arch spread, 12.0, 11.5; interorbital width,

6.1, 5.8; nasal length, 10.0, 9.2; intermaxillary width, 4.7, 4.6; alveolar length, 3.8, 3.7; lacrimal length, 1.6, 1.7; maxillary arch width, 1.2, 1.2; basioccipital length, 3.9, 3.7; greatest depth of cranium, 8.2, 8.0; greatest width of cranium, 12.9, 12.4; zygomatic width, 12.4, 11.8; nasal width, 2.6, 2.5 (Best, 1993).

DISTRIBUTION. The white-eared pocket mouse occupies arid shrub and forest communities in southcentral California, in the transverse ranges of Kern and Los Angeles counties, and the San Bernardino Mountains, San Bernardino Co. (Williams et al., 1993) at elevations ≥1,500 m (Grinnell, 1933; Stephens, 1906). P. a. alticolus is known only from arid Ponderosa pine (Pinus ponderosa) communities in the vicinity of Little Bear Valley and Strawberry Peak, San Bernardino Mountains, San Bernardino Co., California. P. a. inexpectatus occupies arid shrub-steppe communities in the Tehachapi Mountains of southcentral California, from the vicinity of Tehachapi Pass, Kern Co., on the northeast to the vicinity of Mount Pinos, Ventura Co., on the northwest, and Elizabeth and Quail lakes, Los Angeles Co., on the south (Fig. 3; Williams et al., 1993).

FOSSIL RECORD. The genus *Perognathus* is known from the Miocene (Wood, 1935). No fossils of *P. alticolus* are known.

FORM AND FUNCTION. As in all Perognathus, the dental formula of P. alticolus is i 1/1, c 0/0, p 1/1, m 3/3, total 20 (Ingles, 1965). P. alticolus has a medial, external supraoccipital crest. The crest extends dorsally from the superior margin of the foramen magnum, spreads laterally, and approaches the posterior border of the interparietal. The interparietal bone of P. a. inexpectatus is relatively square in shape, the lateral sides are straight and parallel, and the anterior side is rounded and extends slightly forward. In P. a. alticolus, the sides of the interparietal are relatively straight and spreading anteriorly (Sulentich, 1983).

The tip of the tail of *P. alticolus* is pencillate and is 102% of the length of head and body (Hatt, 1932). In *Perognathus*, specialized sebaceous caudal glands occur ca. 25-33% of the distance from the base to the tip of the tail and are restricted to the ventral surface. Compared with other species of *Perognathus*, however, the sebaceous glands associated with the hair follicles of the ventral surface of the tail in *P. alticolus* are not significantly enlarged or modified (Quay, 1965).

Average and range of measurements (in mm) of the phallus of P. a. inexpectatus are: total length of glans, 4.6 (4.4-4.7); proximal length of glans, 3.4 (3.3-3.5); distal diameter of glans, 1.2 (1.0-1.3); proximal diameter of glans, 1.3 (1.3-1.4); length of protractile tip, 1.5 (1.4-1.7); total length of baculum, 6.2 (6.2-6.3); diameter of middle of baculum, 0.4 (0.4-0.4); diameter of base of baculum, 1.1 (0.9-1.2); distal curvature of baculum,  $148^{\circ}$  ( $140-160^{\circ}$ —Sulentich, 1983). Nothing is known about the ontogeny and reproduction of P. alticolus.

Average body temperatures (in °C) of P. alticolus at different ambient temperatures (in °C), respectively, are: 36.17, 2; 35.73, 7; 36.17, 12.5; 34.60, 17; 34.73, 22.5; 35.27, 27; 36.23, 32; 40.13, 37. Abdominal temperatures are significantly lower at ambient temperatures of 16 and 22.5°C than at 2 and 32°C. Death occurs within 1 h at ambient temperatures of 40°C and at body temperatures >43°C (Chew et al., 1967).

ECOLOGY. The white-eared pocket mouse lives among Ponderosa pines and on the dry floor of open pine forests where bracken ferns (Pteridium aquilinum) grow (Grinnell, 1933; Stephens, 1906). It also occupies grassy flats among scattered Ponderosa pines and occurs in Joshua tree (Yucca brevifolia) and pinyon-juniper (Pinus-Juniperus) woodland habitats. At lower elevations, it occurs in chaparral and coastal-sage communities and rangeland habitat composed mainly of introduced grasses. Much of its range is used as cattle range that supports a variety of introduced grasses (Sulentich, 1983). It also occurs in habitat dominated by Salsola, e.g., fallow grain fields (D. F. Williams, in litt.).

In captivity, *P. alticolus* ate rolled oats, sunflower seeds, and vegetable greens (Chew et al., 1967), but nothing is known of its natural diet. No parasites are known (Whitaker et al., 1993).

No specimens of *P. a. alticolus* have been obtained since 1934 (D. F. Williams, in litt.). *P. a. inexpectatus* also is uncommon. Apparently the entire distribution of *P. alticolus* is represented by allopatric populations (Sulentich, 1983). This species has been proposed for listing as a threatened and endangered species by the

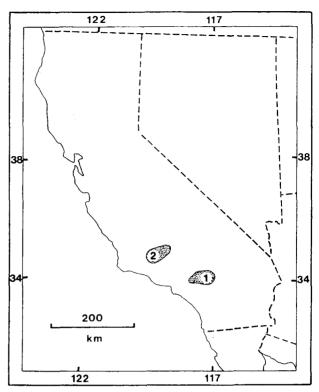


Fig. 3. Distribution of *Perognathus alticolus* in California: 1, *P. a. alticolus*; 2, *P. a. inexpectatus* (Hall, 1981).

United States Fish and Wildlife Service (Dunlop, 1989; Potter, 1982; Smith, 1985) and is considered endangered by the state of California (J. Gustafson, in litt.).

**GENETICS.** The karyotype of P.~a.~alticolus is not known (Sulentich, 1983). However for P.~a.~inexpectatus, the diploid number of chromosomes is 54 and the fundamental number is 74. There are 11 biarmed and 15 acrocentric autosomal pairs. The X chromosome is a large subtelocentric and the Y is a small acrocentric (Williams, 1978a). Based on an examination of 12 allozymes, P.~a.~inexpectatus is heterozygous for mannose phosphate isomerase (Sulentich, 1983).

REMARKS. Perognathus alticolus is closely related, and perhaps only subspecifically distinct from P. parvus (Williams et al., 1993). The parvus species group (P. alticolus and P. parvus) exhibits considerable diversity in chromosome structure (Williams, 1978a) and biochemical variation (Sulentich, 1983). However, in a phenetic analysis of morphologic characters, P. alticolus was not particularly similar to any other member of the genus (Best, 1993).

Based on qualitative characters of the interparietal bone and morphometric analysis, P. a. inexpectatus may be specifically distinct from P. a. alticolus (Sulentich, 1983). However, greater variation is present in size and proportions of the interparietals of P. parvus (e.g., those of P. p. bullatus are extremely compressed compared with those of adjacent populations of P. p. clarus in eastern Utah), and variation in size and shape of the interparietals in P. flavescens and P. fasciatus were shown to be strongly related to degree of bullar inflation and significantly correlated with degree of environmental aridity (Williams, 1978b; Williams and Genoways, 1979; Williams et al., 1993).

Perognathus is from the Greek pera meaning pouch and gnathos meaning jaw. The specific epithet alticolus is from the Latin altus meaning high and colo meaning to inhabit (Jaeger, 1955), possibly in reference to its mountain habitat (Williams et al., 1993).

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