

ARVICOLA BOREALIS.—RICH.

NORTHERN MEADOW-MOUSE.

PLATE CXXIX.—MALE and FEMALES.

A. ungue pollicari robusto præditus, auriculis vellere absconditis, cauda capitis fere longitudine, vellere longissima molli, dorso castaneo nigro mixto, ventre cano.

CHARACTERS.

Thumb nail, strong ; ears, concealed in the fur ; tail, about as long as the head ; fur, very long and fine ; on the back, chesnut colour mixed with black ; on the belly, gray.

SYNONYMES.

MOUSE No. 15. Forster, Philos. Trans., vol. lxii. p. 380.

ARVICOLA BOREALIS. Rich., Zool. Jour., No. 12, April, 1828, p. 517.

“ “ “ NORTHERN MEADOW-MOUSE. F. B. A., p. 127.

ARVINNAK. Dog-Rib Indians.

DESCRIPTION.

This species is a little less than WILSON'S Meadow-Mouse (*A. Pennsylvanica*). It has the form and dentition of the other species of *Arvicolæ*. Head, rather large ; forehead, convex ; nose, short, and a little pointed ; eyes, small ; ears, low, rounded, and concealed by the surrounding fur ; limbs, rather robust, clothed with short hairs, mixed on the toes and hind parts of the fore feet with longer hairs. Hind toes, more slender, and scarcely longer than the fore ones ; fore claws, small, much compressed, arched, and acute, with a narrow elliptical excavation underneath ; the hairs of the toes reach to the points of the nails, but cover them rather sparingly ; the claws of the hind feet resemble those of the fore feet, but are not so strong ; the thumb of the fore feet consists of a small squarish nail slightly convex on both sides, and having an obtuse point projecting from the middle of its extremity ; the tail is round, well clothed with short stiff hairs running to a point, which do not permit the scales to be visible. There are considerable variations in the length of the tail, it being in one specimen a third longer than in others. The fur on the body is long in proportion to the size of the animal.



On Stone by Wm E Hitchcock

Northern Meadow Mouse

Drawn from Nature by J.W. Audubon

Lith. Printed & Col^d by J.T. Bowen, Phil.

COLOUR.

Hair on the upper parts blackish-gray from the roots to the tips, some of which are yellowish or chesnut brown, and some black; the black tipped hairs are the longest, and are equally distributed amongst the others, giving the body a dark reddish-brown colour. There is a rufous patch under the ears. On the under part, and on the chin and lips, the colour is lead-gray, and the hairs are shorter than on the back and sides; tail, brown above and grayish beneath; hairs on the feet, ochreous yellow; claws, white.

DIMENSIONS.

	Inches.	Lines.
Length of head and body, - - - - -	4	6
“ tail, - - - - -	1	
“ head, - - - - -	1	3
Height of ear, - - - - -		4
Breadth of ear, - - - - -		3
Length of fore feet to end of middle claw, - - - - -		4½
Hind feet, including heel and claw, - - - - -		7½
Fur on the back, - - - - -		10

HABITS.

We have little to say in regard to the present species. RICHARDSON states that its habits are very similar to those of *A. xanthognatha*, and in our article on that species we have given an account of the general habits of the Arvicolæ (at p. 18 of the present volume), to which we refer our readers.

The northern Arvicolæ do not appear to become dormant from the effect of cold, but during the long Arctic winter dig galleries under the deep snows, in which they are enabled to search for seeds, grasses, or roots suited to their wants. We have ascertained by an examination of the bodies of several, more southern species of Arvicolæ, possessing similar habits, that so far from suffering in winter and becoming lean, they are usually in good case, and sometimes quite fat, during that season.

The length of the fur on the back of the present species (ten twelfths of an inch) is somewhat remarkable for so small an animal.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION.

This species was found in numbers at Great Bear Lake, living in the vicinity of *Arvicola xanthognatha*. We have not been able to ascertain the

extent of its range towards the south or west. We did not discover this Meadow-Mouse or hear of it on our expedition to the Yellow Stone and Upper Missouri rivers, nor has it been found, so far as we know, anywhere west of the Rocky Mountains.

GENERAL REMARKS.

"The form of the thumb-nail allies this animal very closely to the Norway lemming, and to one or two species of American lemming, but its claws are smaller and more compressed, and apparently not so well calculated for scraping earth as the broader claws of the lemmings."—*Fauna Boreali Americana*, p. 127.

Thus far we agree with Dr. RICHARDSON; he, however, thinks that this species may be considered an intermediate link between the lemmings and the Meadow-Mice, and may without impropriety be ranked either as a true Meadow-Mouse or as a lemming.

After a careful examination of the original specimens, some years ago, we set it down as a true *Arvicola*, possessing more of the characteristics of that genus than of the genus *Georychus*.



Audubon, John James and Bachman, John. 1854. "Arvicola borealis, Northern Meadow-Mouse [Pl. CXXIX, male and females]." *The quadrupeds of North America* 3, 134-136. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.322359>.

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