

## SPERMOPHILUS TOWNSENDII.—BACH.

AMERICAN SOUSLIK.

PLATE CXLVII. FIG. 1.—MALE.

S. Magnitudine Sciuri Hudsonii, capite parvo, corpore gracilior, auribus caudaque brevibus, colore supra rufo-fusco griseo sparsim vario, infra pallidior.

## CHARACTERS.

*Size of Sciurus Hudsonius (red squirrel) ; head, small ; body, rather slender ; ears and tail, short ; colour, upper surface speckled with white and brown ; beneath, yellowish-gray.*

## SYNONYMES.

ARCTOMYS (SPERMOPHILUS) GUTTATUS?—AMERICAN SOUSLIK. Rich., F. B. A., p. 162.  
SPERMOPHILUS TOWNSENDII—TOWNSEND'S MARMOT. Aud. and Bach., Jour. Acad. Nat. Sci. Phil., vol. viii., part 1, p. 61.

## DESCRIPTION.

This animal has a convex and obtuse nose, with the frontal bone depressed ; the body is rather long and slender ; head, short ; ears, slightly visible above the fur ; cheek pouches, small ; nails, slender, compressed, and slightly arched ; the thumb protected by an acute and prominent nail ; the second toe of the fore-foot, as in all the species of the genus, is longest, and not the third, as in the squirrels. The first toe is a little shorter than the second, and the third intermediate in length between the first and second. The tail appears (in the dried specimen) much flattened ; it is clothed with hairs which are longest on the sides.

The fur is throughout remarkably soft, smooth, and lustrous.

## COLOUR.

There is a line of white around the eye. The fur on the whole upper surface is, for one fourth of its length from the roots, dark bluish, or nearly black, then (a broad line of) silver gray, then (a narrow line of) dark brown edged with yellowish-white, giving it a brownish-gray appearance, speckled with white all over the back ; these spots are longest near the

dorsal line, becoming smaller half way down the sides. An indistinct line of separation between the colours of the upper and under surfaces appears high up along the hips and sides; on the under surface, the hairs are nearly black at the roots, and are cinereous at the tips; on the forehead, nose, and sides of the neck, there is a slight tinge of light yellowish-brown. Tail, on the upper surface, light yellowish-brown edged with whitish; beneath, whitish, with a slight tinge of brown; teeth, white; nails, black.

## DIMENSIONS.

	Inches.	Lines.
From point of nose to root of tail, - - - - -	8	9
Head, - - - - -	1	10
Tail (vertebræ), - - - - -	1	
“ (to end of fur), - - - - -	1	6
Length of heel to end of middle claw, - - - - -	1	4

## HABITS.

In a letter addressed to us by the late Mr. TOWNSEND he states that this handsome *Spermophile*, in summer inhabits the prairies near the Wallawalla, where it is rather common; it becomes excessively fat, and is eaten by the Indians. It disappears in August and re-appears early in spring in a very emaciated state. We have heard from other sources that it lives in small families, like the *Spermophiles*, generally burrowing in holes, and that it is seen either sitting on the side of them or with the head partially protruded, but disappears in its underground retreat, on the approach of man or any other animal.

## GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION.

This species exists on the western sides of the Rocky Mountains in Oregon, where the few specimens we have seen have been obtained.

## GENERAL REMARKS.

RICHARDSON described this species under the name of *A. guttatus*, an animal described by PALLAS (*Glir. tab. 6 B*) existing on the Wolga in Russia; but BUFFON mentions of that species, that the name of Souslik is intended to express the great avidity that animal has for salt, which induces it to go on board vessels laden with that commodity, when it is often taken. We should judge that its American relative has less oppor-



tunity of indulging in such a propensity. We carried a specimen with us to Europe, and had an opportunity at the Berlin Museum of comparing it with specimens from Siberia; there is a general resemblance between the animals of the two countries, but they are scarcely more alike than the red squirrel of Europe (*Sciurus vulgaris*) and the red squirrel of America (*Sciurus Hudsonius*). They may be distinguished from each other at a glance by the large rounded spots on the back of the Russian animal, compared with the white and irregular specks in the American species.

As the name *guttatus* was pre-occupied, we have named this animal anew, and in doing so, called it after the gentleman who furnished us the specimen.



Fig 1

Fig 2

Fig 3

On Stone by W. E. Mendenhall

Fig 1 American Towhee. Fig 2 Oregon Meadow-Mouse. Fig 3 Texas Meadow-Mouse.

Drawn from Nature by J. W. Audubon

Lith. Printed & Col'd by J. T. Bowen, Phil



Audubon, John James and Bachman, John. 1854. "Spermophilus townsendii, American Souslik [Pl. CXLVII, male]." *The quadrupeds of North America* 3, 226–228. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.322586>.

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