ARVICOLA PINETORUM.—Leconte.

Leconte’s Pine-Mouse.

PLATE LXXX.—Male and Female.

A. Capite crasso; naso obtuso; vellere curto; molli bombycino, instar velleri Talpe; supra fusco-cani, subtus plumbeo.

CHARACTERS.

Head large, nose blunt; fur short, soft, silky and lustrous, like that of the mole. Colour, above, brown, beneath, plumbeous.

SYNONYMES.


DESCRIPTION.

This species bears some resemblance to Wilson’s Meadow Mouse; it is, however, less in size, and its fur is shorter, more compact and glossy; body rather stout, short and cylindrical; head large and short; nose blunt, and hairy, except the nostrils, which are naked; incisors of moderate size; moustaches, fine, and nearly all short, a few reaching the ear; eyes very small; auditory openings large; ears very short, not visible beyond the fur, thin and membranous, with a few scattered hairs on the upper margin; neck short and thick; legs short and slender, covered with very short, adpressed hairs, not concealing the nails; palms naked. There are four toes on the fore foot, of which the second, on the inner side, is the longest, the first and third nearly equal, and the fourth shortest; in place of a thumb, there is a minute, straight, but not blunt, nail. The hind feet have five toes, the middle longest, the two next on each side being of equal length, and a little shorter than the middle one; the inner toe is considerably shorter, and the fourth, placed fur back, is the shortest. The nails are weak, nearly straight, sharp, but not hooked. The fur on the whole body is short, compact and soft, and on the back, glossy.
This variety is by no means the only one found in Texas, where Wolves, black, white and gray, are to be met with from time to time. We do not think, however, that this Red Wolf is an inhabitant of the more northerly prairies, or even of the lower Mississippi bottoms, and have, therefore, called him the Red Texan Wolf.

The habits of this variety are nearly similar to those of the black and the white Wolf, which we have already described, differing somewhat, owing to local causes, but showing the same sneaking, cowardly, yet ferocious disposition.

It is said that when visiting battle-fields in Mexico, the Wolves preferred the slain Texans or Americans, to the Mexicans, and only ate the bodies of the latter from necessity, as owing to the quantity of pepper used by the Mexicans in their food, their flesh is impregnated with that powerful stimulant. No vouching for this story, however, the fact is well known that these animals follow the movements of armies, or at least are always hand to prey upon the slain before their comrades can give them a soldier's burial, or even after that mournful rite; and if anything could increase the horrors displayed by the gory ensanguined field, where man has slain his fellows by thousands, it would be the presence of packs of these ravenous beasts disputing for the carcasses of the brave, the young, and the patriotic, who have fallen for their country's honor!

No corpse of wounded straggler from his troop, or of unfortunate traveler, butchered by Camanches, is ever "neglected" by the prowling Wolf, and he quarrels in his fierce hunger in his turn over the victim of similar violent passions exhibited by man!

The Wolf is met on the prairies from time to time as the traveller slowly winds his way. We will here give an extract from the journal kept by J. W. Audubon while in Texas, which shows the audacity of this animal, and gives us a little bit of an adventure with a hungry one, related by Powell, one of the gallant Texan Rangers.

"Like all travellers, the ranger rides over the wide prairie in long silences of either deep thought or listless musings, I have never been able to decide which; but when, riding by the side of Walker or H., who would like to say that a vacant mind was ever in the broad brow or behind the sparkling eye either of him with the gray, or of him with the brown? but at times when watching closely I have thought I could trace in the varying expression, castle after castle mounting higher and higher, till a creek 'to water at,' or a deer which had been sound asleep and to..."
The eyes are black; nostrils flesh-colour; incisors light yellowish; moustaches nearly all white, with a few interspersed of a dark brown colour. Hair from the root plumbeous, tipped on the upper surface with glossy brown. These tips are so broad that they conceal the ashy-grey colours beneath; cheeks chestnut-brown, upper surface of tail, brown, feet, light-brown, nails, whitish. The hairs on the under surface are shorter than those on the back, and instead of being broadly tipped with brown, like those on the back, are very slightly tipped with very pale brown and whitish, giving the chin, throat, neck and inner surface of legs and whole under surface of body a pale ash colour. The line of demarcation between the colours of the back and under surface, is very distinct in most specimens, commencing on the edges of the mouth, running along the sides of the neck, thence along the shoulder, including the fore legs—along the sides, the two opposite lines meeting near the root of the tail. We have observed in this species a considerable difference in different specimens, both in size and colour, having met some which were but little more than three inches long, whilst others were five. In some, the colours on the back were of a much deeper brown than in others, whilst in others, the brown markings on the cheeks were altogether wanting. It should be observed that in this species, as well as in all our field mice, the colours are much lighter, and inclined to cinereous after the shedding of the hair in summer; the colours gradually deepen and become brighter toward autumn and winter, and are most conspicuously dark brown in spring.

DIMENSIONS.

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<td>From point of nose to root of tail,</td>
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Another Specimen.

| Length of head and body,             | -       |
| Tail                                 | -       |

HABITS.

The manners of this species do not differ very widely from those exhibited by many other field mice. They however, avoid low grounds, so much the resort of the meadow mice, and prefer higher and drier soils.

This mouse is rather an inhabitant of cultivated fields than of woods, and is seldom found in the forest far removed from the vicinity of plantations, to which it resorts, not only to partake of the gleanings of the fields, but to lay its contributions on the products of the husbandman's labours, claiming a share before the crops are gathered. In the Northern states, it is found
in potato fields and in vegetable gardens, gnawing holes into the sides of the potatoes, carrots, ruta-baga, and common turnips, following the rows where green peas and corn have been planted, bringing down threats of vengeance from the farmer on the poor ground mole, which, feeding only on worms, is made a kind of cat's-paw by this mischievous little field mouse, which does the injury in most cases, whilst the other is saddled with the blame. In the South it is, next to the Norway rat, the most troublesome visitant of the cellars and banks in which the sweet potato is stored, destroying more than it consumes, by gnawing holes into the tubers, and causing them to rot. Wherever a bed of Guinea corn, Egyptian millet, or Guinea grass is planted, there you will soon observe numerous holes and nests of this species. We have recently seen an instance where a large bed of kohlrabi was nearly destroyed by it; the bulbs appearing above the surface were gnawed into holes, which, in some instances, penetrated to the centre. Our friend, the owner, had, as usual, laid the mischief on the broad shoulders of the hated and persecuted ground mole, of whose galleries not a trace could be seen in the vicinity. A number of small holes at the root of a stump, in the garden, indicated the true author of these depredations, and on digging, about a dozen of Leconte's field Mice were captured. This species is particularly fond of the pea or ground nut, (hypogea.) On examining the beds where this nut is cultivated, we have observed the rows on whole acres perforated in every direction by small holes, giving evidence that this troublesome little pest had been at work. In endeavouring to save and collect the seeds of the Gama grass, (Tripsacum dactyloides,) we generally found ourselves forestalled by this active and voracious little rat.

This species has young three or four times during the summer. One which we had in confinement, produced young three times, having three, seven, and four, in the different broods. The young were nearly all raised, but, when full-grown, became pugnacious and persecuted each other so much that we were obliged to separate them. They were almost exclusively fed on ground nuts, corn meal and sweet potatoes, but seemed to relish both boiled rice and bread. We have seen nine young taken from one nest.

The nest of this species is generally found under ground, at the distance of about a foot from the surface; it is small, and composed of light, loose materials, collected in the vicinity.

This prolific field rat possesses many enemies to diminish its numbers. The house cat not only watches for it about the fields and gardens, but is fond of devouring it, whilst the bodies of shrews and ground moles are not eaten. The very common Owl, (Surnia nebulosum,) the Barn
FIELD MOUSE.

Owl (Strix Americana,) the Weasel, Ermine, and Mink, all make this species a considerable part of their subsistence.

The only note we have ever heard from this mouse is a low squeak, only uttered when it is either struck suddenly or greatly alarmed. In a state of confinement it was remarkably silent, except when two were engaged in fighting.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION.

Le Conte's Field Mouse has an extensive geographical range. We have received specimens from our friend, Dr. Brewer, obtained in Massachusetts. It is found in Connecticut, is quite abundant on the farms in Rhode-Island, and in the immediate vicinity of New-York. We found it at Milestown, a few miles from Philadelphia. Mr. Ruffin sent us several specimens from Virginia. We procured it in North Carolina, and received a specimen from Dr. Barrett, Abbeville, South Carolina. It becomes more abundant as you approach the seaboard, in Carolina and Georgia; and we have specimens sent to us from Alabama, Mississippi and Florida. We have traced it no farther south, have not heard of it to the west of the Mississippi, and are informed that it does not exist in Texas.

GENERAL REMARKS.

From the diminutive figure in Wilson's Ornithology, we might be led to the conjecture that he had this little species in view. The accurate description given by Ord, applies, however, only to the Arvicola Pennsylvanica. The first scientific description that appears of this species was given by Le Conte, (Annals of the Lyceum of Nat. Hist. N. Y., Vol. III., p. 3.) Finding that there were some variations in the dentition from the long established genus Arvicola, he formed for it a new genus, under the name of Psamomys. As this name, however, had been pre-occupied by Ruffel for an Arabian species, the American translator, (Dr. McMurtrey,) of Cuvier's Animal Kingdom, proposed changing the genus to Pitmys, Pine Mouse. The variations in the teeth, however, we have found by comparison, do not afford sufficient characters to warrant us in removing it from Arvicola, to which, from its shape and habits, it seems legitimately to belong.

We do not feel warranted in changing the specific name of Le Conte, but that name is not expressive of one of its characteristics, as, although it may have been found in the pine woods, we have never, in a single instance, detected it in such localities. We have always found it either in the open fields, or along fences, in the vicinity of gardens and farms.

This species is subject to many changes in colour, and is so variable in size, that it is easy to mistake it; hence we have added as synonyms, our A. Scalopoides, and the A. Oneida of Dr. De Kay.

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