ARVICOLA TEXIANA.—AUD. and BACH.

TEXAN MEADOW-MOUSE.

PLATE CXLVII. FIG. 2.—MALE.

A *Sigmodon hispidum* minore, supra rufo-fuscus nigro sparsim notato, striis nigris lateralis, lateribus fuscus, infra albido.

CHARACTERS.

Smaller than the cotton rat (Sigmodon hispidum); back, brownish-yellow, spotted with irregular small blotches of black, a faint obscure stripe of black on each side. Sides, reddish-brown; belly, whitish-gray.

DESCRIPTION.

This new species bears a general resemblance to the cotton rat of South Carolina and Georgia. Head, of moderate size; body, rather slender, and thin in the flanks; hair, soft; under fur, woolly; ears, large, ovate in shape, extending beyond the fur, and nearly naked behind, with, on the margins, a few scattered hairs. Whiskers, numerous, and about as long as the head; four toes on the fore-feet, with a small and almost imperceptible nail in place of a thumb. Five toes on the hind-feet, the outer and inner of nearly equal length, the other three longer, and each of about the same length; legs, slender; feet, covered by short hairs, and with a few hairs between the toes, not however concealing the nails; heel, narrow, and naked, as is also the under surface of the fore-feet.

Tail, rather long and slender, tapering to the point, and thinly covered with hairs.

COLOUR.

Fur, dark slate colour on the back at the roots, with reddish-yellow tips. The longer hairs, which are fine and soft, are irregularly marked with dark and yellowish-white at the base, and tipped with dark brown to where they mingle with the under fur. When the hair is laid smooth there is an obscure black stripe on the sides of the back, running from behind the shoulders towards the rump and converging across the buttocks to a point

at the insertion of the tail; the remainder of the back between these stripes is somewhat irregularly, and very slightly, waved or barred as it were, with dark brown spots on a yellowish ground; head, yellowish-brown; sides of the neck, and along the flanks to the hip, brownish-yellow. A narrow line of yellowish-white extends under the chin and on the belly; tail, brown above, grayish-white beneath; ears, brownish yellow; whiskers, white, with a few brown hairs interspersed.

DIMENSIONS.

					Inches	Lines.
From point of nose to root of tail,	-	-	-	-	4	7
“ “ to ear,	-	-	-	-	1	3
“ “ to eye,	-	-	-	-	-	6
Length of tail,	-	-	-	-	4	
From heel to point of longest claw,	-	-	-	-	1	3

HABITS.

This is an active and rather pugnacious little rat. It is sometimes to be seen near the edges of the chaparals, in which it makes its nest. It mostly feeds on seeds of wild grains and grasses, although it has recently shown a disposition to frequent the farm-yards of our enterprising Texan settlers. Like the *Arvicolæ* generally, this animal is a good swimmer, and takes the water when the rains flood the flat plains, which it has pleased the Texans to denominate “hog-wallow prairies.” In the spring season this rat devours a good many eggs of such small birds as make their nests on the ground or in the rank grass and weeds, and it does not hesitate to eat any dead bird or small animal it may find.

Not being very numerous, it is difficult to procure it, and as setting traps for small animals, baited with meat, in the chaparal, has been found almost useless owing to larger quadrupeds than those intended to be caught seizing the flesh, and breaking the trap to pieces, or (as is often the case) devouring the small ones that may have been already entrapped, there is no probability that this or other small species which inhabit Texas and the neighbouring countries will become familiar objects in our collections of mammalia for some time to come. We have therefore placed our specimens of this rat in the museum of the Charleston College at Charleston, South Carolina, where may also be found the skins of some other animals first described in our work, and of which specimens, so far as we have heard, have not been procured by others.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION.

This species was first discovered on the river Brasos, and afterwards seen in the country along the Nueces and Rio Grande, where chapparal thickets afford it shelter

GENERAL REMARKS.

Although this Meadow-Mouse approaches nearer to our cotton rat than any other *Arvicola* with which we are acquainted, it presents very striking differences; its form is lighter and more slender, its heel narrower, tail proportionably longer, and fur much softer. The cotton rat is of a uniform colour on the back, except the ends of the long hairs being tipped with white, but the Texan species presents a somewhat indistinct appearance of specks or spots of blackish on a yellow ground.

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. "Arvicola texiana, Texan Meadow-Mouse [Pl. CXLVII, male]." *The quadrupeds of North America* 3, 229–231. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.322373>.

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