SOREX PALUSTRIS.—RICH.

AMERICAN MARSH SHREW.

PLATE CXXV.—MALES.

S. Mure musculo longior, cauda corporis fere longitudine, auriculis brevibus, pilosis, vellere absconditis, dorso canescente-nigro, ventro cinereo.

CHARACTERS.

Rather larger than the house mouse ; tail, nearly as long as the body ; short hairy ears, concealed by the fur ; back, somewhat hoary black ; belly, ash colour.

SYNONYMES.

SOREX PALUSTRIS. Rich., Zool. Jour., No. 12, April, 1828.

“ “ “ AMERICAN MARSH SHREW. F. B. A., p. 5.

DESCRIPTION.

Dental Formula.—Incisive $\frac{2}{2}$; Canine $\frac{4-4}{2-2}$; Molar $\frac{4-4}{3-3} = 30$.

The two posterior lateral incisors are smaller than the two anterior ones on the same side, and the latter are a little longer than the posterior lobes of the intermediary incisors ; all the lateral incisors have small lobes on their inner sides. Muzzle, tolerably long, and pointed ; upper lip, bordered with rigid hairs ; tips of posterior hairs reaching beyond the ears ; the extremity of the muzzle, naked and bi-lobed ; eyes, small but visible ; ear, short and concealed by the fur, its margins folded in ; a heart-shaped lobe covering the auditory opening, and a transverse fold above it. The upper margins of the ears are clothed with thick tufts of fur. Tail rounded, and covered with hair, terminated by a small pencil of hair at the tip ; feet, clothed with rather short adpressed hairs, the hairs on the sides of the toes being arranged somewhat indistinctly in a parallel manner. The fur resembles that of the mole in softness, closeness, and lustre.

COLOUR.

The tips of the teeth have a shining chesnut-brown tint ; the body is black above, with a slight hoary appearance when turned to the light ; on

Drawn on Stone by Wm. E. Hitchcock

Drawn from Nature by J. W. Audubon

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

American Marsh Frog

the ventral aspect ash coloured ; at the roots the hair is bluish-gray ; the outside of the thighs and upper surface of the tail correspond in colour with the back ; under surface of the tail, insides of thighs, and belly, greyish-white ; feet, paler than the back.

DIMENSIONS.

	Inches.	Lines.
Length from point of nose to root of tail, - - -	3	6
“ of tail, - - - - -	2	7
“ of head, - - - - -	1	2
“ from nose to eye, - - - - -		7
Height of ear, - - - - -		3
Length of hind foot from heel to end of nails, - -		9

HABITS.

The habits of all Shrews (except those of the kind described by SHAKESPEARE) must necessarily be little known. These animals are so minute in the scale of quadrupeds that they will always be overlooked, unless sought after with great zeal, and even then it is often difficult to meet with or procure them. It may be said that it is only by chance that one is seen and taken now and then, even where they are known to exist. We have not seen more than five or six alive during several years, although dead ones have been found by us more frequently, and upon one occasion we found two that appeared to have recently died, lying close to each other. No wonder, then, that they may escape the observation of the most persevering student of nature, as their instinctive caution would, by causing them either to fly to some little hole or tuft of grass, or to remain still, when danger was near, render their discovery more than doubtful ; or, if seen, it would be only for a moment. Not the least singular circumstance connected with the family of Shrews is the fact that they can exist in extremely cold climates, and move about in winter, when the snow covers the ground. In his article on *Sorex palustris* Dr. RICHARDSON says it “most probably lives in the summer on similar food with the Water Shrew, but I am at a loss to imagine how it procures a subsistence during the six months of the year in which the countries it inhabits are covered with snow. It frequents borders of lakes, and HEARNE tells us that it often takes up its abode in beaver houses.”

We might easily make some probable speculations as to the manners and customs of the present species, but prefer not doing so farther than to say that it very likely feeds on seeds, insects, and on the carcasses of any small

birds or other animals it finds dead in the fields, that in winter it has a store of provision laid by, only coming to the snow-covered surface on fine days for the purpose of getting a little fresh air, and that from the number of tracks sometimes seen at one place we consider it partly gregarious in its habits.

Our drawing was made from a specimen in the British Museum at London.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION.

The American Marsh Shrew, according to the writers who have seen it, exists in the northern parts of our continent from Hudson's Bay to the Coppermine river.

GENERAL REMARKS.

We are not aware that any author has referred to this animal, except Dr. RICHARDSON; the specimen from which our drawing was made was the original one from which Dr. RICHARDSON described, and we believe this species has never been hitherto figured.

Audubon, John James and Bachman, John. 1854. "Sorex palustris, American Marsh Shrew [Pl. CXXV, males]." *The quadrupeds of North America* 3, 108–110.
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