Columbia Plateau Ground Squirrel

*Spermophilus canus*

Mammalia — Rodentia — Sciuridae

**CONSERVATION STATUS / CLASSIFICATION**

- Rangewide: Apparently secure (G4)
- Statewide: Critically imperiled (S1)
- ESA: No status
- USFS: Region 1: No status; Region 4: No status
- BLM: Peripheral (Type 4)
- IDFG: Protected nongame

**BASIS FOR INCLUSION**

Lack of essential information pertaining to status is Idaho.

**TAXONOMY**

This species as formerly considered to be a subspecies of Townsend’s ground squirrel (Rickart 1987). Two subspecies have been described (Verts and Carraway 1998), and the subspecies occurring in Idaho is *S. canus vigilis*. This subspecies also occurs in a limited area in the Owyhee River valley in Oregon.

**DISTRIBUTION AND ABUNDANCE**

This species occurs in Owyhee County south of the Snake River and historically occurred at sites between Reynold’s Creek and the Oregon border. Only 1 of 9 historical colonies was extant during 2000 (Yensen 2000).

**POPULATION TREND**

Population trend is unknown.

**HABITAT AND ECOLOGY**

The Columbia Plateau ground squirrel occurs in xeric shrub steppe habitat (Rickart 1987, Verts and Carraway 1998). In Oregon the species occurs in association with big sagebrush, black greasewood, and grasses and in agricultural fields. Little information is available concerning habitat associations in Idaho.

**ISSUES**

Current distribution, population status, and habitat affiliations are largely unknown. The area occupied by this species been altered through livestock grazing, agriculture, invasive plants, and altered fire regime. Residential development and off-highway vehicle use in some parts of the range have resulted in habitat destruction. Recreational shooting of ground squirrels may be an important source of mortality, particularly in areas where populations are small.
RECOMMENDED ACTIONS
Surveys are needed to determine the current distribution and status of populations. Habitat protection and restoration efforts are needed throughout the Idaho range. Monitor recreational shooting of ground squirrels within the range of this species. Public education and enforcement of these regulations is needed.
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Map created on November 17, 2005 and prepared by Idaho Conservation Data Center.
Sources: Point data are from Idaho Conservation Data Center, Idaho Department of Fish and Game (2005). Predicted distribution is from the Wildlife Habitat Relationships Models (WHR), A Gap Analysis of Idaho: Final Report. Idaho Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, Moscow, ID (Scott et al. 2002). Predicted distribution is approximate (for more information, go to http://www.wildlife.uidaho.edu/idgap/idgap_report.asp).