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## Columbia Plateau Ground Squirrel

### *Spermophilus canus*

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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**

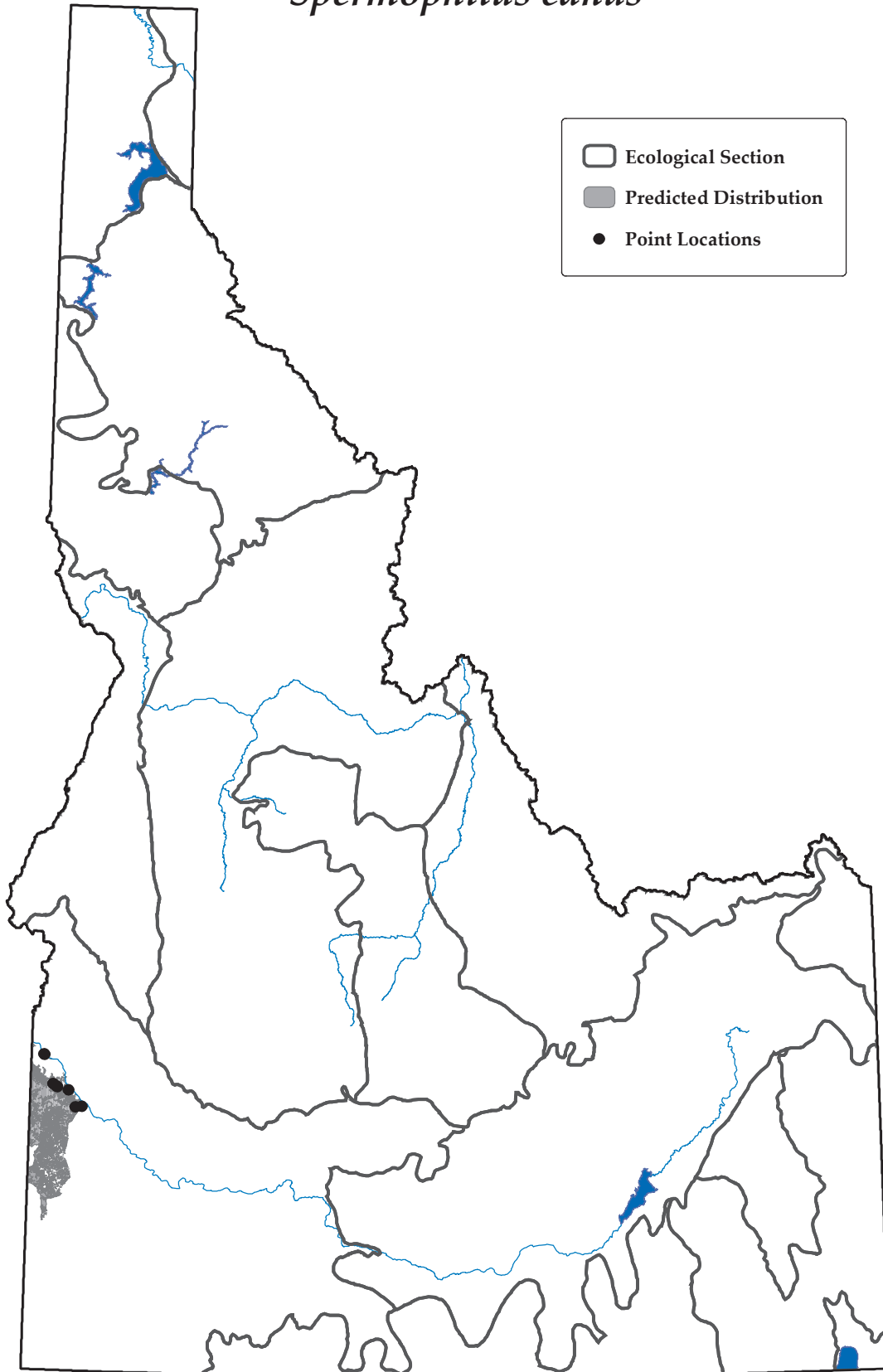
Surveys are needed to determine the current distribution and status of populations.

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](http://www.wildlife.uidaho.edu/idgap/idgap_report.asp)).

