
Red-tailed Chipmunk

Neotamias ruficaudus

Mammalia — Rodentia — Sciuridae

CONSERVATION STATUS / CLASSIFICATION

Rangewide: Secure (G5)
Statewide: Vulnerable (S3)
ESA: No status
USFS: Region 1: No status; Region 4: No status
BLM: No status
IDFG: Protected nongame

BASIS FOR INCLUSION

Lack of essential information pertaining to status in Idaho.

TAXONOMY

Two subspecies are recognized. *N. ruficaudus ruficaudus* occurs in eastern Idaho and *N. ruficaudus simulans* occurs in western Idaho.

DISTRIBUTION AND ABUNDANCE

The red-tailed chipmunk is endemic to western North America and occurs in southeastern British Columbia, southwestern Alberta, northeastern Washington, northern Idaho, and western Montana (Best 1993). A large portion of the range is in Idaho, and the species occurs in scattered localities primarily north of the Salmon River.

POPULATION TREND

There are no trend data for Idaho.

HABITAT AND ECOLOGY

The red-tailed chipmunk inhabits dense, mesic coniferous forests at elevations of 720 to 2400 m (2360 to 7870 ft; Best 1993). *N. ruficaudus ruficaudus* typically inhabits wetter forests at higher elevations compared to *N. ruficaudus simulans* (Bennett 1999). Engelmann spruce, ponderosa pine, and subalpine fir communities are commonly associated with the species in Idaho. Forest openings and edges sustain the highest population numbers, especially where shrubby undergrowth is prevalent. Individuals use burrows associated with fallen logs, large boulders, and brush piles for nesting and over-wintering. The red-tailed chipmunk is also arboreal, foraging and rearing young in tall live and dead standing trees (Best 1993). Movement of young from burrows to tree nests before weaning may be a predator avoidance strategy (Broadbrooks 1974).

ISSUES

Changes in habitat quality may be the biggest concern for red-tailed chipmunks (Bennett 1999). The species requires habitat containing both late and early successional forest tracts. Timber harvest may initially reduce population numbers, but chipmunks usually recover to numbers at or above pre-cut levels. Recovery may be

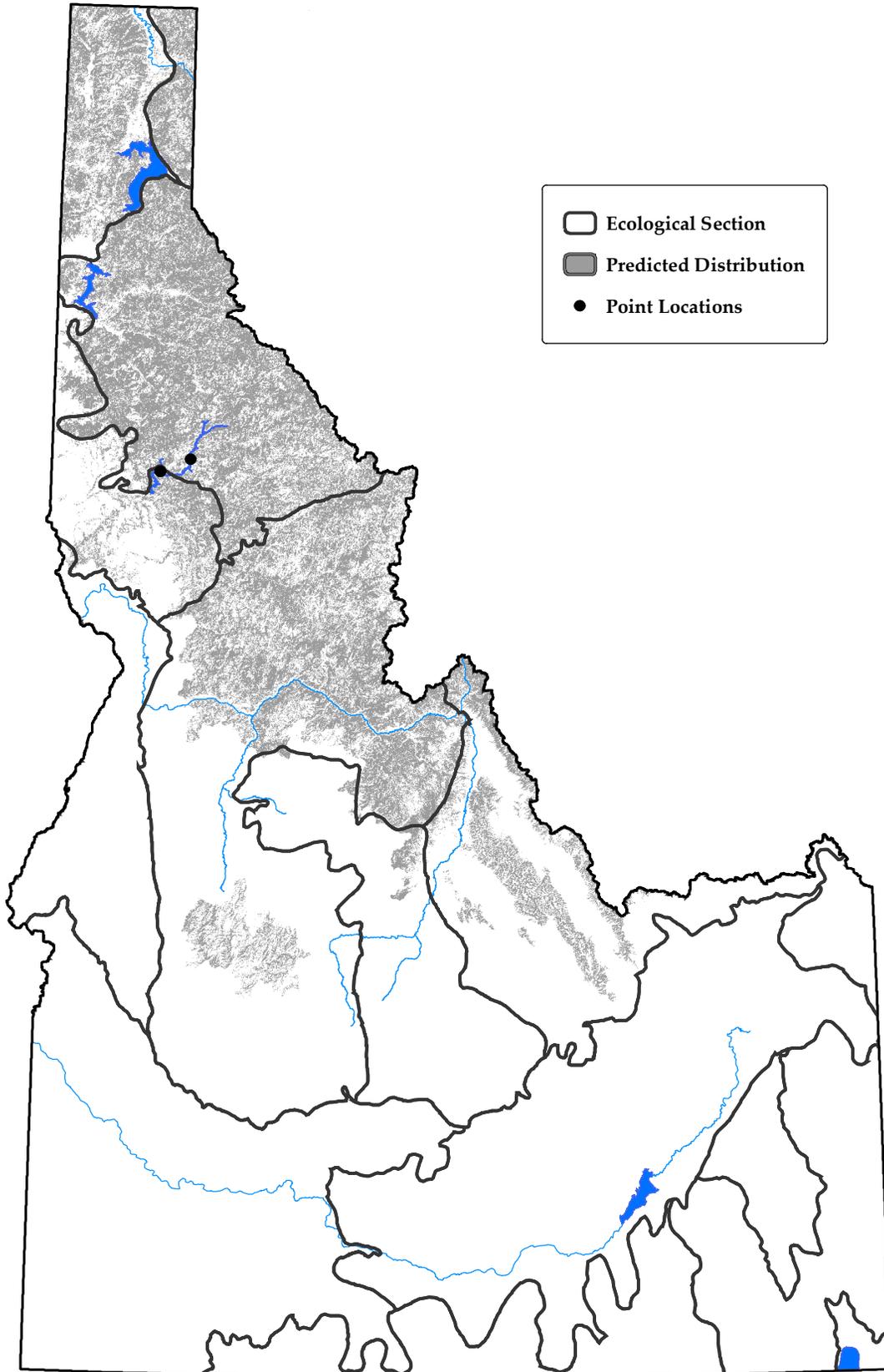
due to the positive response of forbs and shrubs and the proliferation of a forest edge (Halvorson 1982). However, timber harvest that eliminates mature trees may limit populations. Fires that eliminate brush piles, coarse woody debris, and standing dead and live trees may be detrimental. In contrast, fire suppression may limit understory shrubs and forbs (Bennett 1999). Low intensity burns, especially following timber harvest, may retain brush piles and encouraging rapid regrowth of forbs and shrubs (Halvorson 1982). Habitat fragmentation may result in genetic isolation and increase the risk of extinction. Changes to subalpine and montane habitats as a result of climate change is a potential threat (McDonald and Brown 1992).

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Surveys are needed to determine the current distribution and status of the red-tailed chipmunk. Prescribed fires, selective timber harvest, and other management actions that maintain a juxtaposition of seral stages may be necessary to sustain populations. Limiting disturbances that result in a homogeneous environment may also help protect the species.

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Map created on September 23, 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).

