

MAMMALS**BUENA VISTA LAKE SHREW
(SOREX ORNATUS RELICTUS)**

Federal/California status: Endangered/--

**Description**

The Buena Vista Lake shrew is a subspecies of the ornate shrew, *S. ornatus*. In general, shrews are tiny mammals with beadlike eyes and a long, pointed nose. The upper parts of the Buena Vista Lake shrew have a salt-and-pepper pattern of buffy brown and black, with the black predominating. The sides are buffy brown and the underparts are gray. The relatively short tail darkens toward its end. They range from 98-105 mm in length (3.75-4.25 inches) and from 4-7.5 grams in weight. The Buena Vista Lake shrew differs externally from the *S. o. ornatus* by being darker colored and slightly larger, but with a shorter tail.

Habitat

The Buena Vista Lake shrew lives in the marshes of the southern San Joaquin Valley. Buena Vista Lake shrews have been found associated with moist vegetative

communities. Most recently, their habitat has been described as areas with a dense cover and an abundant layer of litter. Plants associated with the more recent habitat description include Fremont cottonwood, willows, alkali heath, wild rye grass, and Baltic rush.

Range/distribution

Historically, Buena Vista Lake shrews occurred in the wetlands around Buena Vista Lake in Kern County, and supposedly throughout the Tulare Lake Basin. A population of Buena Vista Lake shrews was rediscovered on the Kern Lake Preserve, Kern County, in 1986, and no other population has been found since. A single shrew found at Kern National Wildlife Refuge, Kern County, in 1992, was tentatively identified as a Buena Vista Lake shrew but its systematic status still is uncertain. Kern Lake Preserve is privately owned and a Conservation Agreement to protect the only known population of this species has not been negotiated.

Photo: CSUS/ESRP

References

- Brown, N. L., C. D. Johnson, and D.F. Williams, Profile of Buena Vista Lake Shrew, URL: <http://arnica.csustan.edu/esrpp/bvls.htm>, accessed September 10, 2002.
- Center for Conservation Biology. 1990. An investigation of the distribution and abundance of the Buena Vista shrew, *Sorex ornatus relictus*, at Kern Lake Preserve. Final Report, The Nature Conservancy, Stanford Univ., CA, 8 pp.
- Owen, J.G., and R.S. Hoffmann. 1983. *Sorex ornatus*. Mammalian Species, 212:1-5
- Williams, D.F. and K.S. Kilburn. 1992. The conservation and status of the endemic mammals of the San Joaquin faunal region, California. Pp. 329-345 in Endangered and sensitive species of the San Joaquin Valley, California: their biology, management, and conservation (D.F. Williams, S. Byrne, and T.A. Rado, eds.), 388 pp.