

KANGAROO RATS

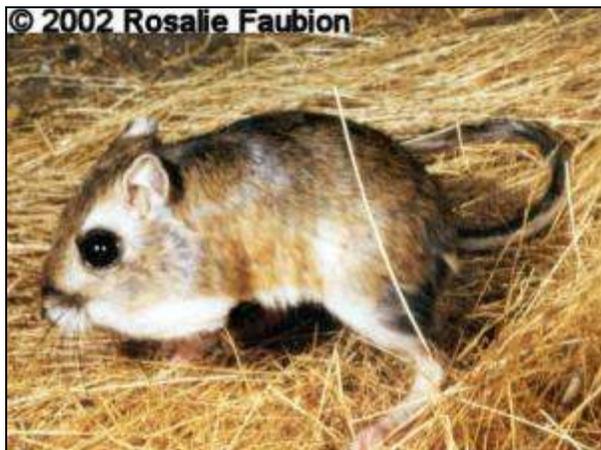
Four types of kangaroo rats in the San Joaquin Valley are listed, or candidates for listing, as Endangered or Threatened. There are also types that are not listed or candidates for listing. If you see signs of a kangaroo rat, assume it is listed as Endangered or Threatened until it can be identified.

Kangaroo rats are small rodents that do not look anything like the common black or Norway rat thought of as typical "rats". Kangaroo rats look like gerbils with long tails. In general, they are buff and white in color with a white stripe across the hips. They have short front legs, strong hind legs with large feet (for hopping), fur-lined cheek pouches, rounded heads, and long tufted tails (see photo). At night, they can be seen crossing roads in desert regions, hopping about in kangaroo fashion.

These small mammals are well-adapted for life in harsh, semi-arid or very dry desert regions. Kangaroo rats survive

GIANT KANGAROO RAT (*DIPODOMYS INGENS*)

Federal/California status: Endangered/Endangered



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These small mammals are well-adapted for life in harsh, semi-arid or very dry desert regions. Kangaroo rats survive on little or no water, getting all necessary fluids from the foods they eat. To conserve water, they are nocturnal (active at night) and remain in underground burrows during the hottest parts of the day. They also conserve water by releasing highly concentrated urine and very dry scat (droppings).

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Most kangaroo rats require uncultivated, arid (dry) grasslands or shrublands to survive. They are often found in sandy areas of alkali sinks and grasslands. Kangaroo rat burrows often have an "apron" (excavated soil) in front of the entrance. Their scat resembles black barley seeds without the groove. The scat is rounded on both ends, rather than pointed as in other rodent species. Streaks, in loose dirt, that look like they were made by a tiny whip are tail-drag marks.

Kangaroo rats store seeds; a few seeds may sprout before they can be eaten. Blunt-nosed leopard lizards (an Endangered species) use kangaroo rat burrows for protection.

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Description

The giant kangaroo rat is the largest of all the kangaroo rats in the San Joaquin Valley, weighing 5 or 6 ounces. Total length is about 13 inches (325 mm), including over 7 inches (175 mm) of tail. The giant kangaroo rat has a light brown tuft on the end of the tail, and five toes on the hind foot.

Range/distribution

Within the project area, scattered populations of this kangaroo rat can be found in the foothills of Fresno, Kern, Kings, and Merced counties.

Photo: © Rosalie Faubion

Photos

