

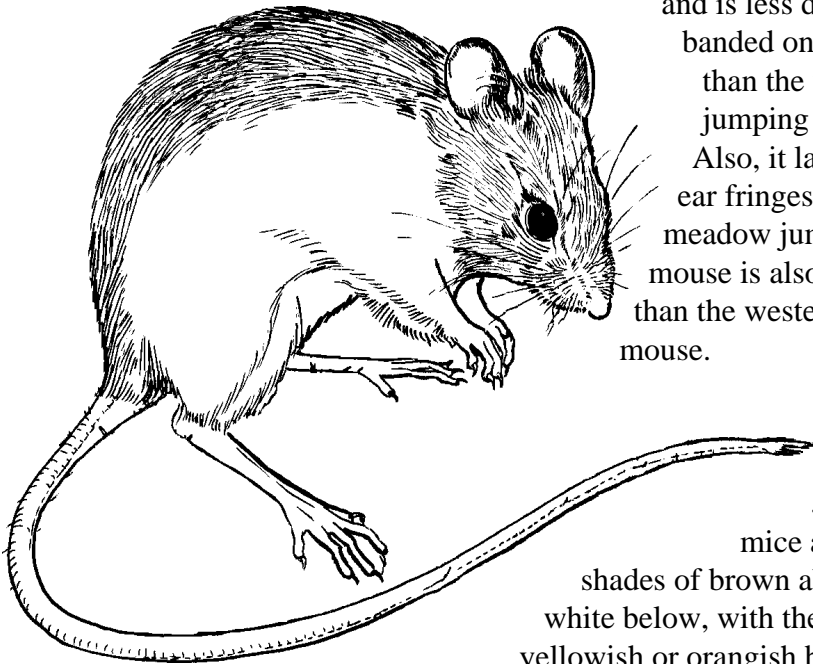


# WILDLIFE NOTES

## Meadow jumping mouse

### Distinguishing Features

Jumping mice (*Zapus hudsonius*) are members of a family that is found only in the northern hemisphere. Except for their long



hindlegs and jumping gait, these mice resemble and behave like mice of other families, such as deer mice. This jumping mouse is different from other rodents as they have well-developed hindlegs, long tails, jumping ability, and a two-footed gait. They resemble kangaroo rats but they lack a distinctive dark-and-light patterning and tuft on the end of the tail. Jumping mice have grooved front teeth and do not

have external cheek pouches.

Distinguishing the meadow jumping mouse from the western jumping mouse (*Z. princeps*) is difficult. The meadow jumping mouse is a paler yellow and is less distinctly banded on the back than the western jumping mouse. Also, it lacks white ear fringes. The meadow jumping mouse is also smaller than the western jumping mouse.

### Descriptive Details

Jumping mice are various shades of brown above and white below, with the sides yellowish or orangish brown. The sides contrast with the brown back color, giving the effect of a dark band on the back. The feet are white, and the tail is bicolored. The ears are fairly large, but the head and body are in proportion to each other—versus the big-headed appearance of kangaroo rats. Other measurements for the meadow jumping mouse include a tail that is over five inches long and a hindfoot that measures a little over an inch long.

### Distribution

These mice are found from Alaska to Labrador, southward to British Columbia, the southwestern United States, Oklahoma, Alabama, and Georgia; the subspecies *Z. h. luteus* is native to New Mexico and Arizona. Locally, the meadow jumping mouse occurs in the San Juan, Jemez and Sacramento mountains and the north-central and central Rio Grande Valley. This mouse was recorded once in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains—Williams Lake in Taos County—and near Belen. Key habitat areas are along the Rio Cebolla in the Jemez Mountains, the vicinity of Espanola, Isleta Marsh (Bernalillo County), Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, and the Cloudcroft area. The meadow jumping mouse may also be found near El Rito (Rio Arriba County) and Socorro.

### Biology

Jumping mice are nocturnal, and in New Mexico this species occurs in moist habitats dominated by damp and rich vegetation. The meadow jumping mouse inhabits areas with streams, moist soil, and lush streamside vegetation consisting of grasses, sedges, and forbs. Such habitats are in the

Jemez Mountains, and the edges of permanent ditches and cattail stands in the Rio Grande Valley.

Jumping mice eat seeds, fruits, and insects. As a rule, these mice are rare. One of the most interesting features of this mouse is the amount of time it spends in hibernation, which is reported to last from October/November to April/May. Their major period of activity in the Jemez Mountains-Espanola areas is June to September. Jumping mice in the middle Rio Grande Valley (Isleta and Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge) appear to be active in the period from May to October—if not longer. Breeding season in New Mexico is from May to September, with litters numbering three to four young. Only one breeding a year takes place in the northern part of the state. Two litters may be produced in the central Rio Grande Valley.

**Status**

Meadow jumping mice are widely distributed in North America, and in moister areas they may be favored by the opening up of forests and similar ecological changes. In the dry Southwest, however, the damp habitats of these animals is negatively affected by agriculture, development, grazing, and diversion of water. As a result, jumping mice

have declined in range and numbers in lowland sites and in resort areas in the mountains. These impacts are especially serious for the meadow jumping mouse of the region, given that the well-differentiated subspecies from there (*Z. h. luteus*) is found nowhere else.

**Conservation**

Habitat maintenance and enhancement are very important to the conservation of this species. Such

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measures should be implemented on public land areas where the species is known or might occur.

