



## prairie vole

*Microtus ochrogaster*

Kingdom: Animalia  
Division/Phylum: Chordata - vertebrates  
Class: Mammalia  
Order: Rodentia  
Family: Muridae

## FEATURES

The prairie vole's back has a salt-and-pepper appearance from the tan and dark hairs that are present. The belly is golden, yellow or reddish. The upper side of the tail is about the same color as the back while the lower side of the tail is lighter than the belly.

## BEHAVIORS

The prairie vole lives in grassy fields such as ungrazed pastures, alfalfa fields, roadsides and prairies. This vole eats seeds, roots, mosses, alfalfa, blue grasses, clovers, dandelions and goldenrods. It is active during the night and day using a system of runways to get from one burrow to another. This vole uses several aggressive behaviors against other voles, among them "boxing," chasing, lunging, standing upright, threatening and wrestling. Mating may occur year round although it is more frequent in spring and fall. Litter size is normally three, four or five. The large nest is built under ground in a part of the burrow system. Young are helpless at birth but develop rapidly

and are able to live on their own at about two and one-half weeks of age. Life expectancy of this vole is about one to two months.

## HABITATS

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> bottomland forests        | <input type="checkbox"/> rivers & streams               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> lakes, ponds & reservoirs | <input type="checkbox"/> swamps                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lake Michigan             | <input type="checkbox"/> temp water supplies            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> marshes                   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> wet prairies & fens |
| <input type="checkbox"/> peatlands                 |   |

## ILLINOIS STATUS

- |  |                                     |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> common | <input type="checkbox"/> endangered | <input type="checkbox"/> threatened |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> native | <input type="checkbox"/> exotic     |                                     |

## ILLINOIS RANGE

statewide

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Illinois Department of Natural Resources. 1999.  
*Biodiversity of Illinois, Volume I: Aquatic Habitats* CD-ROM.