



marsh rice rat

Orzomys palustris

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

FEATURES

The marsh rice rat is about four and three-fourths inches in head-body length with a tail that is about as long as or longer than the head-body length. It has a slender, gray-brown body with white feet. The belly is gray. The tail is gray-brown above and gray below. The ears are hairy.

BEHAVIORS

The marsh rice rat may be found in southern one-fourth of Illinois living in marshes and swamps. Its diet usually includes seeds and leaves of grasses and aquatic plants but it may also eat turtles, fishes, bird eggs, small mammals, insects and snails. This rodent is mainly nocturnal and is active all year. It is a good swimmer. While on land, it makes and uses runways. Mating occurs throughout the spring and summer. Young are raised in a nest of grasses and vines which is placed above flood level. Litter size varies from three to five. Young marsh rice rats reach maturity in about two months.

HABITATS

- bottomland forests
- coniferous forest
- southern Illinois lowlands
- upland deciduous forest

ILLINOIS STATUS

- common
- endangered
- threatened
- native
- exotic

ILLINOIS RANGE

Permanent resident: southern 1/4

Summer resident:

Migrant:

Winter resident:

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Illinois Department of Natural Resources. 1999.
Biodiversity of Illinois, Volume 2: Woodland Habitats CD-ROM.