

## Notes

### Northern Pocket Gophers, *Thomomys talpoides*, with White Pelage from Alberta

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We report the capture of two Northern Pocket Gophers (*Thomomys talpoides*) with a complete lack of integumentary pigments.

Key Words: Alberta, Northern Pocket Gopher, *Thomomys talpoides*, pelage.

The color of the pelage of pocket gophers (Geomyidae) is highly variable (Chase et al. 1982). In *Thomomys*, it varies from almost black through gray and brown to almost white; the ventral pelage is only slightly paler than the dorsal pelage (Nowak and Paradiso 1983). In Alberta, Northern Pocket Gophers (*Thomomys talpoides*) typically have a steel-gray dorsal pelage (Smith 1993); individual hairs have a brownish band toward the tip. Reports of true albinism (the complete lack of melanin pigmentation resulting in white pelage and pink eyes, Searle 1968) in *Thomomys* are rare. Burnett (1925) described a Northern Pocket Gopher (*Thomomys talpoides*) from Colorado, with a deep cream pelage, a large white throat-patch, a light tail, and almost white feet and legs. No information was provided about the eye color. Storer and Gregory (1934) reported complete albinism in three pink-eyed individuals of Botta's Pocket Gopher (*Thomomys bottae*) from California.

In May 1994, farmer D. Fear from Cremona (51° 33' N, 114° 32' W), Alberta, captured two adult Northern Pocket Gophers that were completely white from nose to tail. One was a female (Provincial Museum of Alberta accession number 95.2.1; weight 169.8 g; total length 230 mm; tail 60 mm; hindfoot 30 mm; ear 7 mm) and the other was a male (PMA 95.2.2; weight 158.1 g; total length 235 mm; tail 60 mm; hindfoot 30 mm; ear 7 mm). The animals were received frozen but the eye color was not recorded. For this reason, it is uncertain whether these animals were true albinos. Other instances of white gophers have been verbally

reported to us by farmers from central Alberta. To our knowledge, these specimens are the first confirmed cases of Northern Pocket Gophers with a complete lack of integumentary pigments.

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