

golden mouse *Ochrotomys nuttalli*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Mammalia

Order: Rodentia

Family: Cricetidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The golden mouse is a medium-sized mouse (head-body length three and one-fourth to three and three-fourths inches) with red or golden body fur. The cream-colored belly fur has golden tints. Its tail is the same length or slightly longer than the head-body length. The feet are white.

BEHAVIORS

The golden mouse may be found in the southern one-fourth of Illinois. It lives in honeysuckle and greenbrier thickets in association with conifers, sumac or cane. This mouse eats acorns and seeds of bedstraw, blackberries, grapes and poison ivy as well as other seeds. It climbs well on small branches and vines and can swim. The tail is used for balance and to wrap around vines or branches. These animals live in colonies and are active at night. The nest is built above ground such as in a tree or vine. The nest is used for resting and to raise the young and may contain several mice. The nest is lined with fur, grasses, bark and other plant material and covered with leaves, grasses and stems. During the day the entrance/exit to the nest is kept covered. Feeding platforms may also be utilized by this mouse. It is believed that the golden mouse mates twice per year, once in early spring and once in early fall. The average litter size is two or three. Young are helpless at birth but develop rapidly and are able to live on their own at three weeks of age.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

none

Woodland Habitats

coniferous forests; upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

edge

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