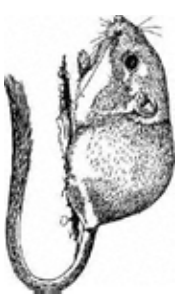


der pink skin. Hundreds of baby kangaroo rats are born in the desert every year.

Kangaroo rats are not social at all. They keep to themselves and protect their burrows from others. They block the entrances to their homes with dirt during the day to keep the hot air and other animals out. There is so little food in the desert that they hide the seeds in their dens. Sometimes they growl and thump their hind feet to chase others away from their space. Kangaroo rats are not friendly.



KANGAROO RATS

Kangaroo rats are cute furry rodents who live in the desert. They have long hind legs and short forelegs. They hop instead of running. Their long tufted tail helps them keep their balance as they hop along. They are mostly white on the belly with brown or tan fur on their backs. They do not have any fur on their tiny rounded ears. Their



shiny black eyes help them see in the dark. Kangaroo rats are adorable animals.

The desert is the kangaroo rats' habitat. They live in the dry regions of the Southwestern deserts in the United States. Sandy or rocky soil is perfect for digging underground homes. There is not much vegetation in this climate. Kangaroo rats survive on seeds, grasses, and small insects. They are



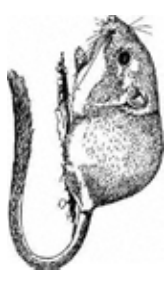
so small that they do not require much food. This unfriendly habitat is perfect for them.

Kangaroo rats can live without drinking water. They are able to get water out of the seeds that they eat. They do not drink or store water at all. They do not sweat except on the bottom of their feet. They live in burrows underground where it is damp and cool to avoid the desert heat. They do not come out until late at night when the temperature is cool. Kangaroo rats do not need to drink water.

Two to three litters are born to each kangaroo rat female every year. It only takes thirty days for them to be born. Each litter can have up to seven pups. Normally a litter includes only two pups. When they are born, they are hairless and toothless. Their eyes and ears are closed for a few weeks after birth. The future fur color patterns can be seen on the ten-

lem to man. Recently more people have moved into their habitat. The kangaroo rat has become a pest. Ranchers have sown grass seed for their animals to graze upon. Farmers have begun to irrigate their crops. This is a gold mine for the kangaroo rat. They steal the seeds that ranchers and farmers have planted. People now see the pint-sized hoarders as pests.

PINT-SIZED HOARDERS



A kangaroo rat is a funny little animal. It hops around on its long hind legs like a tiny kangaroo. It uses its short front legs for digging and gathering seeds. It never runs about on all four legs like other rats. Nighttime is its busy time for finding food. The kangaroo rat stuffs the seeds it finds in its fur-lined cheek pouches until they are



full. Then, it puts the seeds in its burrow to eat later. The kangaroo rat is fun to watch.

The kangaroo rat is small and cute! It is only twelve inches long including its tail. Its tail has a puff of fur on the end. It is longer than the animal's body and head. It has large brown eyes. Its ears are furless, rounded. The plump body of the kangaroo rat is covered in a mixture of tan, cream, and white



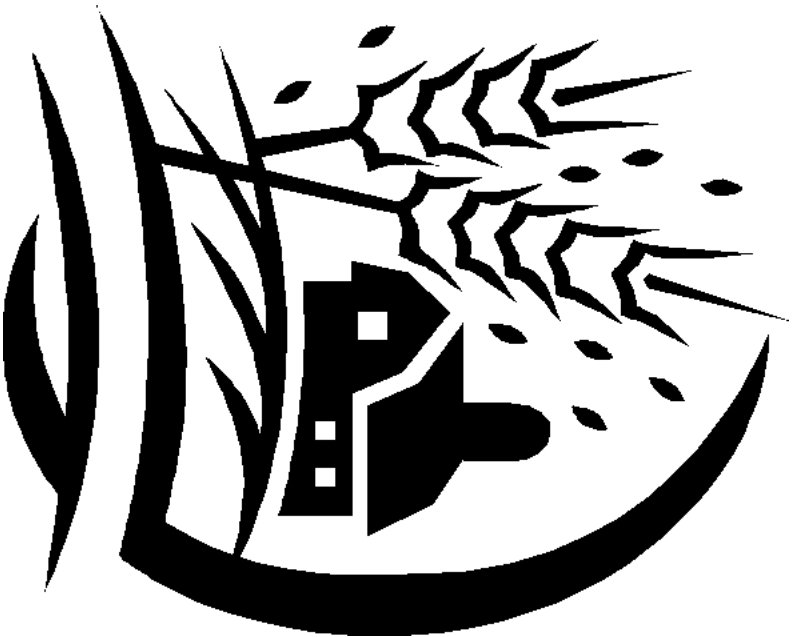
fur. The kangaroo rat is an adorable rodent.

There are twenty-two species of kangaroo rat. All of them live in North America. Some of these desert mammals live only in California. Their habitat is in arid deserts where the soil is sandy or rocky. The Giant Kangaroo Rat is the largest of the species. It weighs about five ounces. Ord's Kangaroo Rat is one of the smallest, most common species.

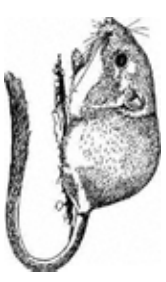
Kangaroo rats live in colonies but they do not work together. They do not even pay attention to each other. They only migrate when the food supply is gone. Sometimes they move as far as a mile away to set up their new homes. Up to twelve kangaroo rats may live on one acre of land. The colony spaces the burrows far enough apart that each has enough room to graze.

For years kangaroo rats were no prob-

actually on the outside of their mouth. They are fur lined and dry. They carry their food efficiently while continuing to search for more. After they have stuffed their cheek pockets full, the kangaroo rats deliver the food to hiding places in their dens. They have a handy carrying case for their food.



CHEEKS FOR STORAGE



Kangaroo rats are neither kangaroos nor rats. They resemble mice but they are not. They are in a family that includes only kangaroo rats and pocket mice. There are twenty-two species within the family. The banner tail kangaroo rat, which is one of the largest, has a black tail with a bushy white tip. The desert kangaroo



rat has a white tip on its tail, too, but its body is yellow instead of brown. There is much variety in this rodent family.

Baby kangaroo rats are called pups. They are ugly and helpless when they are born. They have no fur or teeth. They cannot see or hear. They wiggle and squirm looking for their mother to feed them. Sometimes there are as many as seven pups in a litter. The pups will be cute in about two months when their fur grows in.

Humans do not often see kangaroo rats. They live in sparsely populated areas and they are active only at night. The daytime is extremely hot in the desert where they live, so they stay inside their burrows. Many larger animals like to eat kangaroo rats. To avoid being eaten, they hop around only at night. Kangaroo rats hide from danger.

Kangaroo rats are great jumpers. They have large hind feet and legs that help them jump up to nine feet in one bound. Their feet are hairy on top and on the sole. Balance is not a problem because of their long tails. Because they stand on their hind feet, they are considered bipedal. When they jump, there are two footprints and a tail print in the sand. It is no wonder that they are called kangaroo rats.

These tiny hoppers spend their nighttime hours gathering food and putting it in pouches in their cheeks. The pouches are

