

marsh rice rat *Oryzomys palustris*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Mammalia

Order: Rodentia

Family: Cricetidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

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 body with gray-brown fur and white feet. The belly fur is gray. The tail is gray-brown above and gray below. The ears are hairy.

BEHAVIORS

The marsh rice rat may be found in the 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 that is placed above flood level. Litter size varies from three to five. Young marsh rice rats reach maturity in about two months.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

marshes; swamps

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none

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