

Kangaroo Rats: Burrows in a Colony



Photo: Rosalie Faubion/USBR

Kangaroo Rats build their burrows in mounds of sand or fine soil. Those of the largest species may be over 3 feet high and over 12 feet in diameter. Such burrows have multiple entrances (see photo). Smaller species have smaller mounds and burrows; and some species do not throw up conspicuous mounds.

Kangaroo Rat Burrows



Kangaroo rat burrows can be found typically on gentle slopes. In areas of Creosote bush or other large desert shrubs, the burrows are easily located.

Each rat owns a castlelike mound of soil or sand

surrounding the base of a bush (see figure). There are several entrances, the most frequently used made obvious by a profusion of radiating tracks. Burrow entrances vary in size just as the kangaroo rats do, and can range from 2 (Fresno K-Rat) to 5 inches (Giant K-Rat).

Their burrows are deep enough to allow the occupants to escape midday temperatures. When the air reaches 110° F just above the surface of the ground and the soil surface an intolerable 160° F, the kangaroo rats' burrows may remain a comfortable 85-90° F. This burrow temperature, though warm, is not dangerous, since they are known to adjust their metabolism to air temperatures up to 100° F. Kangaroo rat burrows can also be identified by tapping or scrapping at the entrance, if the burrow is occupied, a light thumping sound, which has been referred to as "drumming" may be heard within.



California Department of Pesticide Regulation
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