



Riparian Brush Rabbit and Riparian Woodrat

Dept. of Pesticide Regulation
Endangered Species Project

Updated: October, 2002

Riparian Brush Rabbit

(*Sylvilagus bachmani riparius*)



Photo: B. "Moose" Peterson/WRP

- Listing Status: Endangered Federal, 2000); Endangered (California, 1994).
- Medium-sized cottontail, about 1 foot long.
- Weighs less than 2 lbs.
- Can be distinguished from desert cottontail (*Sylvilagus audubonii*) by size and coloration. RBR is smaller, its tail is small and inconspicuous. RBR's ears are uniformly colored.
- Desert Cottontail's tail shows much white when viewed from behind, and inner tips of ears are black.

Riparian Brush Rabbit Behavior

Riparian brush rabbits have relatively small home ranges, usually conforming to available brushy habitat.

- Brush rabbits do not dig burrows like European rabbits do. They build “nests” in dense brush, using available vegetation.

- They live in dense riparian forests, and seldom move more than a few feet from cover.

- Riparian brush rabbits will not cross large open areas.



Photo: John Brode, CDFG

Riparian Brush Rabbit

Diet, Reproduction

- RBR diet consists of herbaceous vegetation: grasses, sedges, clover, forbs, and buds, bark, and leaves of woody plants.
- They breed from January to May, not year-round.
- Females give birth to 3-4 babies in each litter and 3-4 litters a year are possible. But only 1 out of 6 young typically survive long enough to breed. Most of the young rabbits are killed by predators, especially feral cats.



Photo: Moose Peterson, WRP

Riparian Wood Rat

(Neotoma fuscipes riparia)



Photo: B. "Moose Peterson/WRP

- Listing Status: Endangered (Federal, 2000); Special Concern (California).
- One of eleven subspecies of dusky-footed woodrat. The riparian woodrat is the only subspecies found in the floor of the Central Valley.
- Up to 17 inches long
- Weighs up to 8 ounces.
- Covered with gray and cinnamon fur on its back and sides, and white fur on its belly and hind feet.

Riparian Woodrat Typical Lodge



Photo: Patrick Kelly

Riparian Woodrat

- RWRs live in stick nest houses, or lodges, generally positioned over or against logs on the ground. These are often located in dense brush.
- RWRs are generalist herbivores. They consume nuts, fruits, fungi, foliage, and flowers.
- They breed throughout the year.
- They are common where there are deciduous valley oaks, but few live oaks. They are most numerous where shrub cover is dense, and least abundant in open areas.
- RWRs are active mostly at night.

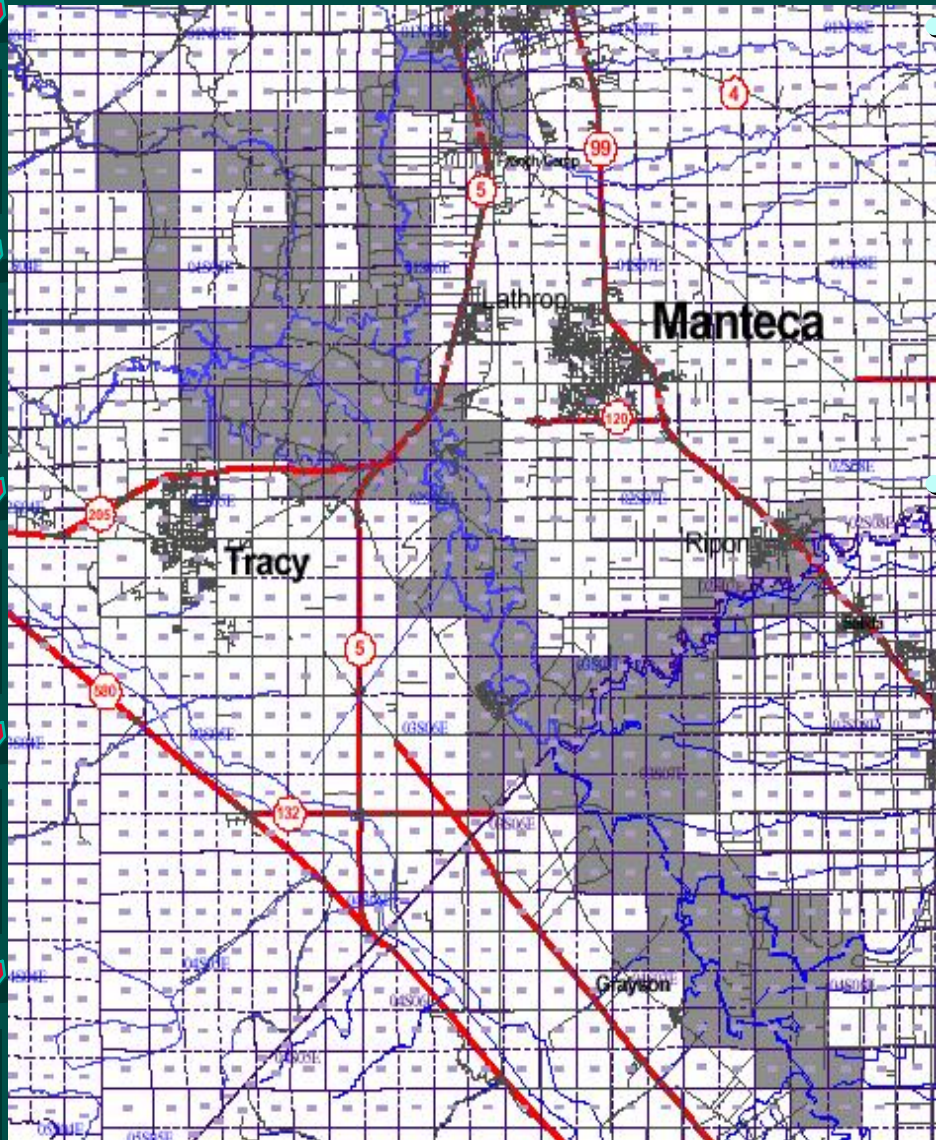
Riparian Brush Rabbit and Riparian Woodrat Habitat

- Historically, riparian brush rabbits and riparian woodrats inhabited riparian forests along major streams of the northern San Joaquin Valley.
- Loss of habitat (90%) has reduced their populations sharply.
- Until 1999, the only confirmed, single populations for both species were found in Caswell Memorial State Park.



Photo: USFWS

Riparian Brush Rabbit and Woodrat: Range



Recent data from USFWS report RBRs in the vicinity of Stewart Tract (1997-98 field season), and RWRs caught west of Caswell Memorial State Park (CMSP) (October 1997).

Since both species of brush rabbit and woodrat usually occur together in the same habitat, the current range map developed by DPR includes riparian habitat in sections along the San Joaquin and Stanislaus rivers, in parts of San Joaquin and Stanislaus counties (see shaded sections in map).

Riparian Brush Rabbit and Riparian Wood Rat Habitat and Flooding



Photo: Marie Sullivan, USFWS

During exceptionally wet winters, Caswell Memorial State Park is completely flooded for prolonged periods. As a result, RBRs and RWRs have nowhere to forage or seek shelter. Survivors are forced to high ground, mostly cleared levees or fields lacking protective cover from predators.

Riparian Brush Rabbit and Riparian Woodrat Rodenticide Use Limitations per Interim Measures County Bulletins

- Use limitation #20 applies to all grain bait (including pelletized baits) rodenticides applied by broadcast or bait station method, when such use is in proximity of dense riparian vegetation in any of the sections listed in the Interim Measures County Bulletins for San Joaquin or Stanislaus counties.
- If you have questions about where to apply these limitations, contact your county agricultural commissioner for assistance.

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DPR's Pesticide Use Limitation #20



Photo: Desley Whisson, UCD Extension

- A fifty foot clearing is required from the edge of dense riparian brush to any bait stations or edge of broadcast baiting.
- Alternatively, modified inverted "T" bait stations can be placed closer if they are capped at night (two hours before sunset to two hours after sunrise).