



least shrew

Cryptotis parva

Kingdom: Animalia
Division/Phylum: Chordata - vertebrates
Class: Mammalia
Order: Insectivora
Family: Soricidae

Features

The least shrew is 2 1/2 to 3 1/2 inches long, including the tail. It has a short, gray-cinnamon body with a lighter belly. The tail is short, about one-third the length of its head and body combined. It has extremely large ear openings that are well concealed with fur.

Natural History

The least shrew lives in open grassy areas and dry fallow fields. It can be found to a lesser extent in marshes and timbered areas. It eats insects, spiders, and earthworms. It uses a shallow underground burrow system. It may build a nest in the burrow or under debris or weeds on the ground. Young are born in the spring and fall. The gestation period is three weeks and the average number of young per litter is five. Young least shrews grow to adult size by one month after birth.

Habitats

bottomland forests; natural lakes and prairie marshes; wet prairies and fens

Iowa Status

threatened; native

Little is known about the reason for decline of this species. It is associated with open grasslands and fallow fields, which are less common than in the past.

Iowa Range

statewide

Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001. *Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats* CD-ROM.