



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
CRATERS OF THE MOON NATIONAL MONUMENT AND PRESERVE
P.O. BOX 29
ARCO, IDAHO 83213

Memorandum

March 18, 2011

To: Central Files, CRMO

From: John Apel, Integrated Resource Program Manager

Subject: Wildlife Observation Record, Pygmy Rabbits

This memo documents observations of pygmy rabbits within Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve in 2010 and early 2011. While pygmy rabbits were suspected to occur within the Monument and Preserve, documentation was limited (last record in 2002) and lacked photographic support prior to these observations.

The first recent indication of their presence came from a observation on 9/16/2010 when a rabbit was sighted in the road leading into Little Cottonwood canyon. An automated remote night vision equipped camera placed at the lower end of the Little Cottonwood Creek drainage captured an image of a rabbit on 9/27/2010 but the image was out of focus and did not provide conclusive identification. .

Following up on this evidence the area was ground checked on 12/11/2010 and on 12/17/2010 when 16 inches of snow covered the ground (Figure 1). Two pygmy rabbits and an abundance of trails and scat were observed in the vicinity of the well building located at the lower end of Little Cottonwood Creek. On a subsequent survey of the area on 1/9/2011 three pygmy rabbits at two separate denning areas to the west and north of the well building were observed. Photos positively documenting one of the rabbits are included in this memo (Figure 3).



Figure 1. Photo of pygmy rabbit tracks near the well building on 12/17/2010.



Figure 2. Tunnel entrance and pellets, Site #1.



Figure 3. Photo of pygmy rabbit taken at Site #2 on 1/9/2011.



Figure 4. Photo of Pygmy rabbit taken at Site #2 on 1/9/2011.



Figure 5. Photo of pygmy rabbit taken at Site #1 on 1/9/2011.

In late January of 2011 a suspected third pygmy rabbit site was identified approximately three miles east of sites 1 and 2. Site #3 is located just south of U.S. Highway 20/26/93 between highway mile markers 232 and 233. A single rabbit was observed on this site on numerous occasions during February 2011. The site contained an abundance of burrows and small pellets but only one rabbit was observed.

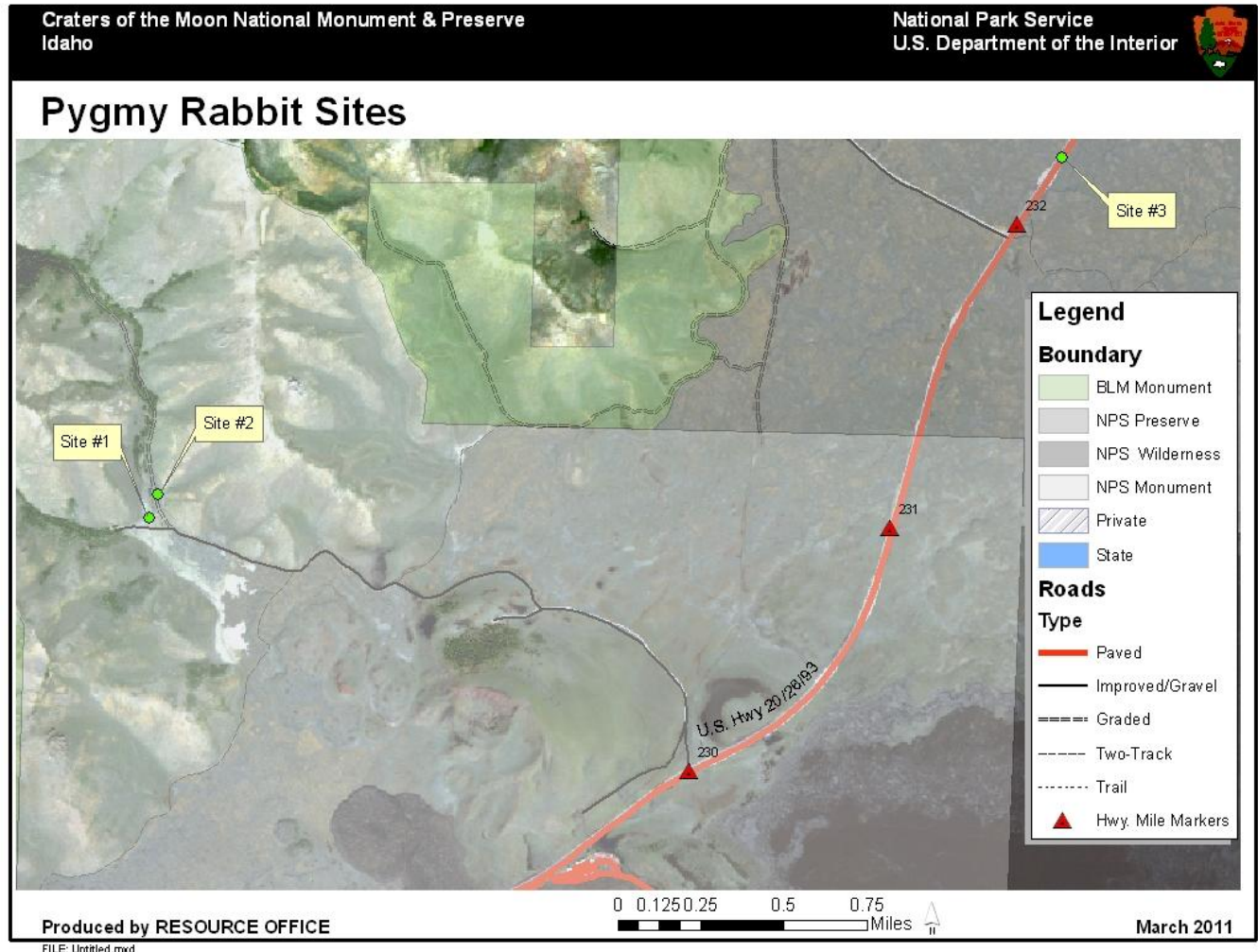


Figure 6.

Observations (Figure 7) of the rabbit along with characteristic tunnel system and pellets at the den site confirmed the third was occupied by a pygmy rabbit. Additional sightings of a pygmy rabbit were made during the same time period on the north side of the highway.

UTM coordinates (NAD83, Zone 12) for the sites are as follows;

Site 1; Easting 290707, Northing 4,817,022
 Site 2; Easting 290751, Northing 4,817,140
 Site 3; Easting 295130, Northing 4,818,768



Figure 7. Photo of Pygmy rabbit taken at Site #3 on March 7, 2011.

These records should provide adequate documentation for purposes of the NPSpecies record from “Probably present” to “Present in Park”.