

Mammals

Importance

The American Southwest may have the greatest diversity of mammal species in the country. Information, however, is lacking on most mammal species. Many of the mammals in the southwest, such as shrews, pocket gophers, and pikas, are vulnerable to local extirpation due to their having geographic ranges that may be restricted to a single mountain top or other isolated island of habitat. Concern is also increasing for several species of mammals adaptive to arid habitats, such as kangaroo rats and pocket mice, and for several species of bats, many of which are now considered sensitive species.

Status and Trends

The Fort Larned National Historic Site (FOLS), established as a military outpost in 1859, is comprised of developed areas, grassland, and the Pawnee River lined by a wooded riparian corridor. A detached 44-acre parcel consists of native mixed-grass prairie and is home to a prairie dog town. Surveys for mammals were conducted in the summer of 1998 by Jerry Choate and Korrie Chapman (Fort Hays State University), and in the spring-summer of 2001 by the Kansas Natural Heritage Inventory (KSNHI [Jennifer Delisle and William Busby]) (final report dated 2004). Surveys were conducted in 2001 because species documentation in 1998 had not reached the desired level. A third survey was also conducted in 1989. These inventories provide valuable baseline information for future inventory and monitoring.

A total of 23 mammal species have been observed at FOLS during the three surveys and by park personnel (Figure 1). The first two surveys reported numbers of individuals captured or observed, and in these surveys the species observed in the greatest numbers were the deer mouse (*Peromyscus maniculatus*; 34) and white-footed mouse (*Peromyscus leucopus*; 10)

in 1989, and the Western harvest mouse (*Reithrodontomys megalotis*; 21) and white-footed mouse (19) in 1998. The big brown bat (*Eptesicus*



Bobcat



PHOTO: RON SINGER

Black-tailed prairie dog

fuscus) has been found in cracks above doorways in historic buildings. Other mammals recorded include: the silver-haired bat (*Lasionycteris noctivagans*), black-tailed prairie dog (*Cynomys ludovicianus*), American beaver (*Castor canadensis*), coyote (*Canis latrans*), and mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*). Eighteen additional species have not been observed but are on a master species list.

Discussion

Fifty-six percent of the mammal species that are predicted to occur on FOLS have been documented. The only species recommended for monitoring in 2004 by KSNHI was the black-tailed prairie dog, due to its status as a species potentially proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act. Further survey work would likely lead to recording more species, particularly small rodents and bats, while less numerous larger mammals are more likely to be observed opportunistically.

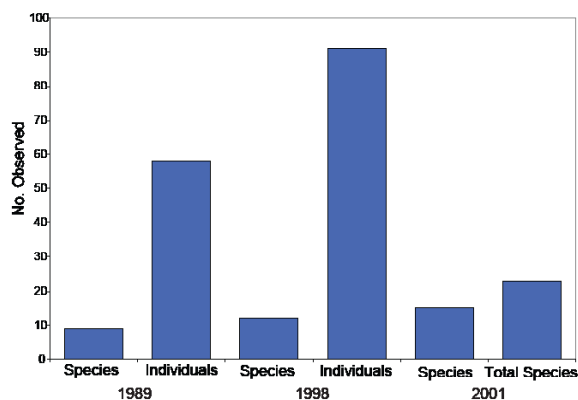


Figure 1. Mammals documented during three surveys at FOLS.