

# 7a

## Small Mammals

### MONTANE VOLE

#### *Microtus montanus*

##### *Identification*

- 5–7.6 inches long, 1.2–3.2 ounces.
- Brownish to grayish-brown, occasionally grizzled; ventral side is silvery gray; relatively short tail is bi-colored.

##### *Habitat*

- Found at all elevations in moist mountain meadows with abundant grass and grassy sagebrush communities; also common in riparian areas.
- Grass is their primary food.
- Probably the most important prey

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species in the park; eaten by coyotes, raptors, and other animals.

##### *Behavior*

- Active year-round maintaining tunnels in the winter; also dig shallow burrows.
- Typically breed from mid-February to November; up to 4 litters of 2–10 young per year.



### PIKA

#### *Ochotona princeps*

##### *Identification*

- 7–8.4 in. long, 5.3–6.2 ounces (about the size of a guinea pig).
- Tailless, gray to brown with circular ears.

##### *Habitat*

- Found on talus slopes and rock falls at nearly all elevations in the park.
- Eat plant foods such as grasses, sedges, aspen, lichen, and conifer twigs.
- Predators include coyotes, martens, and hawks.

##### *Behavior*

- Active year-round; darts around on rocks; travels through tunnels under snow.
- Breed in spring; two litters per year.
- Often heard but not seen; makes a distinct shrill whistle call or a short “mew.”
- Scent marks by frequently rubbing cheeks on rocks.
- Late summer it gathers mouthfuls of vegetation to build “haystacks” for winter food; defends haystacks vigorously.
- Haystacks often built in same place year after year; have been known to become three feet in diameter.
- Like rabbits and hares, pika eat their own feces, which allows additional digestion of food.