

## Aberrant Coloration in Two Least Chipmunks, *Eutamias minimus*, from Western Canada

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Aberrant pelage coloration in two specimens of *Eutamias minimus* from British Columbia and Alberta is reported. One is melanistic and one is pale orange. Aberrant pelage coloration in the genus *Eutamias* is rare.

Key Words: *Eutamias minimus*, melanistic, aberrant pelage.

Aberrant pelage coloration in chipmunks occurs infrequently. Smith and Smith (1972) summarized the reported occurrences in Eastern Chipmunks (*Tamias striatus*). The only published report of aberrant coloration in western chipmunks, *Eutamias* spp., is that of Fleharty and Jones (1960) who reported a type of albinism in one Gray-collared Chipmunk, *Eutamias cinereicollis*, from New Mexico.

The Provincial Museum of Alberta has recently received two specimens of aberrantly pigmented Least Chipmunks, *Eutamias minimus*, from western Canada. The first specimen (number Z81.49.1), collected in northwestern British Columbia in 1976, was donated as a study skin. Unfortunately it had not been sexed or measured. It is smaller than other study skins of *Eutamias minimus* in the Provincial Museum of Alberta. Whether this is an artifact of the way the specimen was prepared or whether it is in fact smaller cannot be determined. Its pelage is totally black with no hint of the dorsal striping that is characteristic of this species. The specimen is uniformly black on both the dorsal and ventral surfaces, including the feet and tail. Smith and Smith (1972) described three melanistic *Tamias striatus* of which two showed faint striping and one was totally black.

The second specimen (number Z82.77.13), a female, was collected by W. Weimann on 21 August 1982 at Steen River, Alberta. Its color is diluted from normal and can be best described as pale orange. In a normally colored specimen the dorsal striping alternates between black and white. In the specimen reported

here the alternate-striping pattern is evident but it is much paler. The stripes that are black in normal specimens are pale orange in this specimen. The white stripes are approximately normal in color. In normal specimens the body color is greyish-brown shading into russet on the shoulders but in this specimen the body color is much paler, without any shading on the shoulders. The top of the head, cheeks, and nose are greyish-white. The ventral surface is white. The tail is yellow-orange on both the dorsal and ventral surfaces, and is darker than the rest of the body. The feet are greyish. Standard body measurements are within the range of those of normal adult individuals (Soper 1964).

During the preparation of this note, I examined approximately 100 specimens of *Eutamias minimus*. As well, C. G. van Zyll de Jong, Curator of Mammals, National Museum of Natural Sciences, Ottawa, reported that his collection had no specimens of this species showing aberrant pelage coloration. I conclude that species of *Eutamias*, and particularly *Eutamias minimus*, seldom exhibit aberrant pelage color variation.

### Literature Cited

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