

Pygmy Rabbit Survey in the Big Hat Creek drainage  
Conducted January 16, 2004  
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The survey was conducted near the junction of Big Hat Creek and Beaver Gulch, in T17N, R20E, SE¼ Sec. 9, 6000 feet elevation, in a mixture of low and tall sagebrush. Snow was 6-8 inches deep. The area surveyed is bounded on the southeast by jeep trail #93 and on the north and east by FS road #5093.

We walked the area where burrows and small, pygmy rabbit-like droppings had been observed by Vince, Diane, Pat, Cheryl Dolen<sup>4</sup>, and Hadley Roberts<sup>5</sup> on August 29, 2003. In August, droppings and burrows had been observed in small islands of tall sagebrush between the draw bottom and main ridge to the north of the draw. A few larger, cottontail-size droppings were found among the smaller droppings. We were uncertain whether the smaller droppings, which were much more abundant than the larger ones, were those of juvenile cottontails or adult pygmy rabbits.

On January 16, 2004 the snow's surface was unbroken except for cottontail tracks and pellets in and near the main draw and a few mouse trails on the open slopes. There was no evidence of pygmy rabbit tracks or pellets or burrows of any kind. The draw where the cottontail tracks and droppings were observed is just north of and parallel to jeep trail #93. Vegetation in the draw included wild rose, sticky currant, Basin big sagebrush, rabbitbrush, and bunchgrass.

According to Wendy, pygmy rabbits tend to be very active immediately following a snow event. They are quick to clean snow from the openings of their burrows and can be observed sitting in or near the mouths of the burrows, sunning themselves or feeding on sagebrush.

On January 16, 2004, it had been days since the last snowfall. The fact that we did not see pygmy rabbit sign is a strong indication that they are not at this location now. This does not preclude the possibility that they summer here, but we are wondering if the sign we saw in August was made by cottontails rather than pygmy rabbits.

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