



Species at Risk Profile Series: Ord's Kangaroo Rat



- Ord's Kangaroo Rats are listed as Endangered in Canada.
- They are not true rats, but are actually related to pocket and kangaroo mice.
- They use their large back legs to jump, an efficient mode of travel in sandy soils.
- Sandy soils with little vegetation are required to provide space for their erratic movement.
- They are nocturnal, and spend their days underground in extensive burrow networks.
- Over the winter, 90% of a population may die due to starvation or hypothermia.
- Females produce 2-4 litters of 3 young per year and juveniles reproduce in their 1st year.
- To conserve energy in the winter, they enter an inactive state known as torpor, and are the only kangaroo rats that use torpor.
- Territories are actively defended, and encounters with intruders may even result in death.
- They primarily eat plant seeds, and obtain all their moisture from these seeds.
- Owls and snakes are considered to be their main predators, and their ears are adapted to be especially sensitive to owl wingbeats and snake strikes.



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Conservation

- Habitat loss, particularly vegetation growing on and subsequently stabilizing sand dunes, is the greatest concern for Ord's Kangaroo Rat populations.
- Most available habitat occurs on lands leased for cattle grazing.
- Fire suppression and low intensity grazing allow vegetation to stabilize dunes.
- Active dunes, kangaroo rats' main habitat, are being lost at about 1-2% per year.
- Sub-optimal human-created habitats (eg. roads, firebreaks, etc) may be used, but associated disturbances may cause more deaths than births at these sites.

Get involved

- Read the recovery strategy for Ord's Kangaroo Rats [here](#).
- Allow moderate grazing around sand dunes, to prevent dune stabilization.

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Range map credit: Environment Canada. 2012. Recovery Strategy for the Ord's Kangaroo Rat (*Dipodomys ordii*) in Canada. *Species at Risk Act Recovery Strategy Series*. Environment Canada, Ottawa. vi + 28 pp.