



Rediscovery of *Rhipidomys ochrogaster* J.A. Allen, 1901 (Cricetidae: Sigmodontinae) with a redescription of the species

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Abstract

Rhipidomys ochrogaster is a poorly known sigmodontine rodent from the Yungas of southeastern Peru, known only from a few specimens collected more than 110 years ago. This work reports a new specimen from Yanacocha, Puno, Peru, collected on 22 May 2010; provides a morphological description and comparisons with *R. leucodactylus* and *R. gardneri*; characterizes the habitat; and presents data on the diet of the species. This discovery stresses the urgent need for additional inventory work in the region, in order to document its biodiversity.

Key words: Rodentia, Cricetidae, *Rhipidomys*, Yungas, Peru

Introduction

Among the more than 508 mammal species recognized for Peru (Pacheco *et al.*, 2009), one of the least known is *Rhipidomys ochrogaster* J.A. Allen, 1901. According to Musser and Carleton (2005), this species was described from Peru, Puno Dept., valley of Río Inambari, Inca Mines (= Santo Domingo), 6000 ft (1830 m), based on two female specimens, the holotype (AMNH 16481), collected on 14 September 1900, and the paratype (AMNH 16482), collected on 9 October 1900, both by H. H. Keays.

For almost a century, these were the only specimens known in the literature and all citations (Cabrera 1961, Musser and Carleton 1993, 2005) are apparently based upon them alone. More recently, Tribe (1996) examined two additional specimens housed at the Natural History Museum, London. These specimens have the following information (P. Jenkins, pers. comm.): BM(NH) 1902.7.27.2 collected on 14 December 1901, and BM(NH) 1902.7.27.3 collected on 29 December 1901. Both specimens are male, skins and skulls, collected at Santo Domingo, Carabaya, Peru, 5500 feet [1676 m], by G. Ockenden (collector numbers 217 and 218 respectively), and purchased from W. Rosenberg.

Rhipidomys ochrogaster was retained as a species until Cabrera (1961) synonymized it under *Rhipidomys leucodactylus* (Tschudi) without providing an argument. Later, Musser and Carleton (1993, 2005) and Tribe (1996) considered *R. ochrogaster* as a valid species. Tribe (1996) divided the genus *Rhipidomys* in three sections: "*leucodactylus*", "*fulviventer*", and "*macconnelli*" mainly based on the type of carotid circulatory pattern; and placed *R. ochrogaster* in the "*fulviventer*" section (not in the "*leucodactylus*" section as stated by Musser and Carleton, 2005: 1171).

The scarcity of specimens of *Rhipidomys ochrogaster* led to its being classed as Vulnerable in the Peruvian official list of threatened species (Ministerio de Agricultura, 2004), but only as Data Deficient, ver. 3.1, in the IUCN Red List (Zeballos *et al.*, 2008).

We herein report a new record of *Rhipidomys ochrogaster*, provide a full morphological description including several unreported characters, compare with potential sympatric species, discuss the current distribution, and present new information on the habitat and diet of the species. The conservation status of the species is also addressed.