

~ LIVING WITH WILDLIFE ~

POCKET GOPHERS



NATURAL HISTORY

Pocket Gophers resemble prairie dogs with their stocky, short, powerful and gray-furred bodies. They have short legs and tails and a flattened head with small eyes and gnawing front teeth. They weigh from 85-150 gm, are about 23 cm long and are highly adapted for digging with their strong front claws and protruding front teeth. They are named for their distinctive large, fur-lined cheek pouches (pockets), formed from folds of skin and used for carrying food and nesting materials.

Although Pocket Gophers are sometimes confused with moles, the two animals leave different signs. Gophers deposit separate cone-shaped mounds at tunnel outlets; moles leave continuous trails of raised soil. Gophers are herbivores, feeding on grasses and woody plant materials. They often open tunnels to the surface in the early morning or early evening to feed. Gophers do not hibernate, so they need a food store for winter survival. Solitary creatures for the most part, they repair any holes in their burrows immediately to avoid contact with neighboring gophers or other occupants of abandoned burrows such as snakes, nocturnal birds and other mammals.

Like most rodents, pocket gophers are a primary food source for many large predators. Humans have typically been the gopher's main enemy because of the damage the rodent can do to lawns, gardens and agricultural lands. Their presence does benefit humans

~ LIVING WITH WILDLIFE ~

POCKET GOPHERS



NATURAL HISTORY

Pocket Gophers resemble prairie dogs with their stocky, short, powerful and gray-furred bodies. They have short legs and tails and a flattened head with small eyes and gnawing front teeth. They weigh from 85-150 gm, are about 23 cm long and are highly adapted for digging with their strong front claws and protruding front teeth. They are named for their distinctive large, fur-lined cheek pouches (pockets), formed from folds of skin and used for carrying food and nesting materials.

Although Pocket Gophers are sometimes confused with moles, the two animals leave different signs. Gophers deposit separate cone-shaped mounds at tunnel outlets; moles leave continuous trails of raised soil. Gophers are herbivores, feeding on grasses and woody plant materials. They often open tunnels to the surface in the early morning or early evening to feed. Gophers do not hibernate, so they need a food store for winter survival. Solitary creatures for the most part, they repair any holes in their burrows immediately to avoid contact with neighboring gophers or other occupants of abandoned burrows such as snakes, nocturnal birds and other mammals.

Like most rodents, pocket gophers are a primary food source for many large predators. Humans have typically been the gopher's main enemy because of the damage the rodent can do to lawns, gardens and agricultural lands. Their presence does benefit humans

~ LIVING WITH WILDLIFE ~

POCKET GOPHERS



NATURAL HISTORY

Pocket Gophers resemble prairie dogs with their stocky, short, powerful and gray-furred bodies. They have short legs and tails and a flattened head with small eyes and gnawing front teeth. They weigh from 85-150 gm, are about 23 cm long and are highly adapted for digging with their strong front claws and protruding front teeth. They are named for their distinctive large, fur-lined cheek pouches (pockets), formed from folds of skin and used for carrying food and nesting materials.

Although Pocket Gophers are sometimes confused with moles, the two animals leave different signs. Gophers deposit separate cone-shaped mounds at tunnel outlets; moles leave continuous trails of raised soil. Gophers are herbivores, feeding on grasses and woody plant materials. They often open tunnels to the surface in the early morning or early evening to feed. Gophers do not hibernate, so they need a food store for winter survival. Solitary creatures for the most part, they repair any holes in their burrows immediately to avoid contact with neighboring gophers or other occupants of abandoned burrows such as snakes, nocturnal birds and other mammals.

Like most rodents, pocket gophers are a primary food source for many large predators. Humans have typically been the gopher's main enemy because of the damage the rodent can do to lawns, gardens and agricultural lands. Their presence does benefit humans

however, as their burrowing helps aerate soils, improving plant habitat.

SITUATIONS AND SOLUTIONS

DAMAGE TO AGRICULTURAL LANDS, GARDENS, AND LANDSCAPING: Gophers create their living spaces in soils well suited for burrowing. Unfortunately, these areas are often in our gardens, lawns and agricultural crops. Solutions include:

- Crop rotation and alternative plantings can control pocket gophers.
- Burying hardware cloth 45-50 cm deep around small plots of ornamental trees and plants as fencing around them generally does not work.
- The reduction of ground cover and weeds will cut down their food sources.
- If water supplies allow, keep the ground well irrigated and constantly moist which makes it unsuitable for burrowing.
- When installing new landscaping, consider laying wire mesh over the entire surface and covering with top soil.
- There has been some success using high frequency deterrents. These inexpensive devices are placed at ground level and send sound waves underground that annoy the gophers and may drive them out of the area.
- Encourage the pocket gopher's natural enemies such as weasels, badgers, fox, skunks and snakes to the area.



Medicine River
WILDLIFE CENTRE

Box 115 Spruce View AB T0M 1V0 (403)728-3467 www.mrwc.ca

however, as their burrowing helps aerate soils, improving plant habitat.

SITUATIONS AND SOLUTIONS

DAMAGE TO AGRICULTURAL LANDS, GARDENS, AND LANDSCAPING: Gophers create their living spaces in soils well suited for burrowing. Unfortunately, these areas are often in our gardens, lawns and agricultural crops. Solutions include:

- Crop rotation and alternative plantings can control pocket gophers.
- Burying hardware cloth 45-50 cm deep around small plots of ornamental trees and plants as fencing around them generally does not work.
- The reduction of ground cover and weeds will cut down their food sources.
- If water supplies allow, keep the ground well irrigated and constantly moist which makes it unsuitable for burrowing.
- When installing new landscaping, consider laying wire mesh over the entire surface and covering with top soil.
- There has been some success using high frequency deterrents. These inexpensive devices are placed at ground level and send sound waves underground that annoy the gophers and may drive them out of the area.
- Encourage the pocket gopher's natural enemies such as weasels, badgers, fox, skunks and snakes to the area.



Medicine River
WILDLIFE CENTRE

Box 115 Spruce View AB T0M 1V0 (403)728-3467 www.mrwc.ca

however, as their burrowing helps aerate soils, improving plant habitat.

SITUATIONS AND SOLUTIONS

DAMAGE TO AGRICULTURAL LANDS, GARDENS, AND LANDSCAPING: Gophers create their living spaces in soils well suited for burrowing. Unfortunately, these areas are often in our gardens, lawns and agricultural crops. Solutions include:

- Crop rotation and alternative plantings can control pocket gophers.
- Burying hardware cloth 45-50 cm deep around small plots of ornamental trees and plants as fencing around them generally does not work.
- The reduction of ground cover and weeds will cut down their food sources.
- If water supplies allow, keep the ground well irrigated and constantly moist which makes it unsuitable for burrowing.
- When installing new landscaping, consider laying wire mesh over the entire surface and covering with top soil.
- There has been some success using high frequency deterrents. These inexpensive devices are placed at ground level and send sound waves underground that annoy the gophers and may drive them out of the area.
- Encourage the pocket gopher's natural enemies such as weasels, badgers, fox, skunks and snakes to the area.



Medicine River
WILDLIFE CENTRE

Box 115 Spruce View AB T0M 1V0 (403)728-3467 www.mrwc.ca