

[A race of the] Botta's pocket gopher (*Thomomys bottae bonnevillei*)

## **Species Status Statement.**

### Distribution

This subspecies occurs only at Fish Springs, Juab County, Utah. The federal government owns the site, and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service administers it as a National Wildlife Refuge.

Table 1. Utah counties currently occupied by this species.

[a Race of] Botta's Pocket Gopher - bonnevillei
JUAB

### Abundance and Trends

Population trends of this subspecies are unknown. Seemingly, only 11 specimens have been collected, all at the single locality of its occurrence (Durrant 1952, p. 197).

## **Statement of Habitat Needs and Threats to the Species.**

### Habitat Needs

Moist, spring-fed soils and the plants associated with these soils provide the habitat required for this narrowly endemic subspecies. Durrant (1952, p.197) noted: "Fish Springs, where *T. b. bonnevillei* occurs is a marshy area south of the barren salt-desert country of western Utah. The source of water is springs at the base of the north end of the Fish Springs Mountains. Only the moist area supports pocket gophers." The same author discussed the isolation of this subspecies and mentioned the absence of pocket gophers from nearby areas, including Cane Springs, seven miles south of Fish Springs.

### Threats to the Species

Anything that might cause the dewatering of Fish Springs would almost certainly represent a very serious threat to this endemic subspecies. This would include various direct human activities such as aggressive management of the spring complex, indirect activities such as excessive groundwater withdrawal from Snake Valley, as well as temperature extremes and drought.

Table 2. Summary of a Utah threat assessment and prioritization completed in 2014. This assessment applies to the species' entire distribution within Utah. For species that also occur

elsewhere, this assessment applies only to the portion of their distribution within Utah. The full threat assessment provides more information including lower-ranked threats, crucial data gaps, methods, and definitions (UDWR 2015; Salafsky et al. 2008).

<b>[a Race of] Botta's Pocket Gopher - <i>bonnevillei</i></b>
<b>High</b>
Droughts
Groundwater Pumping
Spring Development / Capping

### **Rationale for Designation.**

This subspecies is endemic to Utah, with a global distribution restricted to a very small part of a single county. Because of this exceedingly narrow distribution, and its resulting small population size, the subspecies is vulnerable to extinction. UDWR considers it a high priority for conservation (Oliver 2018).

### **Economic Impacts of Sensitive Species Designation.**

Sensitive species designation is intended to facilitate management of this species, which is required to prevent Endangered Species Act listing and lessen related economic impacts. A listing of this subspecies of Botta's pocket gopher could lead to restrictions on water development and use in the west desert. Listing would also affect management of Fish Springs National Wildlife Refuge.

### **Literature Cited.**

Durrant, S.D. 1952. Mammals of Utah: taxonomy and distribution. *University of Kansas Publications, Museum of Natural History* 6: 1–549.

Oliver, G.V. 2018. Mammal subspecies endemic to Utah; an overview and conservational prioritization. Utah Division of Wildlife Resources. Salt Lake City, Utah, USA. 51 pp.

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Utah Division of Wildlife Resources [UDWR]. 2015. Utah Wildlife Action Plan: A plan for managing native wildlife species and their habitats to help prevent listings under the Endangered Species Act 2015-2025. Publication Number 15-14, 385 pp.