

= Marsh shrew =

The marsh shrew (*Sorex bendirii*), also known as the Pacific water shrew , Bendire 's water shrew , Bendire 's shrew and Jesus shrew is the largest North American member of the genus *Sorex* (long @-@ tailed shrews) . Primarily covered in dark @-@ brown fur , it is found near aquatic habitats along the Pacific coast from southern British Columbia to northern California . With air trapped in its fur for buoyancy , marsh shrews can run for three to five seconds on top of the water . It measures about 16 cm (6 @.@ 3 in) in length , including a 7 @-@ centimetre (2 @.@ 8 in) -long tail , and weighs an average of 14 @.@ 5 ? 16 g (0 @.@ 51 ? 0 @.@ 56 oz) . The marsh shrew 's diet consists mainly of invertebrates , which it hunts on land and in the water . They are rare ; their populations are thought to be in decline , and they are considered endangered in parts of their range .

= = Description = =

The marsh shrew is the largest member of the genus *Sorex* in North America , and mammalogist David Nagorsen described it as " an attractive mammal " . Its fur is primarily dark brown , and it has a long tail . Although the marsh shrew 's fur is usually uniformly dark on its back and abdomen , the abdominal fur of populations (*S. b. albiventer*) on the Olympic Peninsula may be white . The marsh shrew is about 16 cm (6 @.@ 3 in) in length , including a 7 @-@ centimetre (2 @.@ 8 in) -long tail , and weighs about 14 @.@ 5 ? 16 g (0 @.@ 51 ? 0 @.@ 56 oz) . Its hind feet , slightly fringed with coarse hairs on the toes , measure about 19 @.@ 2 mm (0 @.@ 76 in) .

Although in some areas the marsh shrew is sympatric with other members of the genus *Sorex* , no other large , velvety , gray @-@ black shrew shares this geographic range . Its size distinguishes it from all but the American water shrew (*Sorex palustris*) . Although the marsh shrew and the American water shrew (the two largest shrews in North America) share some features , the American water shrew has more dark @-@ grey @-@ to @-@ black fur on its back , a silver @-@ grey belly and a bi @-@ colored tail and the marsh shrew 's fringed hairs are more distinct . The American water shrew has a smaller skull , without the marsh shrew 's characteristic curvature , and its upper incisors have less @-@ distinct medial tines . The marsh shrew typically has a longer snout than that of the American water shrew , which is more streamlined when viewed from the side .

The marsh shrew 's skull is relatively large , and its condylobasal skull length is usually greater than 19 @.@ 3 mm (0 @.@ 76 in) . There is a distinctive , downward @-@ sloping curve along the snout (rostrum) . Its dental formula is incisors : 1 / 1 ; unicuspid : 5 / 1 ; premolars : 1 / 1 ; molars : 3 / 3 . Of the five upper unicuspid the third is distinctly smaller than the fourth , and they have a pigmented ridge extending to the cingulum . There is a large medial tine on the large upper incisor , in the anterior pigmented region . The reddish pigmentation of the enamel , the result of iron deposits , is thought to be an adaptation strengthening the enamel .