



Oregon Sea Grant Extension  
Sustainable Tourism &  
Outdoor Recreation Program

# Interpretative Fact Sheet Townsend's Chipmunk (*Tamias townsendii*)



The following short article is from the [Oregon Coast 101 Species](#) collection used by the Guide and Outfitter Recognized Professional (GORP) training program. These articles are intended to provide interesting facts you can share with your clientele and add value to your services.

An Interpretive Fact Sheet has been written about each species. We are currently uploading these blogs and creating the links.

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# Townsend's Chipmunk (*Tamias townsendii*)

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 [tourism.oregonstate.edu/townsend-chipmunk-tamias-townsendii/](https://tourism.oregonstate.edu/townsend-chipmunk-tamias-townsendii/)

By colliiek2

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## *Running in the Shadows*

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Townsend's chipmunk is one of the largest in Oregon and can measure nearly 10-inches long. Nine alternating dark and light stripes help identify this very secretive species.

This chipmunk has a black tip on their tail with margins lightly frosted. Its underside and small patch behind the ear are white-ish. Notice white patch under the ear in the image.

These chipmunks molt twice a year and the colors will brighten during the summer.



Townsend's Chipmunk (Courtesy of Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife)

## Communications

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While they are secretive, they are not silent and are often heard before seen. They will not be singing "The Chipmunk song (Christmas Don't be Late)" but they do communicate through a number of vocalizations, posturing, and other displays (no three-part harmonies, sorry guys).

There is a good chance of catching a peak at the Townsend's chipmunk during the late morning and early afternoon when they are foraging, eating, and bringing food back to their burrow. They will often momentarily perch on a sunny stump, log, or low branch... and with a flick of their tail, disappear.

## Diet

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These spunky omnivores eat a wide variety of materials depending on the season and stockpile food for winter. They fill their flexible cheek pouches with plants (seeds, leaves, roots, fruit), fungi and lichens, insects, bird eggs, etc.

They will forage up to a half mile from their burrow and carry food back in their flexible cheek pouches.

Their flexible cheek pouches can hold over 100 oats.

## Where's Home?

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Townsend's chipmunks live in dense forests and thicket found in the Pacific Northwest, up through British Columbia, and throughout western Washington and Oregon.

They are also found in more open areas such as slopes with rock debris. These talus slopes are favorite nest sites and refuges for escaping predators. Sometimes nests are created in trees.

## Burrows

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Burrows maybe up to nearly 33 feet long! They are used to stockpile food and may include shells and other debris. They are also used in harsher regions for hibernation. The chipmunk can be active all year round in mild areas.

## Solitude

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These chipmunks are typically solitary and territorial. Only one chipmunk will live in a single borrow system except when the female is rearing the young.

They seem to prefer isolation and solitude and are not generally socially active except during mating season when they can become quite loud. Males will also aggressively defend their home turf and mate, and attempt to exert dominance over other males.

Not much is known about their mating habits but the population is stable with few predators.

Last note. Chances are very few of them will answer to the name 'ALVIN!'

## REFERENCES

- Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, Squirrels, chipmunks, and marmots (<https://myodfw.com/wildlife-viewing/species/squirrels-chipmunks-and-marmots> and <https://myodfw.com/wildlife-viewing/species/townsend-chipmunk>)
- Aniamlia, Townsend's Chipmunk (<http://animalia.bio/townsend-chipmunk>)
- USDI, Fish & Wildlife Service ([https://www.fws.gov/refuge/julia\\_butler\\_hansen/wildlife\\_and\\_habitat/mammals/townsend\\_chipmunk.html](https://www.fws.gov/refuge/julia_butler_hansen/wildlife_and_habitat/mammals/townsend_chipmunk.html))
- Squirrels at the Feeder, 'How many squirrels live in a burrow?' (<https://bit.ly/3oI6cTN>)
- Munkapedia, Wiki, Alvin and the Chipmunks ([https://alvin.fandom.com/wiki/List\\_of\\_The\\_Chipmunks\\_and\\_The\\_Chipettes\\_songs](https://alvin.fandom.com/wiki/List_of_The_Chipmunks_and_The_Chipettes_songs))