

ECOLOGICAL PATTERNS OF GREY-SIDED VOLE
(*CLETHRIONOMYS RUFOCANUS*) SPREAD AND HABITAT
DISTRIBUTION IN AREAL

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The Grey-sided voles is widespread in forest zone of Eurasia from the Pacific Ocean coast to Scandinavia. Nearly everywhere within this area it is typical mountain taiga species. In many regions, especially at the east of Siberia grey-sided voles occupy several habitats, this species being considered of Eastern Palearctic origin. At the borders of its range the species often become stenotopic due to deterioration of environmental conditions. Urals region is not a marginal area but here this vole is stenotopic to the great extent and inhabits mainly stone fields in the upper belts of Urals mountains.

This report is a survey where an attempt is made to analyze occurrence and habitat spectra of grey-sided vole in different parts of the area. We undertook it to reveal preconditions that caused the relatively stenotopic and petrophilic features of this species in the Urals. The published papers of different authors as well as our own data from different areas (Taimyr, Western Siberia, Urals, Perm and Arkhangelsk regions) were used. In Urals the grey-sided vole is distributed from upperstream of Schuchia river, located at the Polar Urals in shrub tundra subzone, to the Irendyk range at the South Urals in steppe zone. Notwithstanding such wide distribution the species is stenotopic to a great extent and has stable populations only in stone fields and other lithomorphic habitats in subgolets and mountain taiga belts. Less often it can be found in lithomorphic habitats of golets belt and sometime in some non-stony habitats of mountain taiga. In the northern areas of the Urals, the grey-sided vole is less stenotopic and more often occurs in non-lithomorphic habitats and in southern areas its occurrence enhances in stone fields. Throughout its range the grey-sided vole seems to show an eurytopic character in relatively stable coast climate of the southern Far East and a stenotopic character in intracontinental and northern parts. In the Urals mountains, characterized by a wide variability of climatic conditions, voles find optimal hydrothermal situations in lithomorphic habitats. This determines a wide distribution in this region with penetration into upper mountain belts.