

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Look for it now in Southwest Ohio!

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Meadow Vole (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*)

By Shannon Pennington, Warren County Park District Staff Naturalist

Often mistaken for a mouse, the meadow vole has a rounder nose, smaller ears, and a much shorter tail than its better-known rodent cousin. With its dull gray-brown fur, the adult meadow vole's body measures between 6 ½ to 7 inches long, including its nearly hairless tail that makes up about a third of its overall length.

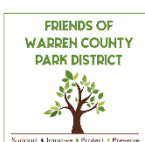
As its name implies, the meadow vole's preferred habitat is amid tall grasses and sedges, providing both shelter and food. They can be found in prairies, grassy openings in the woods, abandoned fields, and swamp edges, creating maze-like underground tunnels and above-ground runways that connect numerous nests.

In the winter, keep an eye out for these tunnels when snow starts to melt. Meadow voles take advantage of the snow cover to create new, insulated pathways throughout their territory, remaining protected from potential predators like foxes, coyotes, owls, and hawks. Once the snow begins to melt, the tunnels are exposed, revealing an intricate system of pathways.

To learn more about this species, visit [page 21 of Ohio Division of Wildlife's Mammals of Ohio Field Guide](#).

FUN FACTS

- "Microtus" means "small ear"
- To communicate, newborn pups can emit four types of ultrasonic signals.
- Babies are weaned by 14 days of age and can begin reproducing by 28 days.
- They breed every 21 days, and can have up to 17 litters a year, with an average of 5 pups per litter. That is around 85 babies a year!
- They are excellent swimmers but poor climbers.
- They are crepuscular, meaning they are most active at dawn and dusk.



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