

exceptional opportunities for study, owing to their abundance, and to the fact that they do not burrow but remain above the ground.

They are thick, low set animals, of a dark brownish color, darker over the back, caused by the glossy guard hairs, becoming lighter on the sides and reaching their extreme paleness on the under parts. Their legs are short and sturdy, the eyes normal, the ears are small*, and the tail is short, but seldom if ever shorter than the hind foot. Their average size, taken from many specimens in my collection, is the following: Length, 144 mm.; tail, $37\frac{1}{2}$ mm.; foot, 20 mm. All of these characters are, however, subject to variation and slight departures, at least, can be expected.

The above species is very closely related to those of the genus *Synaptomys* and *Phenacomys* but its certain identity is made possible by constant and distinct cranial and dental characters. An important difference, and one most readily appreciated, if the skull is available, is the formation of the teeth. In *Synaptomys* the upper incisors are grooved, while the lower incisors are rooted on the inside of the molars and terminate opposite the posterior molar. *Microtus*, on the other hand, has no grooves on the upper incisors, and the lower incisors cross the line of the molar series between the second and third molars and terminate in the ascending ramus of the mandible behind the posterior molar. This and the preceding genus have in common, rootless molars. *Phenacomys* has upper incisors ungrooved similar to *Microtus*, but the molars in contradistinction to the latter are rooted.

The genus *Microtus* enjoys a circumpolar distribution and ranges over its entire area, Old and New World, from the tropic's edge to the northern-most fringe of mammalian life. The species (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*) is, however, peculiar to America, and the animal we know so well throughout Ontario.

This vole becomes at times a menace to agricultural interests, as it is a prolific breeder, bringing forth three or four litters of young a season, with from four to eight young to the litter. Scarcely a month from April to September but nests of young have been found, and when a region becomes over-run they migrate over to other parts of the country, giving rise in years of abnormal increase to "vole plagues" which are so devastating to crops the country over. They are truly the most destructive of all small animals. Their tastes, while essentially vegetarian, sometimes, no doubt, become carnivorous, as they may readily be trapped by means of a meat bait.

They naturally love the low meadows and grass lands where rank vegetation flourishes, giving them the seclusion they seek. Here they drive their intricate system of runways and tunnelings over the ground, forming a perfect maze of passages, running in all directions, crossing and recrossing.

*In the summer the ears are longer than the fur; in the winter the longer fur conceals the ears.—C.G.H.