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WHITE-TAILED PRAIRIE DOG (*CYNOMYS LEUCURUS* MERRIAM)  
DIGGINGS IN WESTERN HARVESTER ANT,  
*POGONOMYRMEX OCCIDENTALIS* (CRESSON), MOUNDS

William H. Clark<sup>1</sup> and Cynthia J. Clark<sup>1</sup>

ABSTRACT.—We report observations of the white-tailed prairie dog, *Cynomys leucurus* Merriam, digging and burrowing into mounds of the western harvester ant, *Pogonomyrmex occidentalis* (Cresson), in Emery County, Utah.

On 16 July 1987 we observed evidence of white-tailed prairie dog (*Cynomys leucurus* Merriam) digging into the mounds of *Pogonomyrmex occidentalis* (Cresson) near Wellington, Emery County, Utah. We observed two white-tailed prairie dogs sitting on the edge of a *P. occidentalis* mound at 1630 hr. Investigation of the ant nest revealed an active prairie dog entrance at the base of the mound and 12 large exploratory holes dug into the mound

(Fig. 1). The entrance (11 cm diameter) was actively used, with numerous tracks, scats, and bits of vegetation adjacent to it. The burrow angled downward to the southeast and went directly under the ant mound and presumably through the center of the ant nest. The exploratory holes dug into the ant nest averaged 10 cm diameter and 15 cm deep. Of 20 ant mounds surveyed in the immediate area, 55% had the large exploratory holes;



Fig. 1. Mound of *Pogonomyrmex occidentalis* showing prairie dog burrow entrance and exploratory diggings. Prairie dog droppings can be seen in the lower portion of the photo. Scale: the field book is 11 × 19 cm.

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however, holes were not found in the adjacent ant clearings or nearby vegetated areas. Thus, the mounds appeared to be selected as exploratory digging sites. Effects of the digging on the ants are not known.

Clark and Comanor (1973, Occ. Pap. Biol. Soc. NV 34: 1-6) reported heteromyid rodent digging activity into mounds of *P. occidentalis* in Nevada and Utah apparently to obtain seeds stored by the ants. Allred (1982, Great Basin Nat. 42: 415-511) made many collections from *P. occidentalis* nests in Utah but reported only one mound with two rodent

burrows. Little else has been reported in the literature concerning the use of these ant mounds by small mammals.

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