Rodents

Rodentia

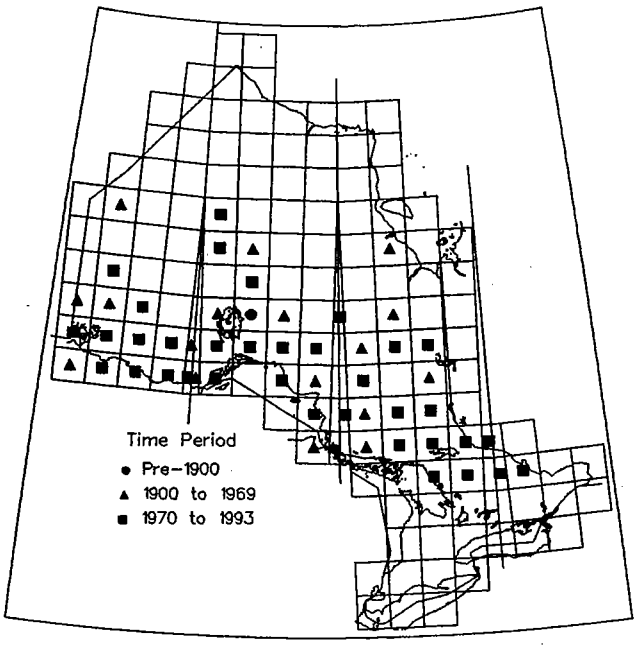
Porcupine: Linda Shaw

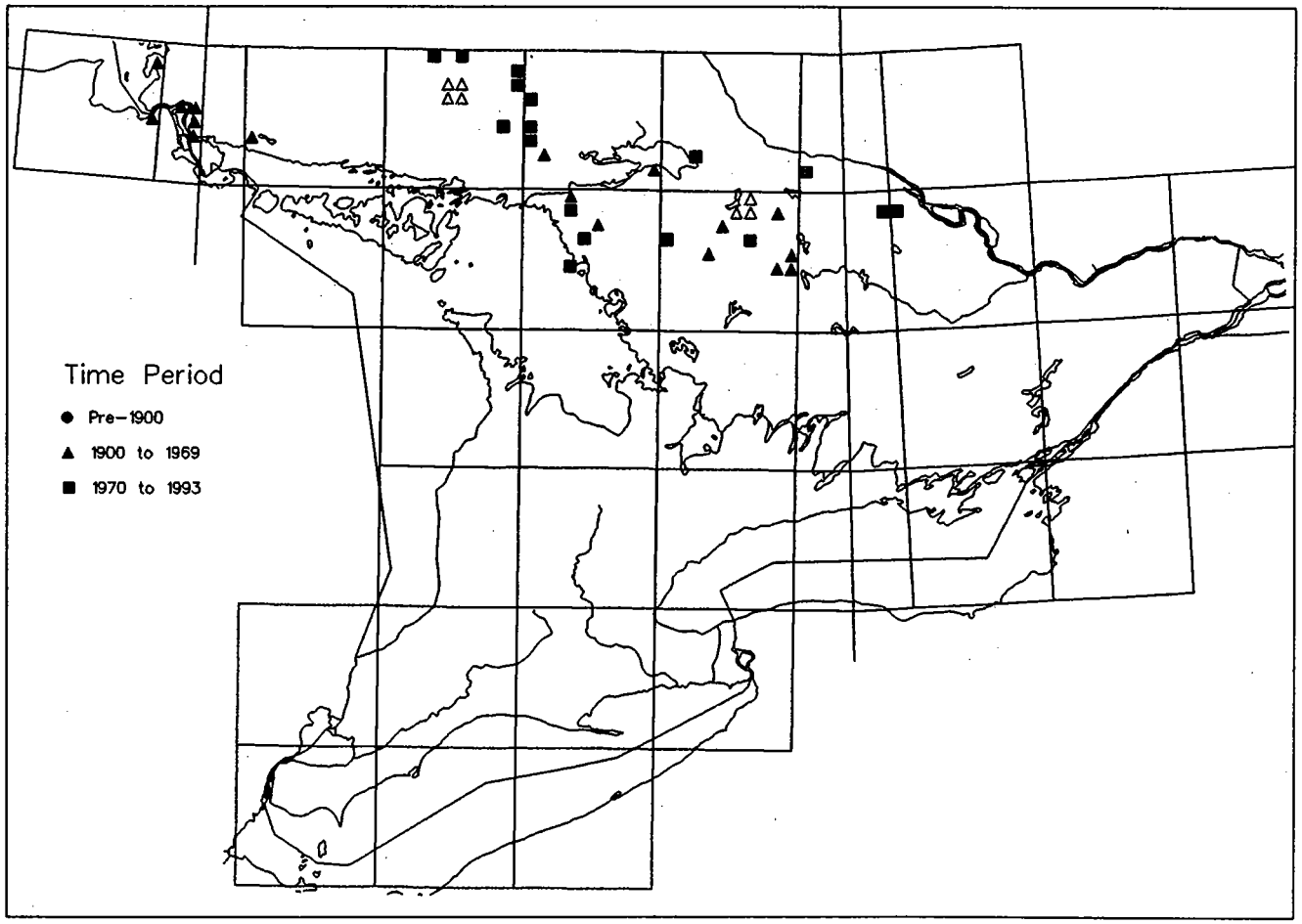
Least Chipmunk

Tamias minimus

The Least Chipmunk ranges from western North America into central Canada and the northern Great Lakes states. In Ontario, the species occupies most of the north (except for coastal regions). It is also found as far south as Algonquin Provincial Park and the Magnetawan River in central Ontario where it prefers coniferous habitat. Although the Least Chipmunk is considered to be expanding its range southward (Peterson 1966), its most southern record remains in Algonquin Provincial Park where it was first documented in the late 1940s.

.. Judith Eger



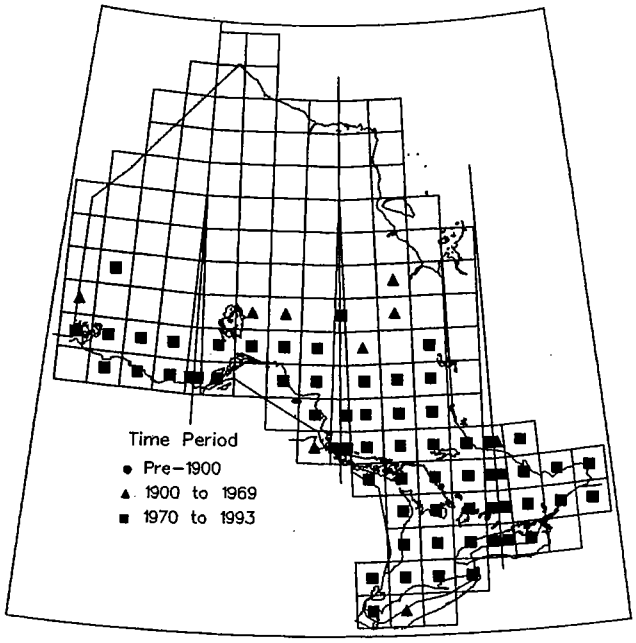


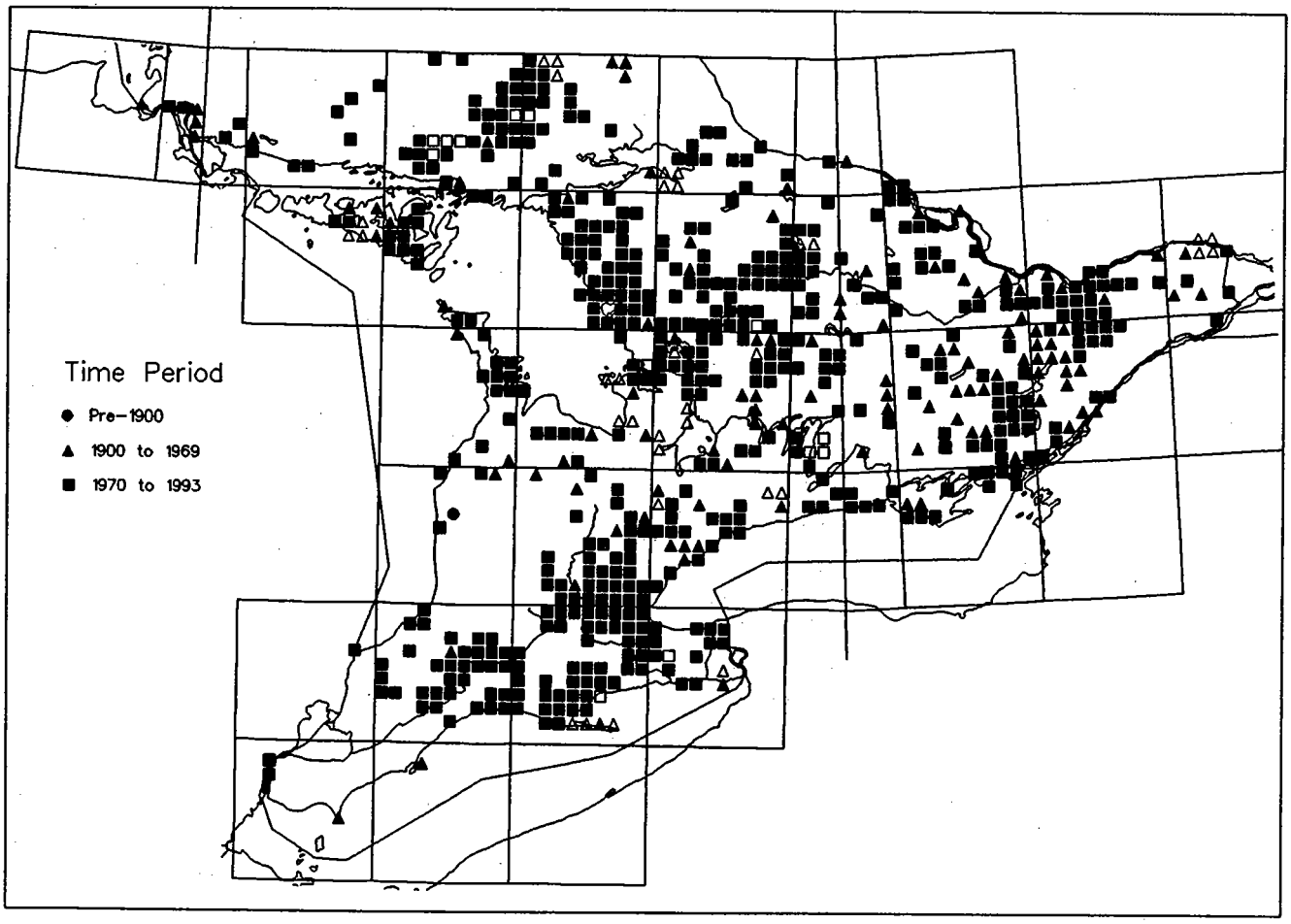
Eastern Chipmunk

Tamias striatus

The Eastern Chipmunk inhabits deciduous hardwood forests of eastern North America, from southeastern Canada to Georgia and Louisiana. In Ontario the species is common from the south to approximately 50° latitude in the north, at which point records are scarce. Mature beech-maple forests support maximum numbers of these chipmunks, although the species prefers open situations and evergreen-deciduous forest edges (Baker 1983).

.. Judith Eger

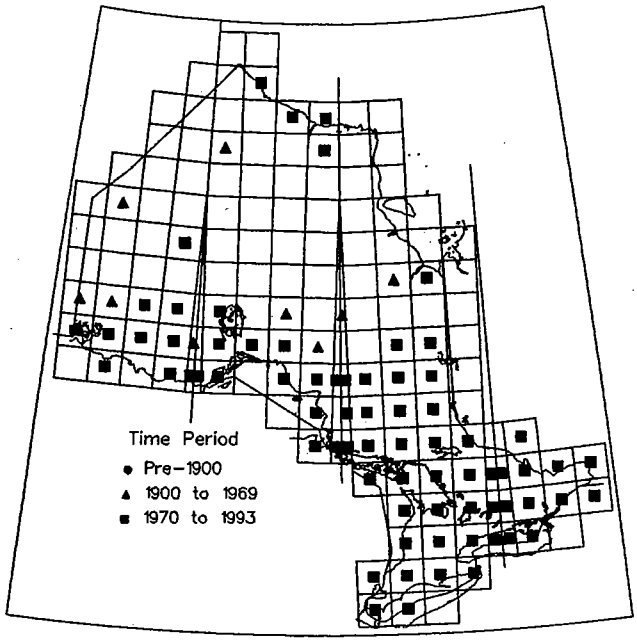


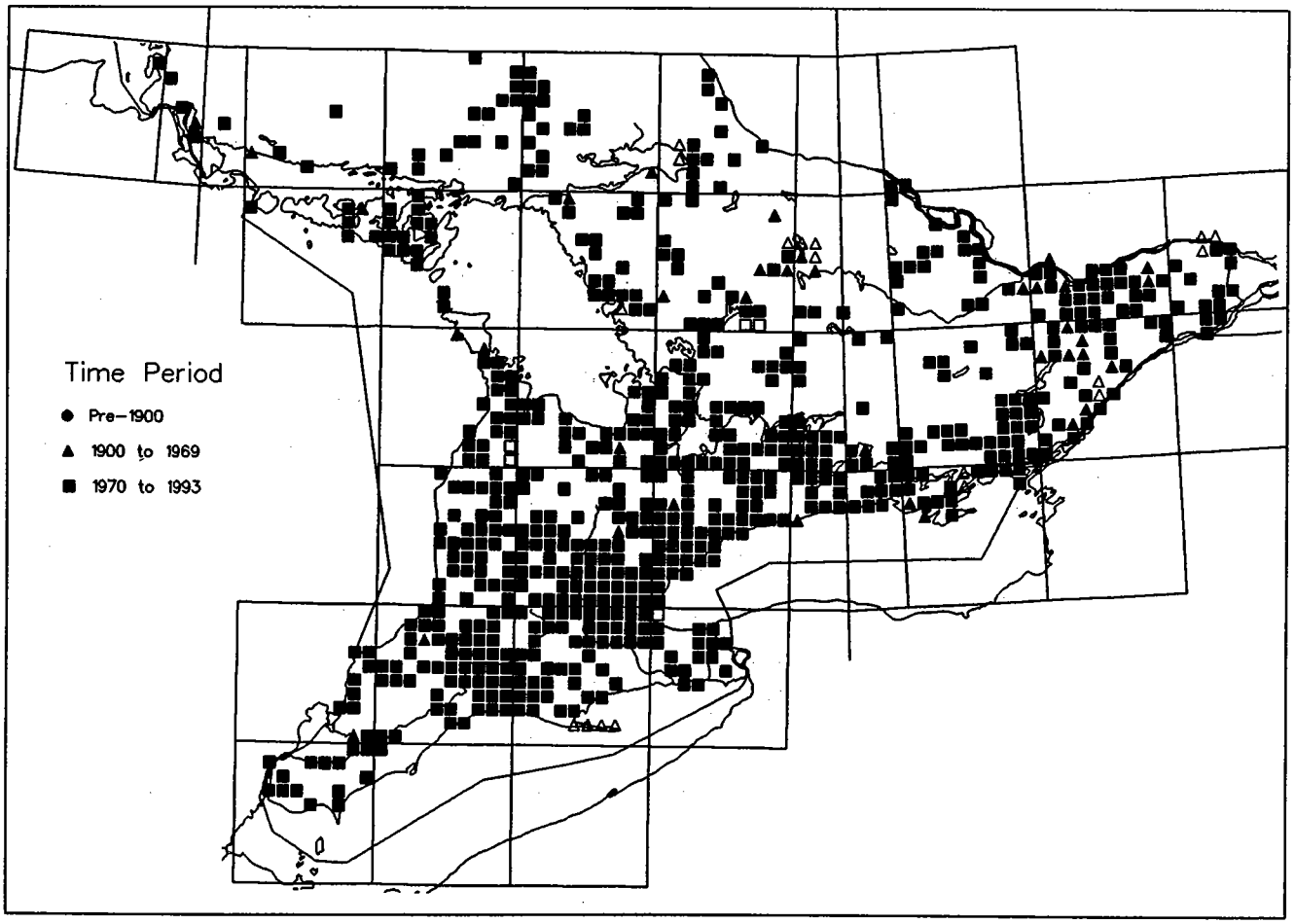


Woodchuck

Marmota monax

The common Woodchuck or Groundhog is the largest member of the squirrel family in Ontario. It ranges throughout the eastern US and all of the Canadian provinces except Newfoundland. In Ontario, the Woodchuck can be found everywhere, except for parts of the Tundra along James and Hudson bays. Woodchucks favour agricultural areas, small woodlots, and open forests but where these are absent, Woodchucks will live in larger, more dense forests.



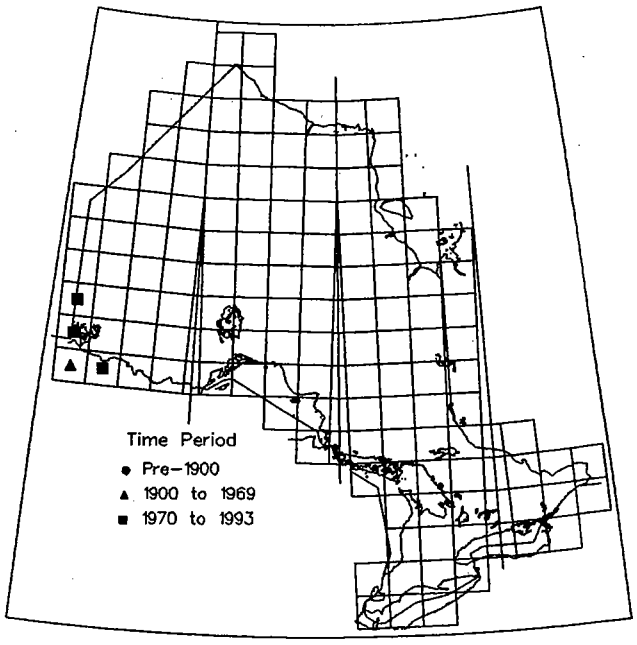


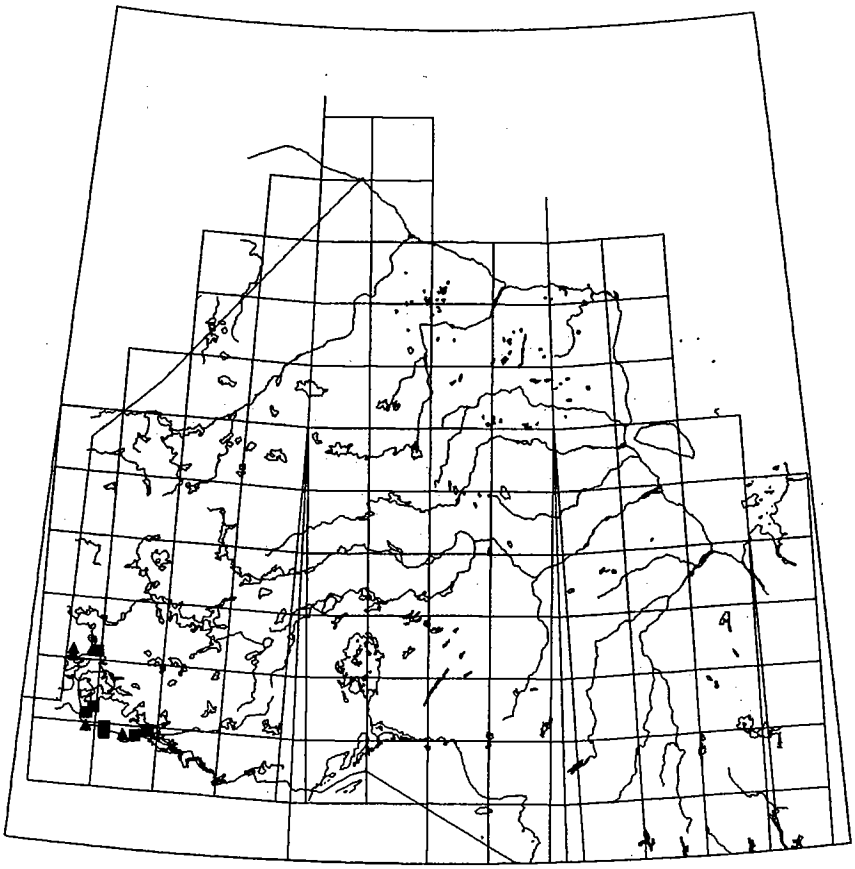
Franklin's Ground Squirrel

Spermophilus franklinii

The Ontario population of Franklin's Ground Squirrels represents a fringe population at the eastern extent of their range. Franklin's Ground Squirrels are generally prairie mammals, ranging through the American prairies from Indiana to Kansas and north into southern Manitoba and central Saskatchewan. Forest clearing in the southern parts of northwestern Ontario allowed Franklin's Ground Squirrels to move into the province. This ground squirrel can now be found in the Fort Francis, Kenora, and Rainy River areas.

Although this squirrel was able to move into the Rainy River area, it is unlikely that it will spread much further. Areas north and east of its present Ontario range are primarily forested, with insufficient soil depths for this burrowing, hibernating mammal.





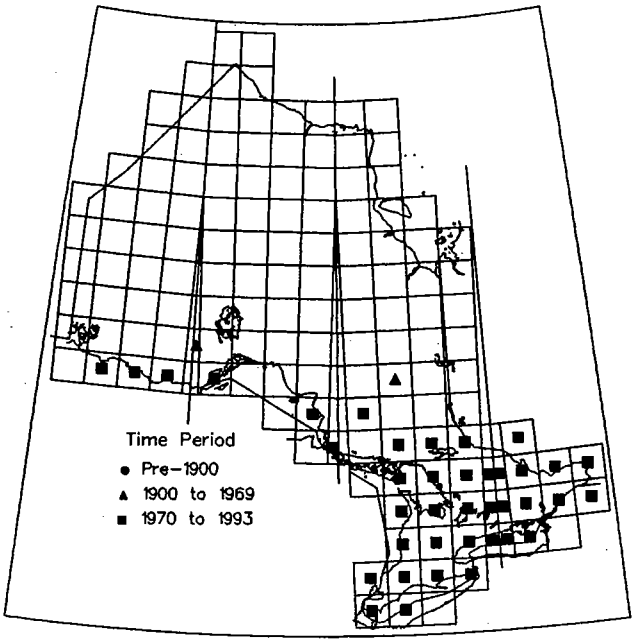
Gray Squirrel

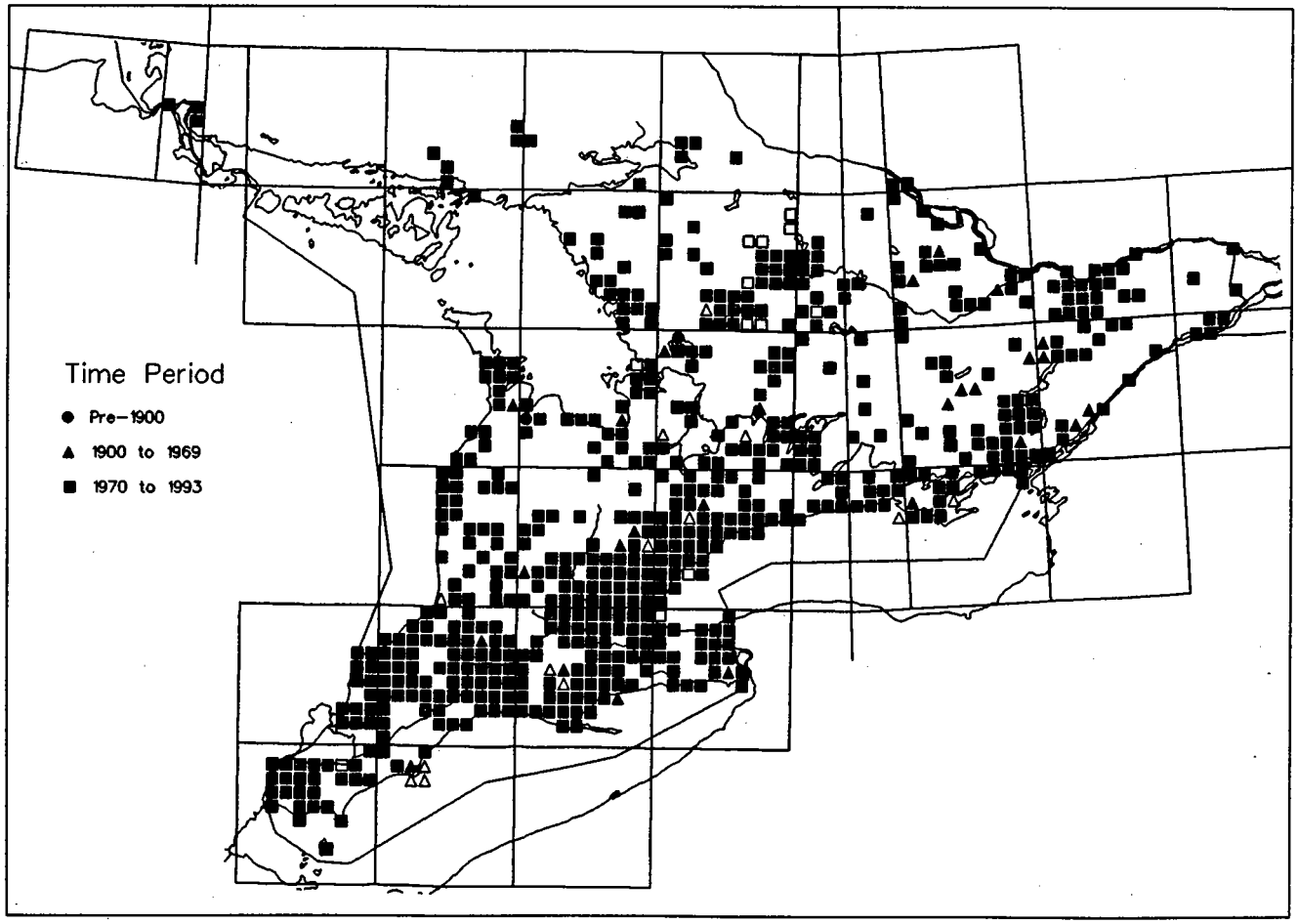
Sciurus carolinensis

The Gray Squirrel is one of the most common mammals in Ontario urban centres. The species has two colour phases: gray and black. For specific information concerning each colour phase, see their respective accounts.

The Gray Squirrel inhabits the eastern broad-leaved deciduous forests of southern Canada and the US. The Gray Squirrel was formerly rare in northern regions such as Algonquin Provincial Park (Peterson 1957), but has since become more common. In Ontario, the species is now common as far north as Parry Sound with occasional records to lake Nipissing. A single specimen from Gogama district was collected in 1948. However, this record is likely beyond the normal range of the species. Gray Squirrels are also found in the Rainy River area, and along the Ontario-Minnesota border in northwestern Ontario. Further northern expansion of the Gray Squirrel's range will be limited by the distribution of deciduous forest.

.. Judith Eger





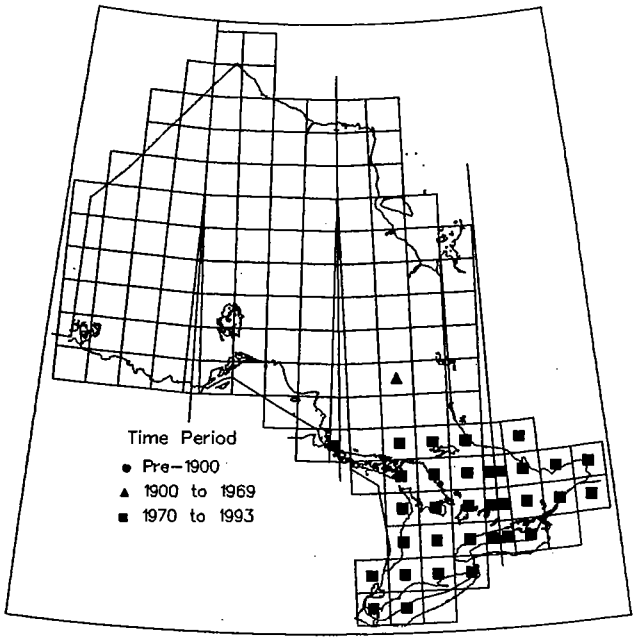
Gray Squirrel Black Phase

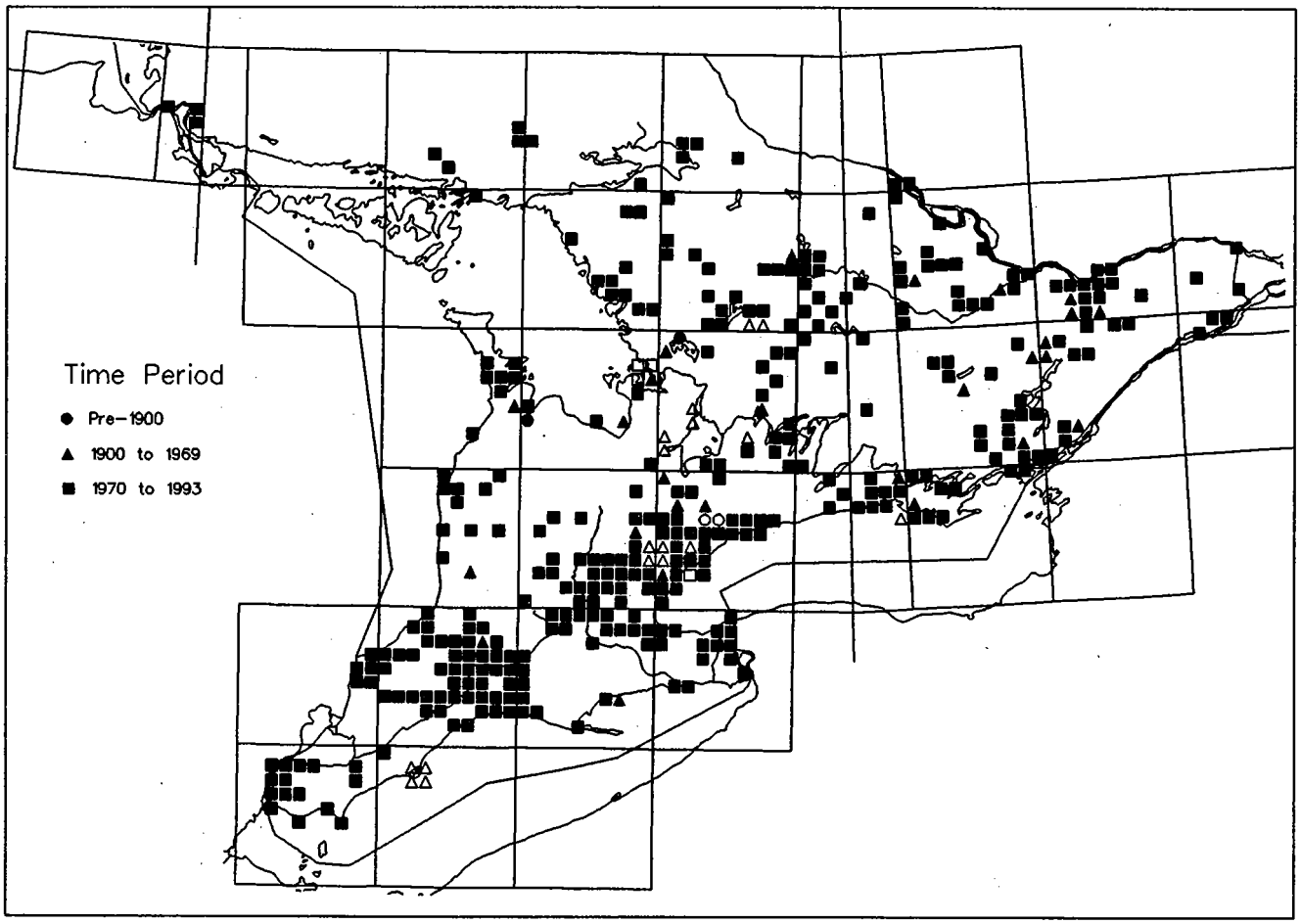
Sciurus carolinensis

The black phase of the Gray Squirrel is more common in central Ontario than the gray phase. Throughout the entire range of the Gray Squirrel, melanistic squirrels (including the black colour phase) live primarily where there is snow in winter. Experimental work at the University of Guelph indicated that black-phase animals exhibited lower energy expenditure during winter than gray morphs (Innes and Lavigne 1979). Therefore, the more efficient thermoregulation of the black phase may be more advantageous in colder areas.

Black-phase animals have been found as far west as Sault Ste. Marie and as far north as Gogama District, although the latter record is clearly an isolated one.

.. Judith Eger



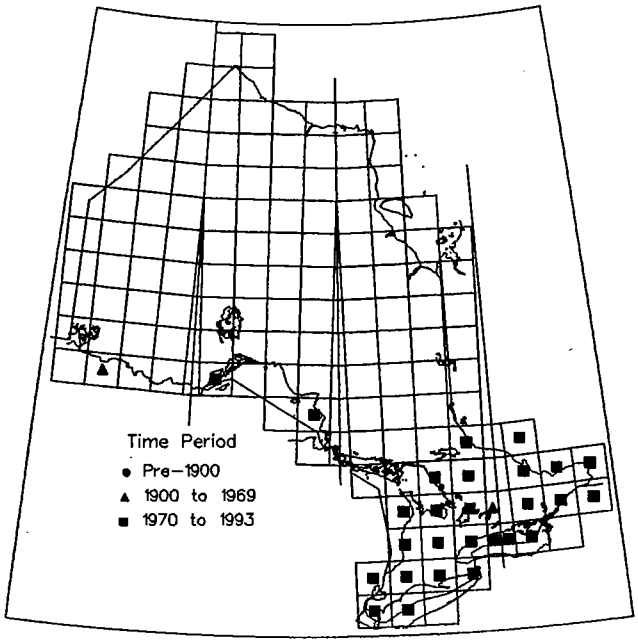


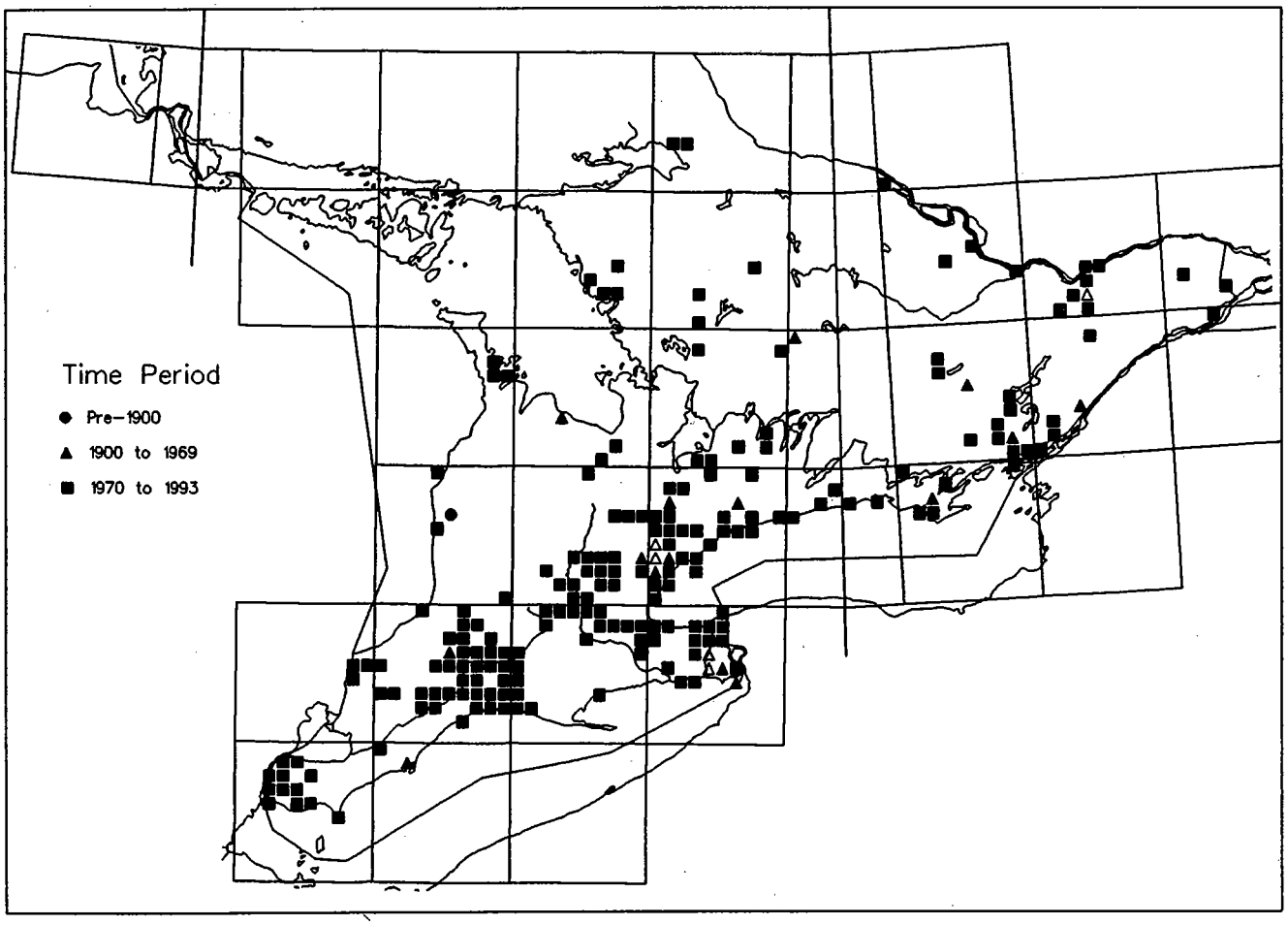
Gray Squirrel Gray Phase

Sciurus carolinensis

The gray colour phase from which the species derives its common name is most common in the southern parts of Gray Squirrel range. In Ontario the gray-phase and black-phase animals have a similar distribution, although there are fewer records of the gray phase, especially in central Ontario. Squirrels that have been identified to colour in northwestern Ontario have been gray-phase individuals, as are the Gray Squirrels from northern Minnesota.

.. Judith Eger



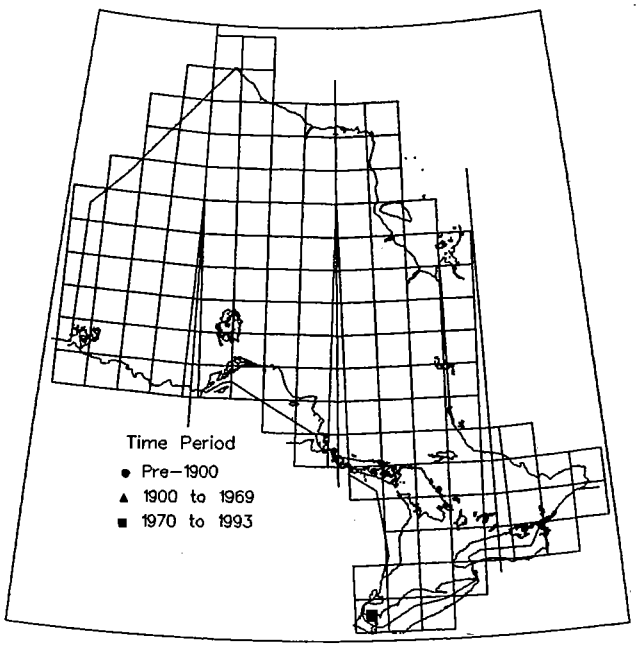


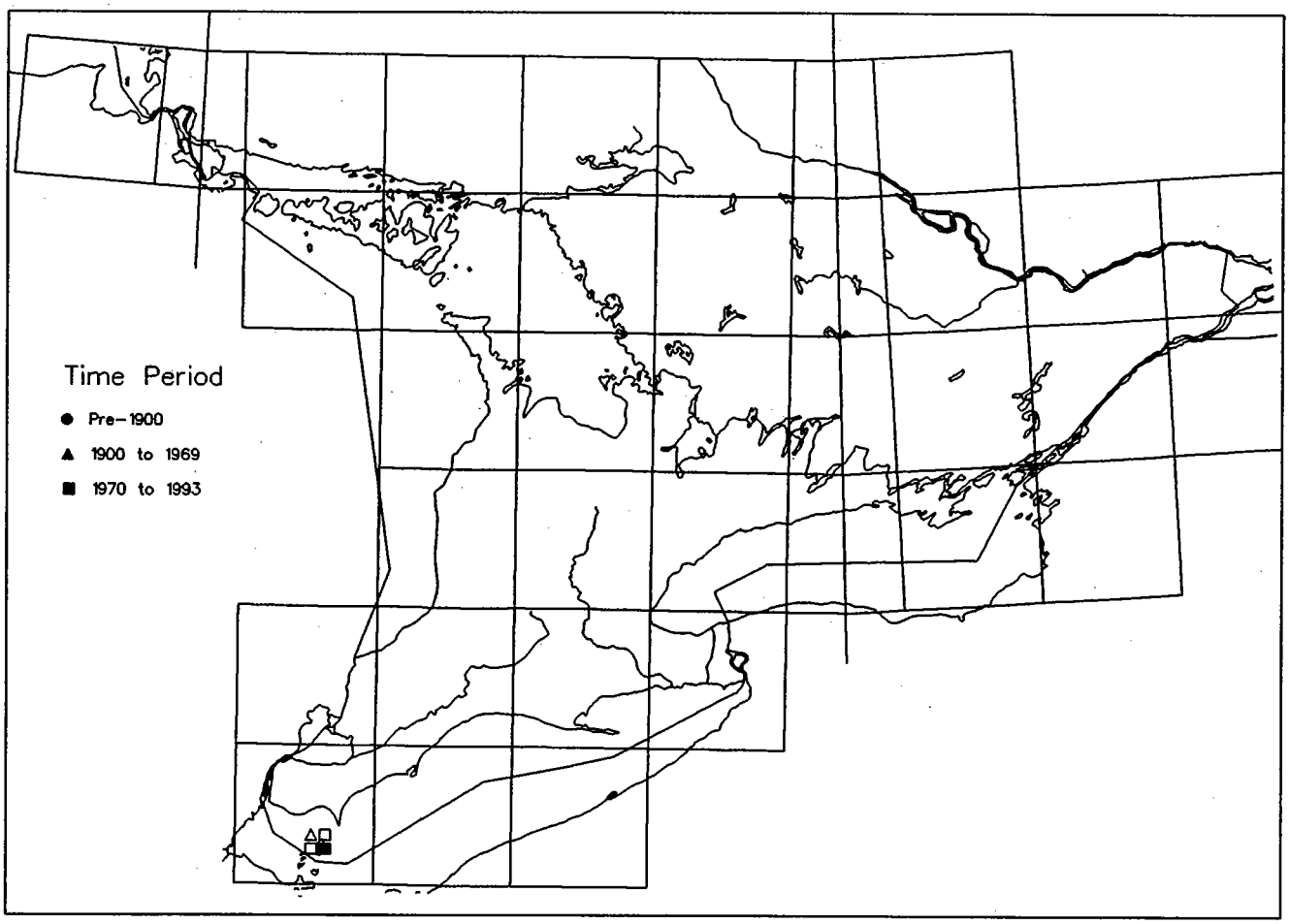
Fox Squirrel

Sciurus niger

The Fox Squirrel is the largest tree squirrel living in the province. However, it is not native to Ontario. It was introduced from Ohio to Pelee Island and parts of the Ontario mainland (Peterson 1966). The mainland introductions were not successful, though, and currently Pelee Island is the only location in Ontario where the Fox Squirrel can be found. In the US, Fox Squirrels are found in the eastern states as far north as Lake Erie.

The Fox Squirrel thrives in agricultural areas interspersed with small woodlots. It was originally associated with the southern oak and hickory forests of the US, but has spread north with settlement and agricultural development.





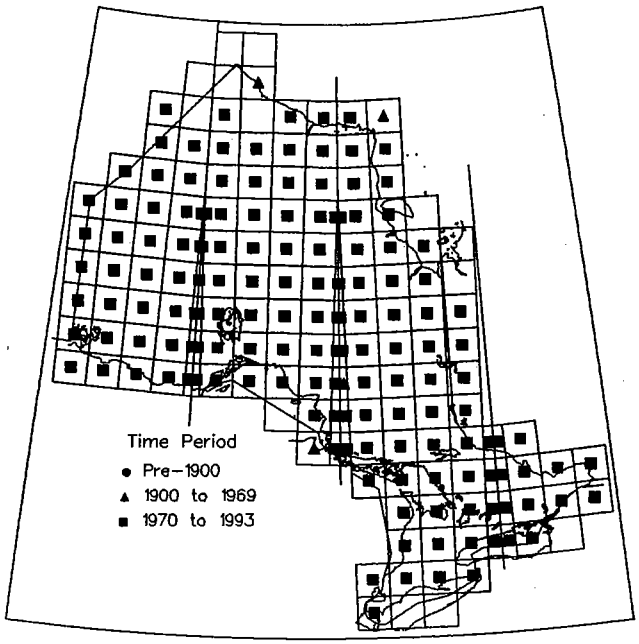
Red Squirrel

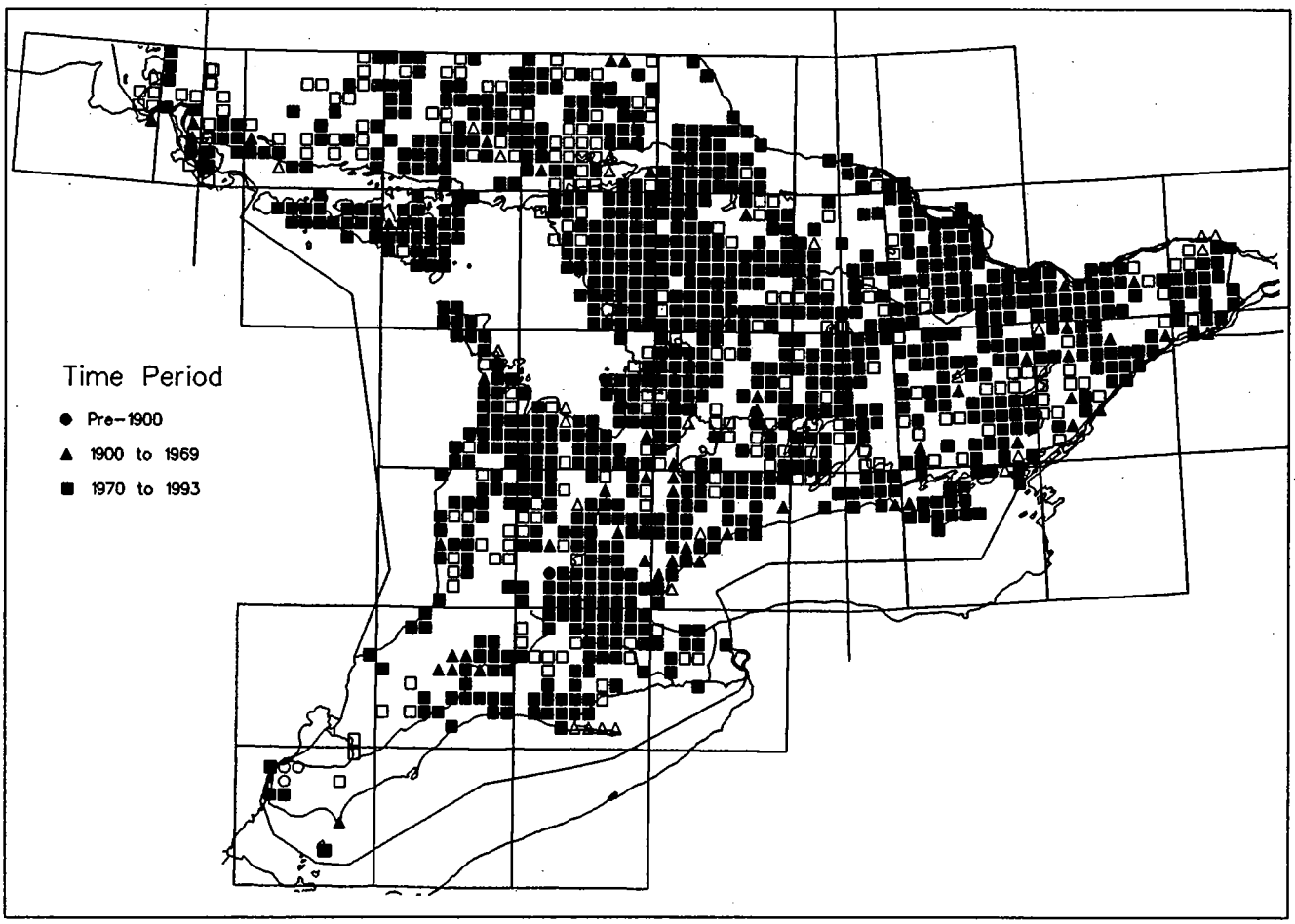
Tamiasciurus hudsonicus

The Red Squirrel is found in the Boreal and montane forests of North America. Within Canada, it is found below the tree line, but is absent from the prairies. In Ontario, the Red Squirrel can be found throughout the province, although records become scarce in southwestern Ontario where spruce and pine are not as prevalent.

Although Red Squirrels have not been seriously exploited for their fur, ample data do exist to provide a detailed distribution map for the species. The Red Squirrel is easily identified by direct observation, tracks, and vocalizations.

.. Judith Eger





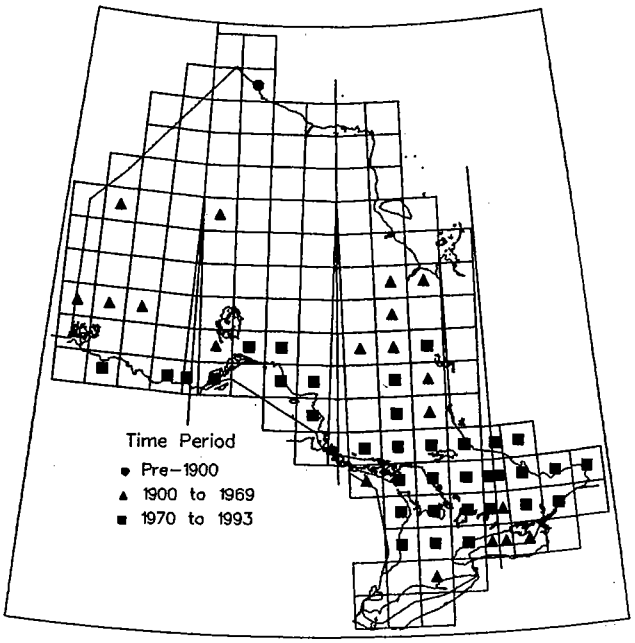
Northern Flying Squirrel

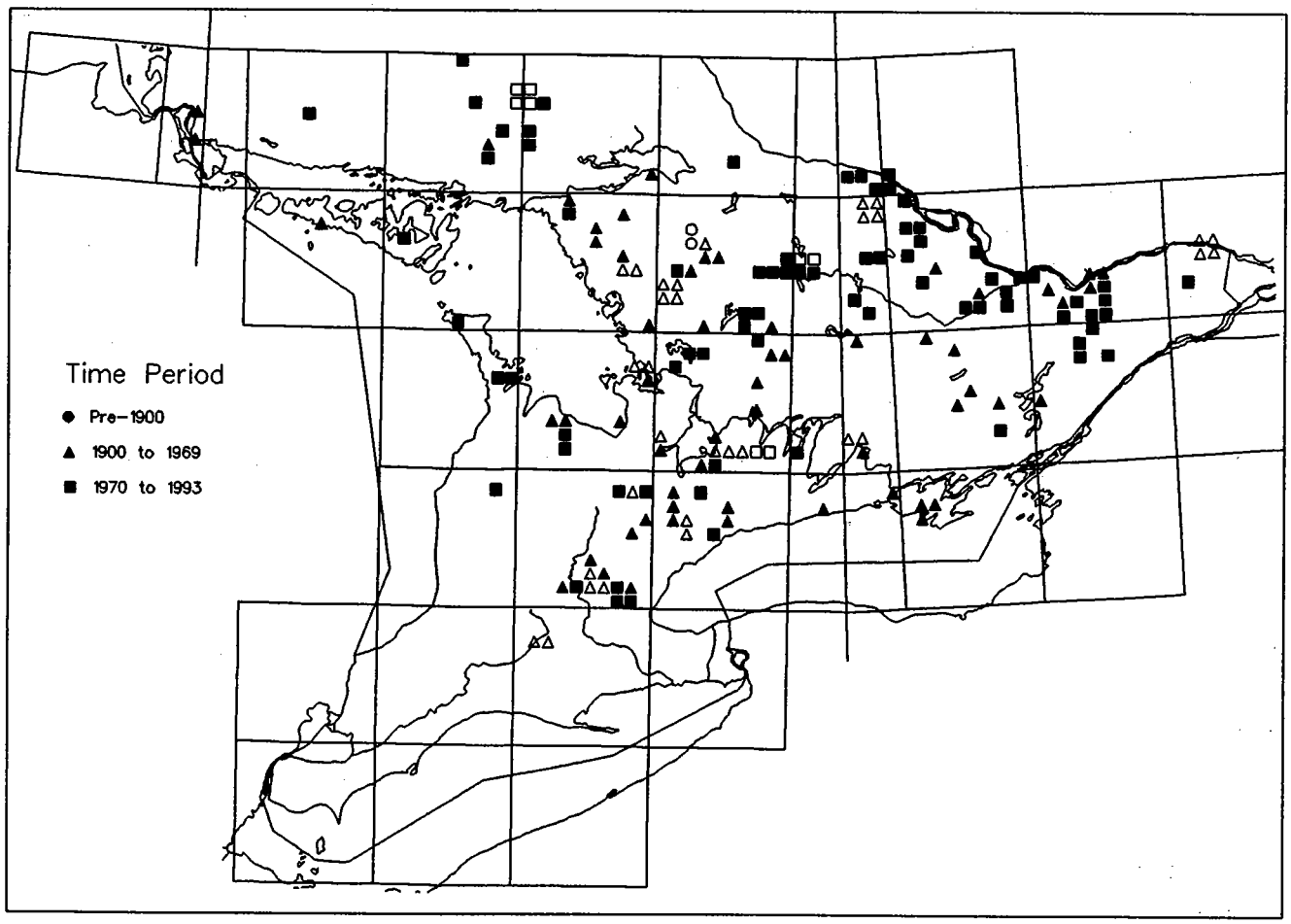
Glaucomys sabrinus

The Northern Flying Squirrel is larger than the Southern Flying Squirrel, and shows subtle colour differences. In North America, the Northern Flying Squirrel is found in Boreal and evergreen forests from the tree line in Canada and Alaska, south to the montane forests of California, Colorado, North Carolina and Tennessee. In Ontario, the Northern Flying Squirrel is found from southern Ontario, to the tree line.

Whereas the range of this animal overlaps that of the Southern Flying Squirrel (both are occasionally found in the same woodlot), they are generally distinguishable by habitat preference. The Northern Flying Squirrel prefers mixed or coniferous forests, while the Southern Flying Squirrel favours mature hardwood forests.

.. Judith Eger





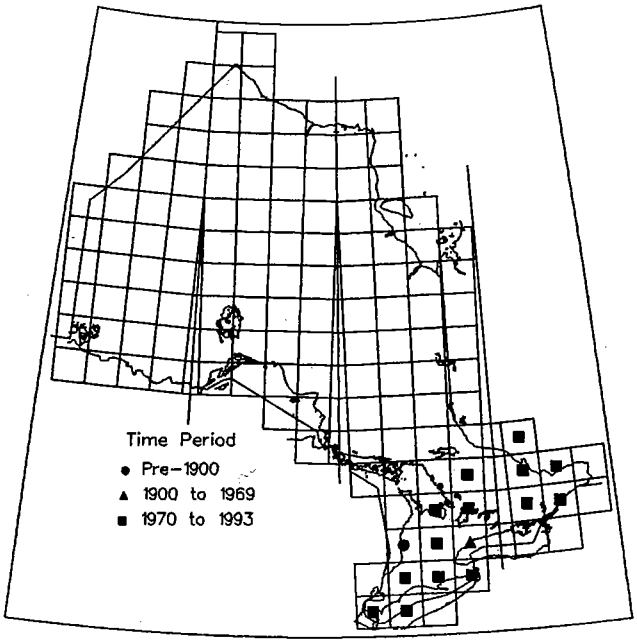
Southern Flying Squirrel

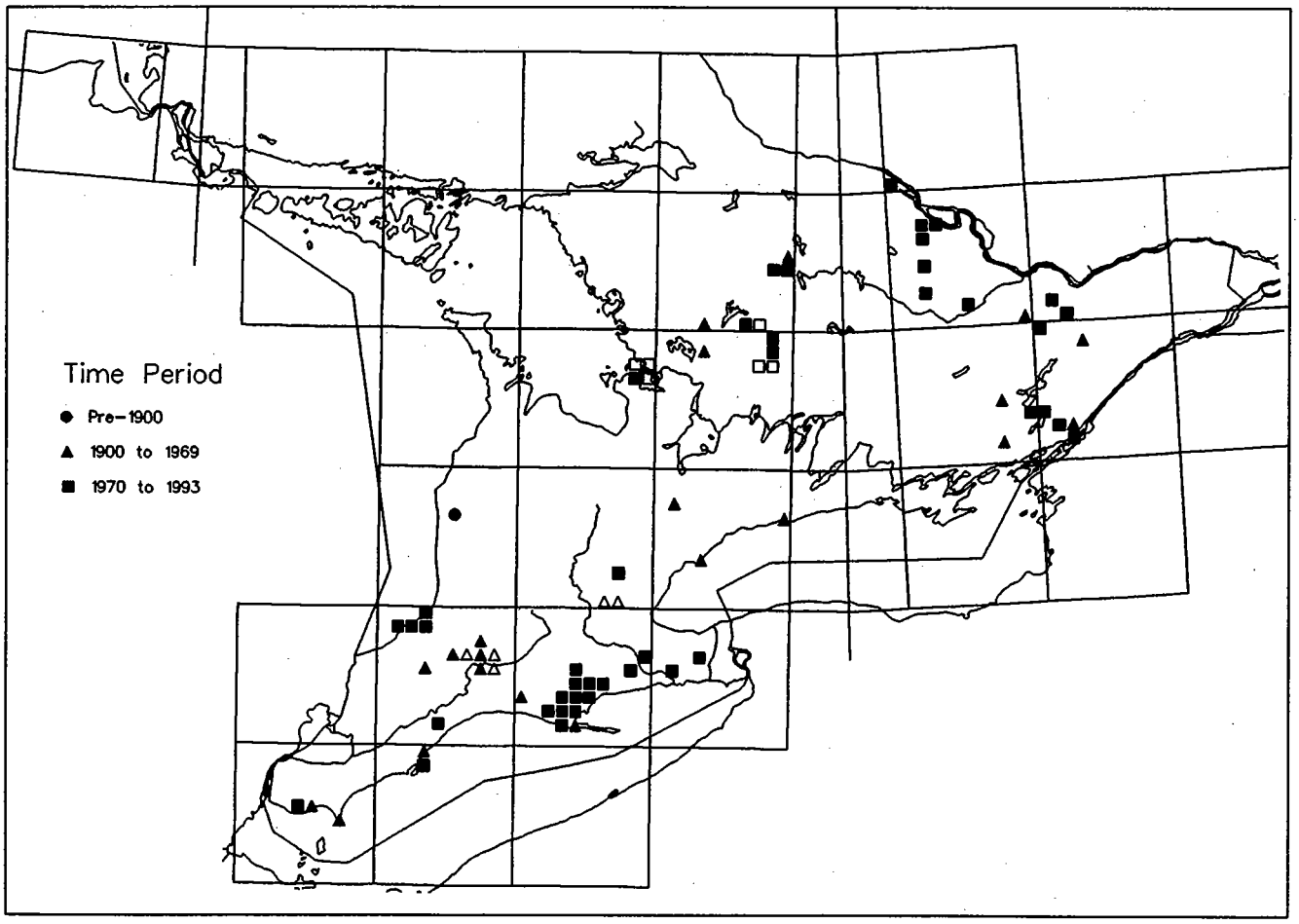
Glaucomys volans

The Southern Flying Squirrel occupies the deciduous forests of eastern North America. Within Ontario, this species is most commonly found in the Carolinian Forest north of Lake Erie, but can also occasionally be found throughout the rest of southern Ontario, north to Deep River and Parry Sound District.

Although the Southern Flying Squirrel has been recorded in a number of locations throughout southern Ontario, it is found only in areas with mature hardwood forests (particularly maple, beech, or oak). This close association with the disappearing Carolinian Forest region has prompted the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources to designate the Southern Flying Squirrel a rare species.

.. Judith Eger



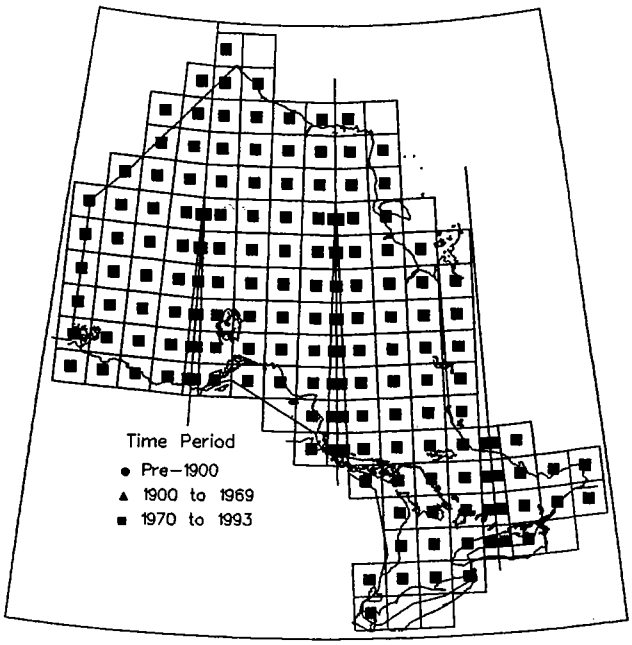


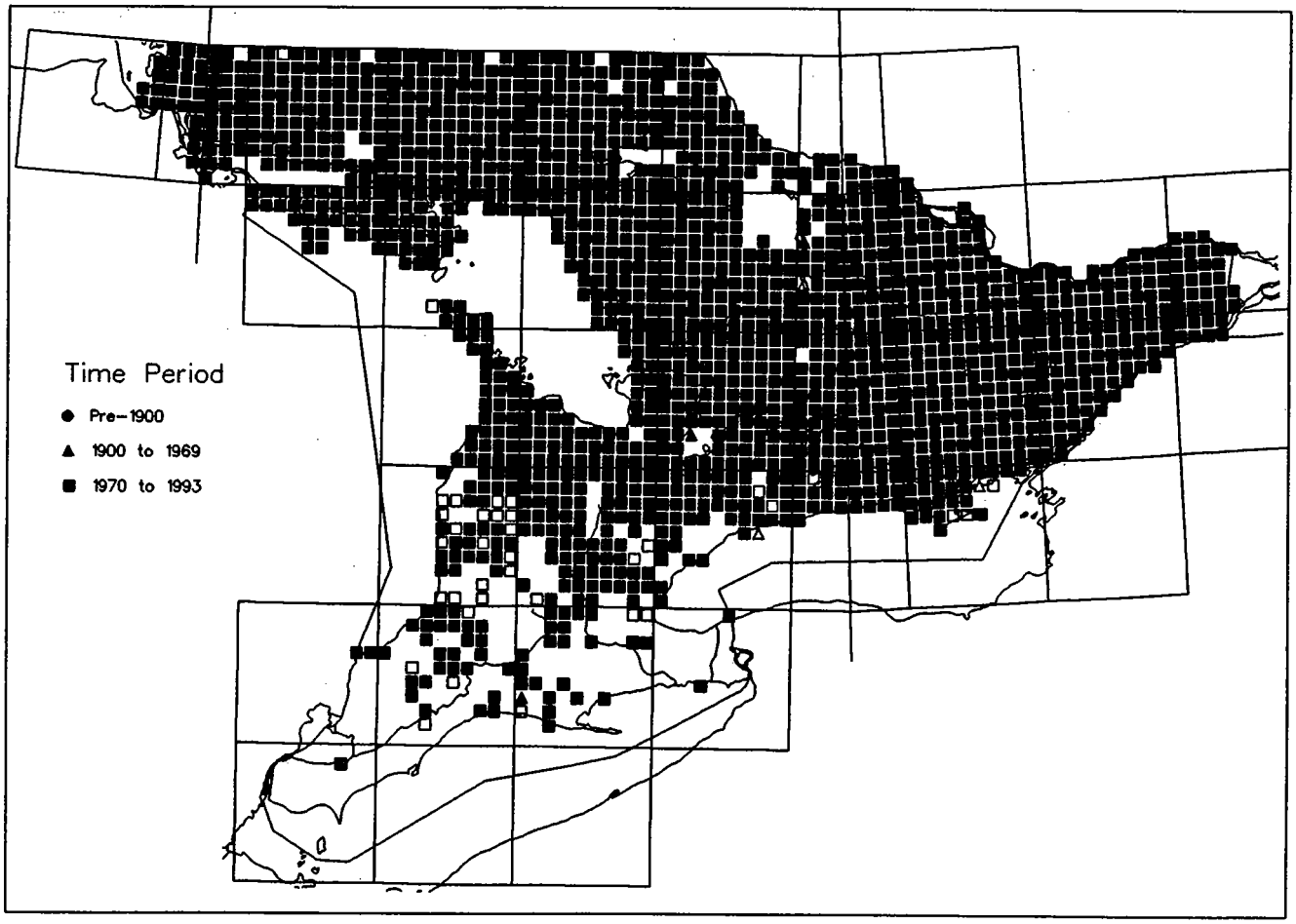
Beaver

Castor canadensis

Canada's official animal is common throughout most of Canada and the US. Within Ontario, Beavers are found in all parts of the province with the exception of southwestern Ontario, where only a few are found because of a lack of suitable water habitat.

Historically, Beavers ranged throughout Ontario before the fur trade caused severe population depletion. Comprehensive fur management programs which began in 1911 have resulted in a dramatic recovery of this species in Ontario. The recovery of Beavers has not met with widespread approval; excessive dam-building can interrupt agriculture through flooding and by impeding drainage and irrigation ditches. Beaver dams may also inhibit fish migration. Conversely, dams create excellent habitat for ducks and many species of mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians.



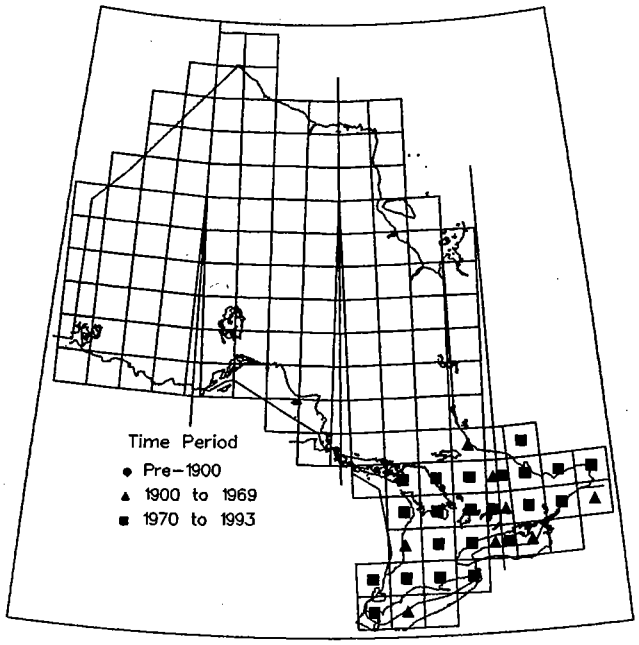


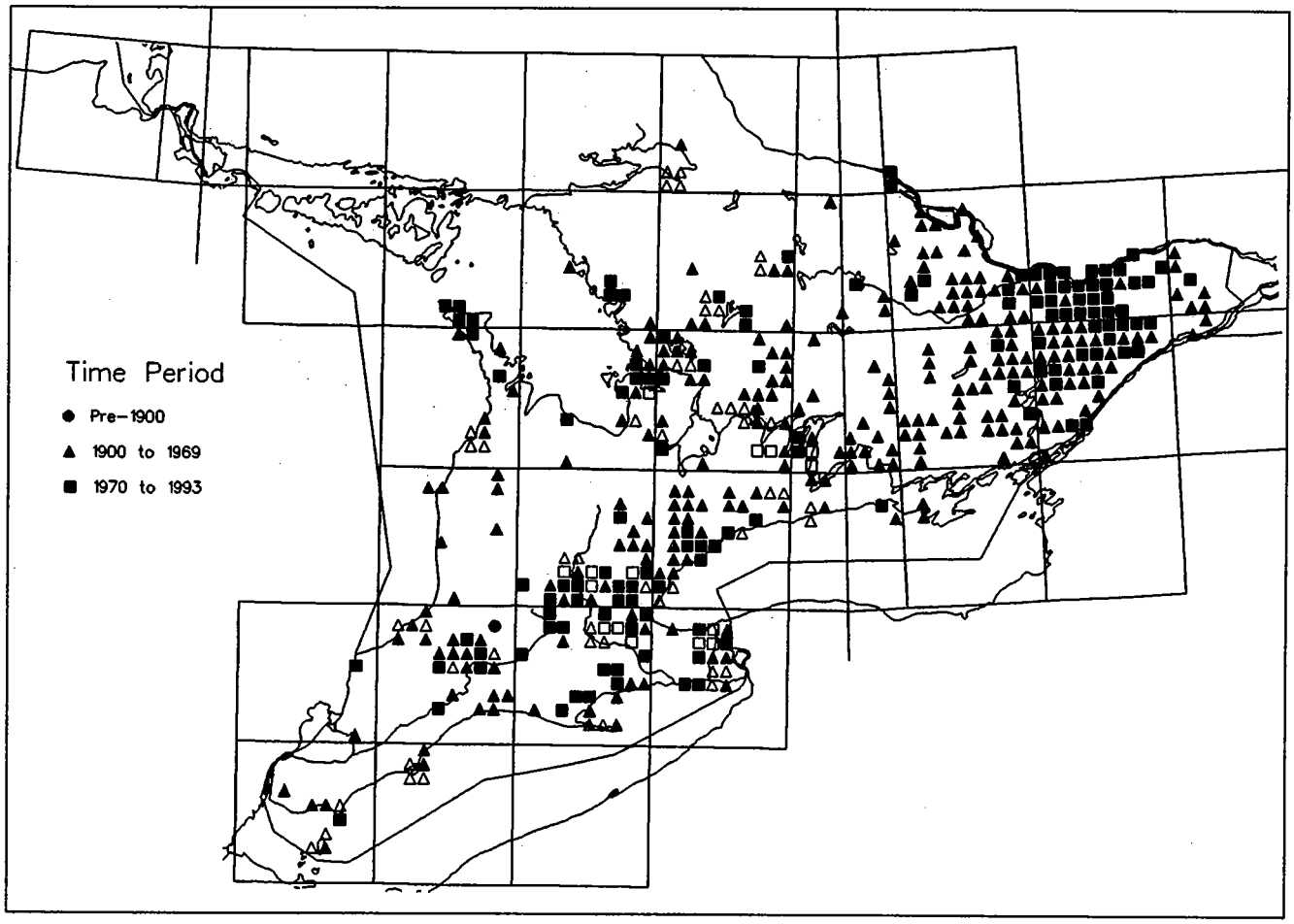
White-footed Mouse

Peromyscus leucopus

The White-footed Mouse is a close relative of the common Deer Mouse. It ranges throughout the eastern and central US and southern parts of Ontario, Quebec, and Nova Scotia. In Ontario, the White-footed Mouse is found from the southern portions of the province north to North Bay.

White-footed and Deer mice are often mistakenly thought of as being one-in-the-same (and are referred to as "White-footed Deer Mice"). Identification is difficult, but the two species are distinguishable. Identification is based upon several characteristics including tail and ear lengths, pelage colour, and pencil hair length. For detailed information on these characteristics, consult Burt (1957) or Peterson (1966).



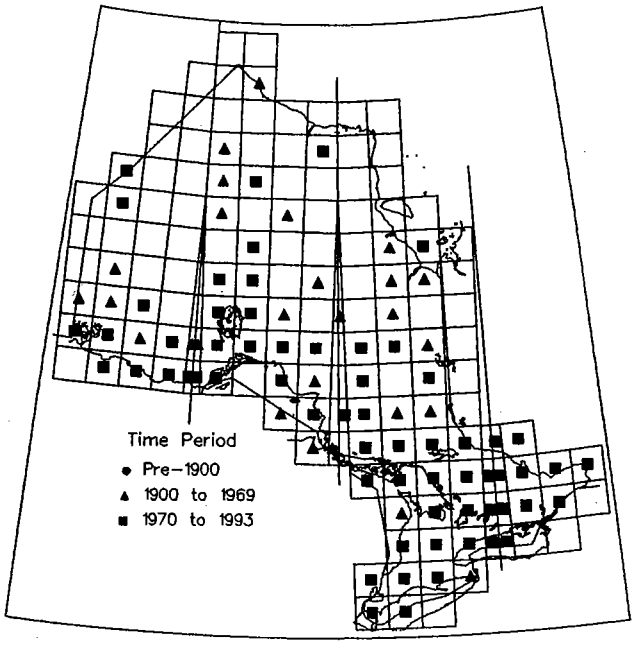


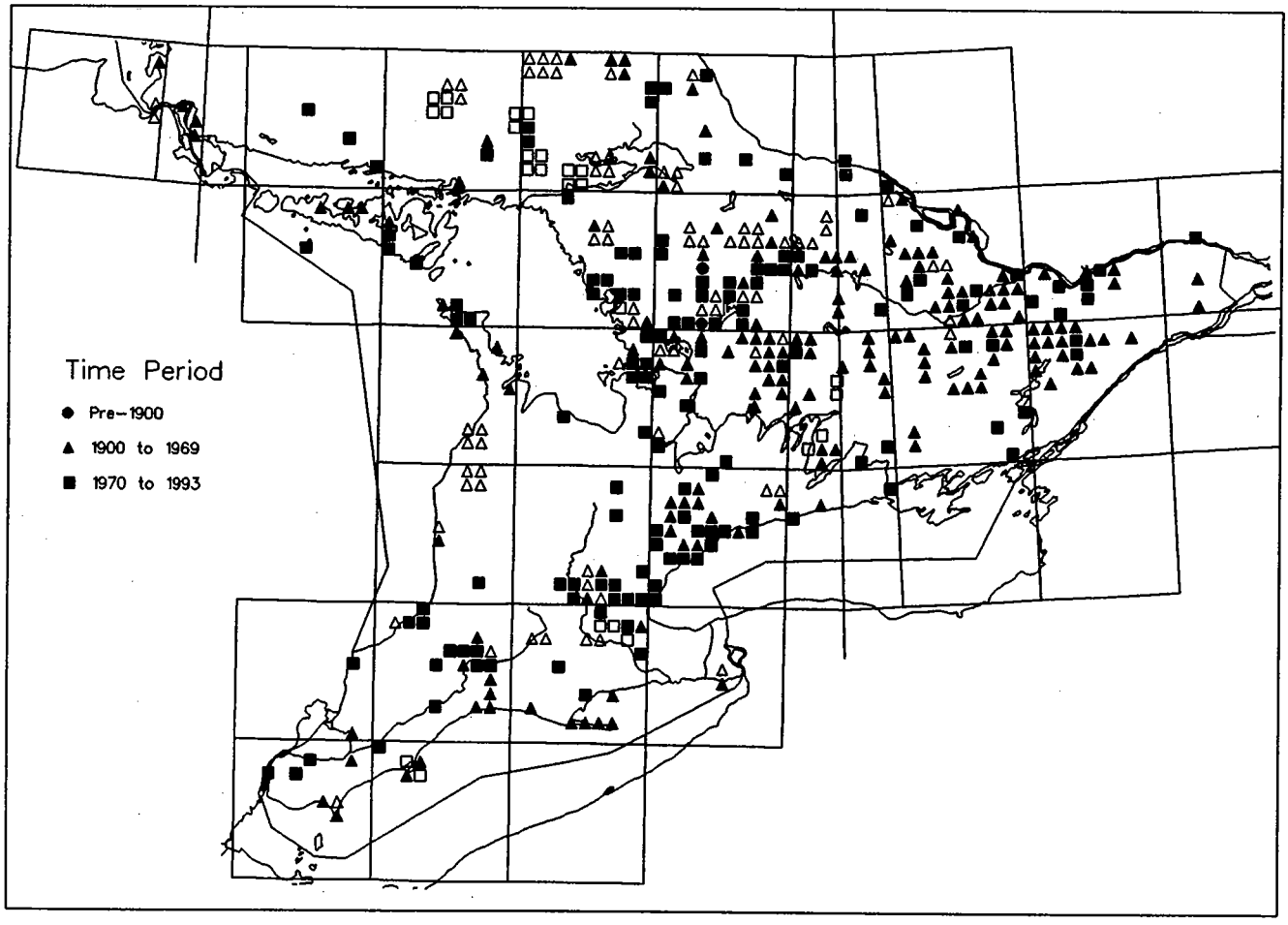
Deer Mouse

Peromyscus maniculatus

The Deer Mouse is one of the most wide-ranging small rodents in North America. It is found throughout the US (except in the south-east) and Canada (south of the Tundra). In Ontario, it can be found in all parts of the province except the Cape Henrietta Maria region at the junction of James and Hudson bays (Peterson 1966).

There are several distinct races of Deer Mice in North America, three of which can be found in Ontario (*P. m. bairdii, P. m. maniculatus, and P. m. gracilis*) (Peterson 1966). Each of the three races has adapted to a different habitat type and this adaptation has contributed to the successful colonization of a wide geographic area.



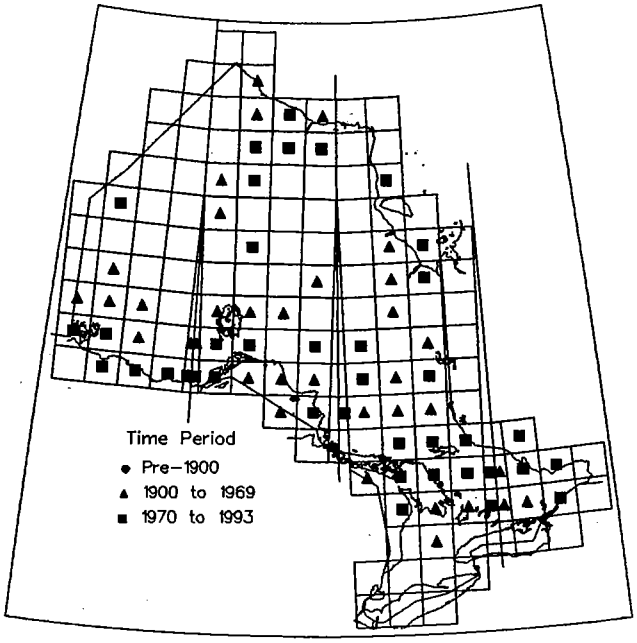


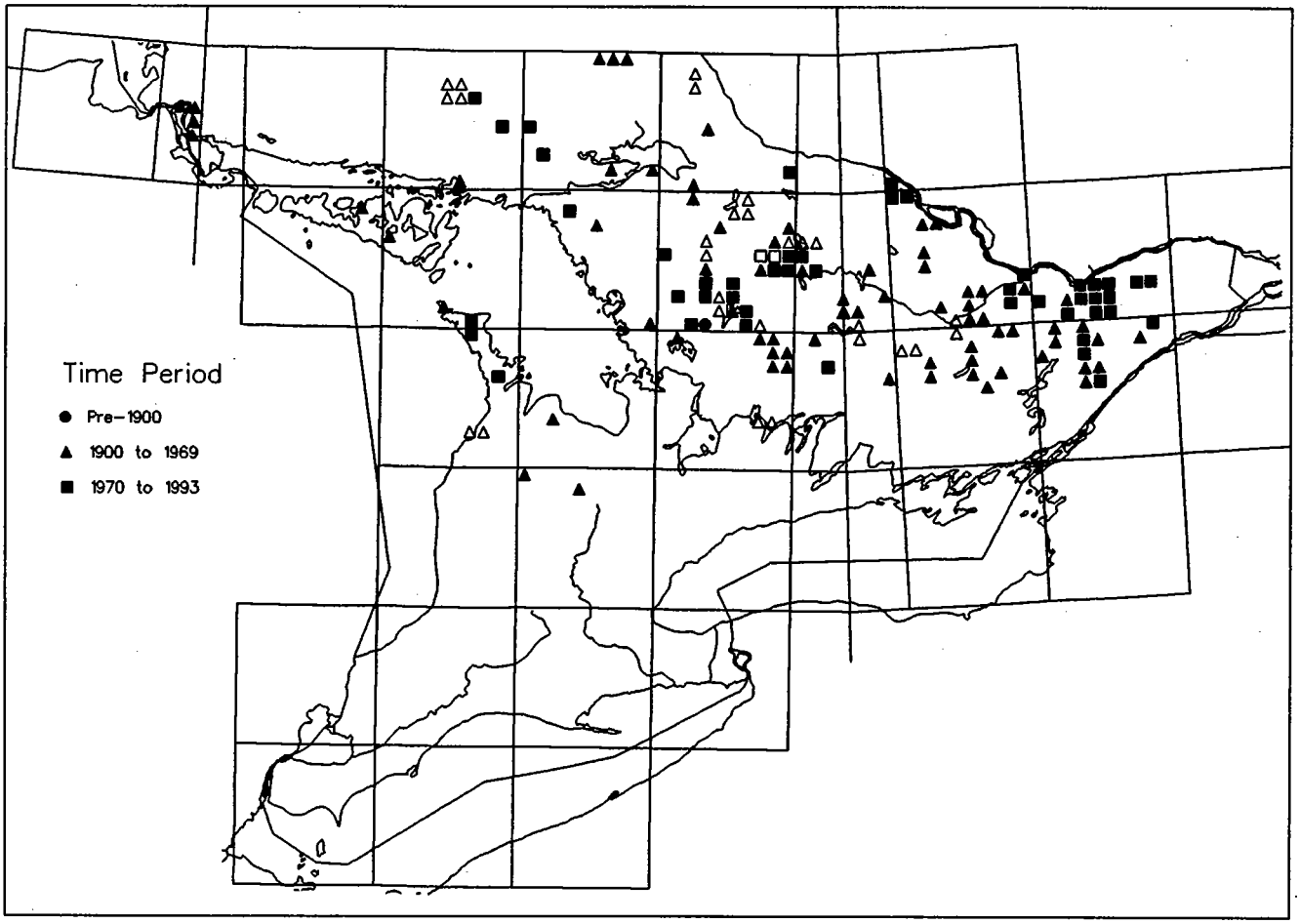
Southern Red-backed Vole

Clethrionomys gapperi

The Southern Red-backed Vole is a familiar occupant of northern US and Canadian forests. In Ontario, it is found from Grey and Bruce counties north to Hudson Bay (except in the Cape Henrietta Maria area) (Peterson 1966).

The Southern Red-backed Vole is readily distinguished from other members of the vole family by a distinct dorsal band that extends from its forehead to rump and varies in colour from yellowish-brown to reddish or even blackish (Peterson 1966). The Southern Red-backed Vole occupies both deciduous and coniferous forests, particularly in damp or swampy areas with deep litter.



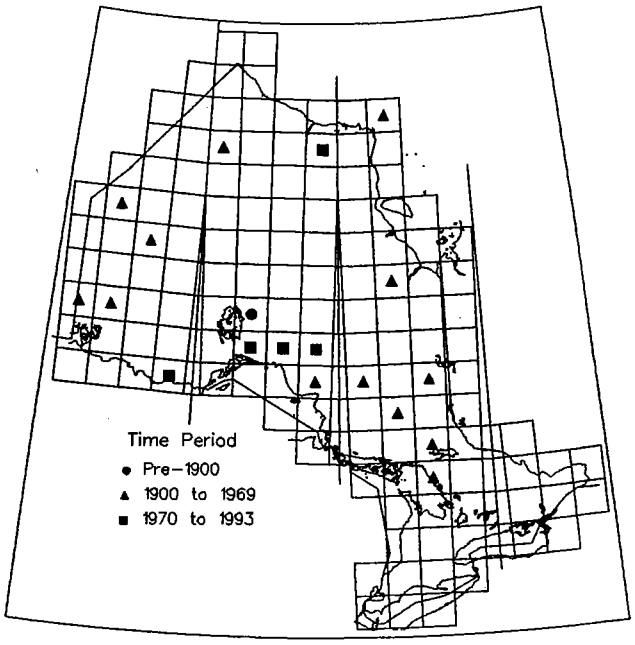


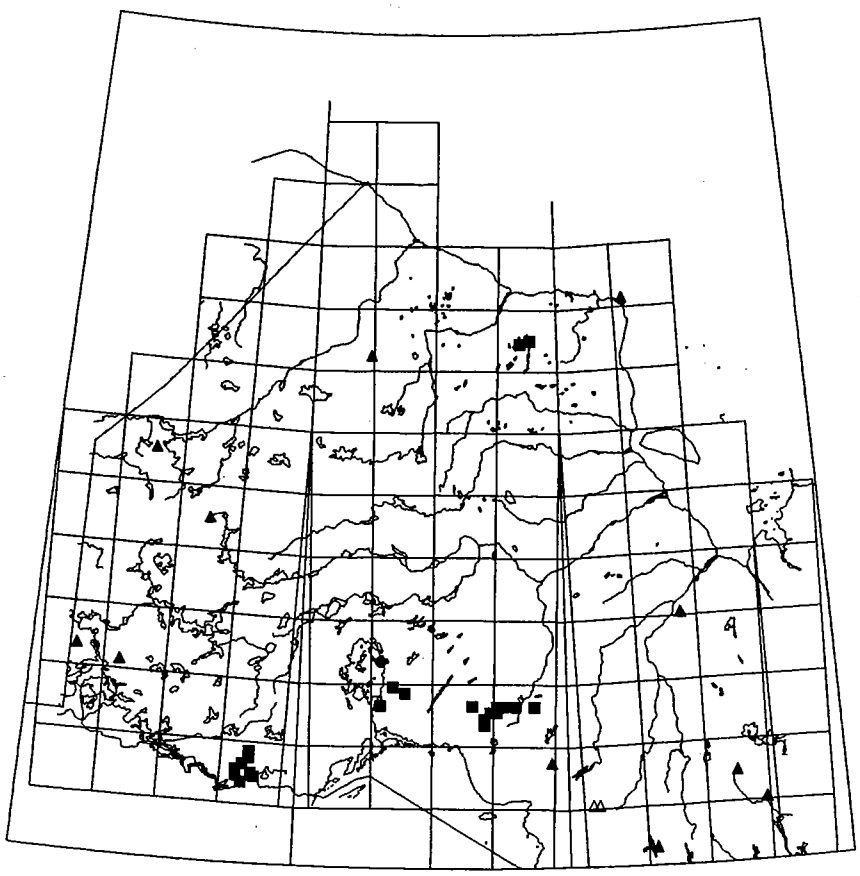
Heath Vole

Phenacomys intermedius

The Heath Vole is found across central and southern Canada except in parts of southern Ontario, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. In Ontario, it has been found north of a line extending from the French River to Lake Nipissing and the Ottawa River.

The Heath Vole has not been well-documented and only a few reliable records exist. Sometimes, the Heath Vole is mistaken for the Rock Vole. However, there are distinguishing features: the Heath Vole's tail is 45 mm or shorter, while the Rock Vole's tail is longer than 45 mm; the Heath Vole has a yellow colouring around its nose while the colouring around the Rock Vole's nose is more yellow-red (Burt 1957, Peterson 1966).



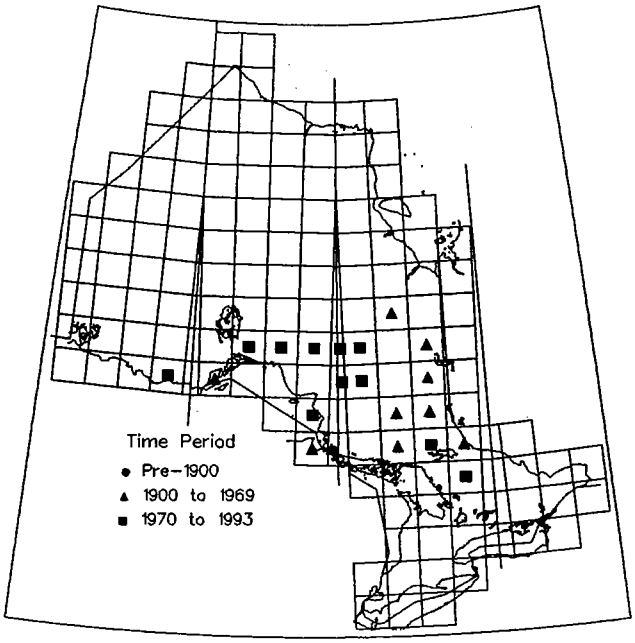


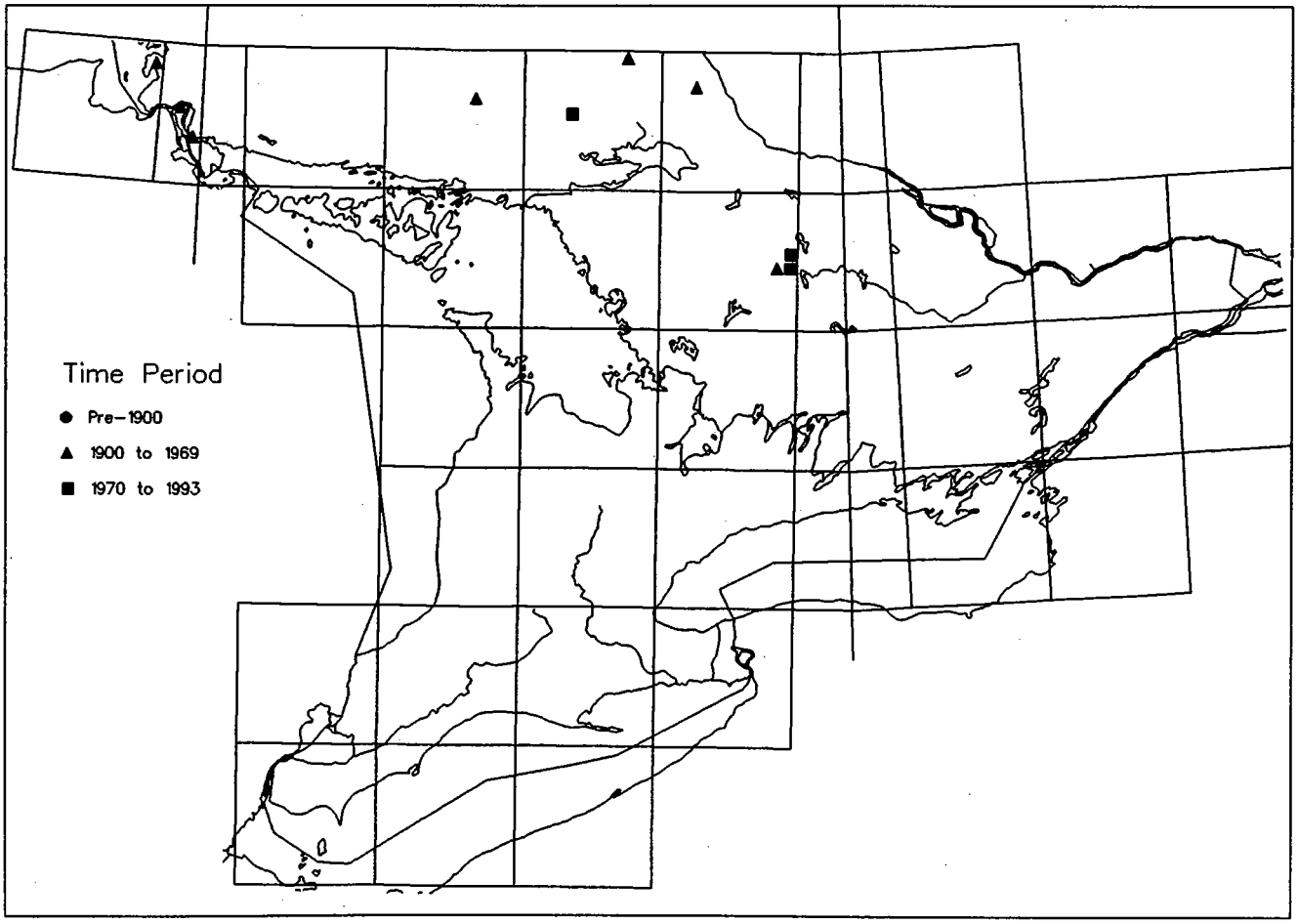
Rock Vole

Microtus chrotorrhinus

The Rock Vole is restricted to a small area of eastern North America. It is found in parts of Ontario, southern Quebec, the Maritimes, and a small area of the eastern US. In Ontario, it ranges throughout northeastern and northcentral regions, from as far west as Quetico Provincial Park and as far south as Algonquin Provincial Park.

The Rock Vole is similar in appearance to the Heath Vole. However, colouring around the nose of the Rock Vole tends to be reddish in contrast to the yellow hue around the nose of the Heath Vole. The tail of the Rock Vole is longer than that of the Heath Vole, usually exceeding 45 mm. The species has been found in association with rock outcrops, talus slopes, and other rocky areas (Peterson 1966).



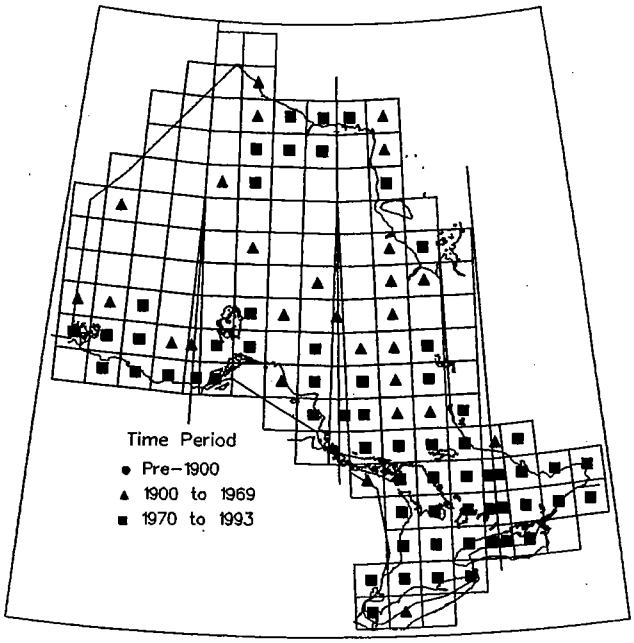


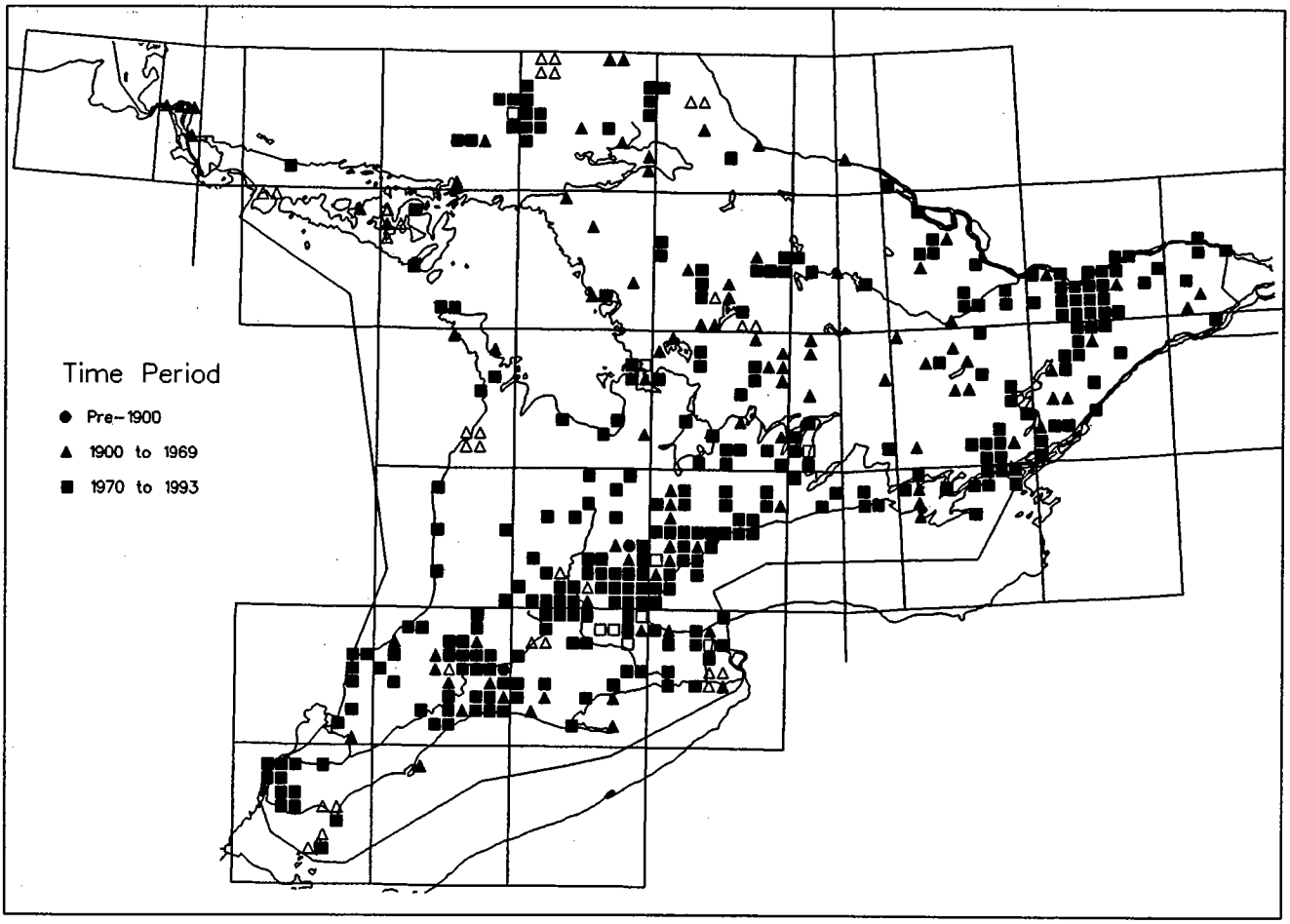
Meadow Vole

Microtus pennsylvanicus

With the possible exception of the Muskrat, the Meadow Vole is the most common and widespread member of the vole family. It is found throughout the northern US and Canada to the Tundra. In Ontario, the Meadow Vole can be found in all parts of the province from Pelee Island in Lake Erie to the Hudson Bay coast.

The Meadow Vole is an important food source for a variety of predators including hawks, owls, Red Foxes, weasels, and Coyotes. Preferred habitats include wet or dry open areas such as meadows, marshes, and open forests, but Meadow Voles can be found in other habitats when population levels are high. Meadow Voles have tails longer than 37 mm and uniformly dark brown or grayish pelage (Peterson 1966).



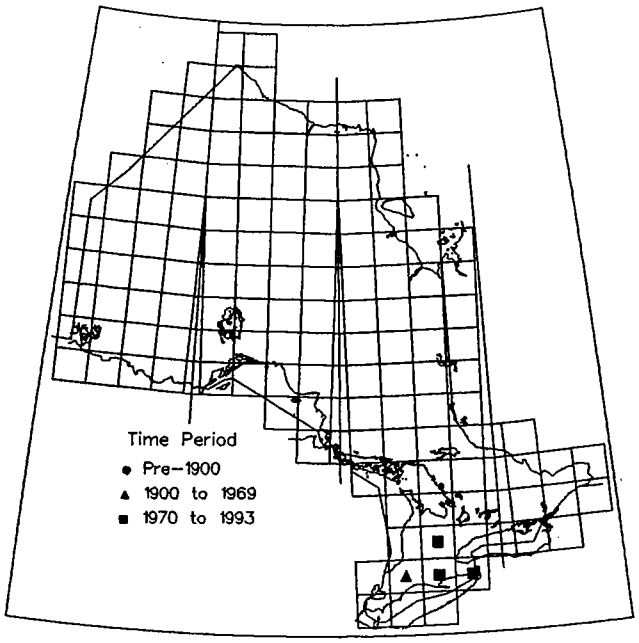


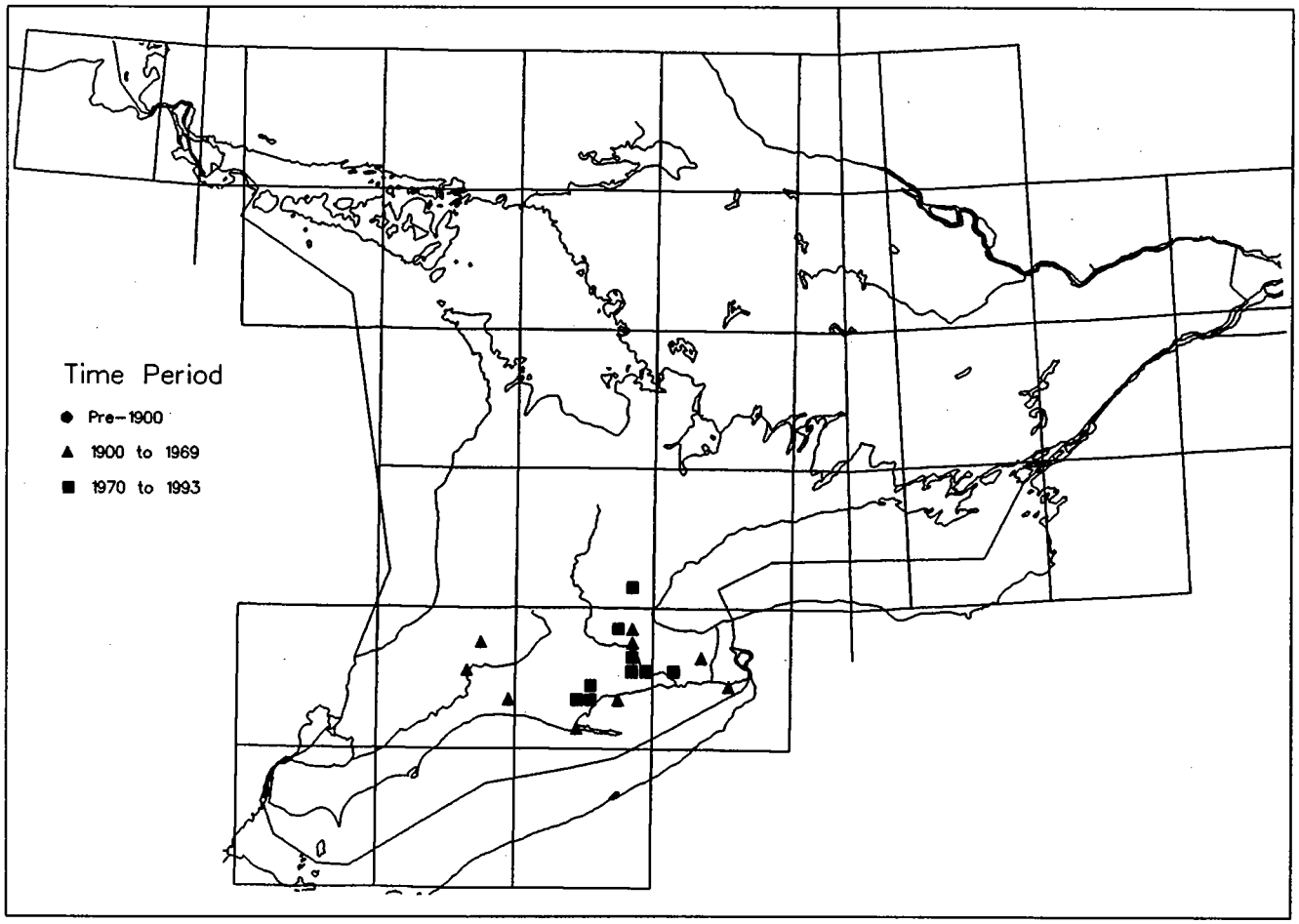
Woodland Vole

Pitymys pinetorum

The Woodland or Pine Vole is a southern species with a restricted Canadian range. Its North American range covers the eastern half of the US, and southwestern Ontario. Within Ontario, this vole is restricted to the area along the north shore of Lake Erie from London to Crawford Lake (near Campbellville).

The distribution of the Woodland Vole appears to be closely related to the mature deciduous forests along Lake Erie where there is loose sandy soil and deep humus suitable for burrowing. In Ontario, the Woodland Vole's preferred habitat is most common within the Carolinian Forest and the future of the Woodland Vole depends on the preservation of this rapidly-disappearing forest type. Although the Woodland Vole has not yet been given official status within Ontario, it should be carefully monitored because of its close association with the disappearing Carolinian Forest.





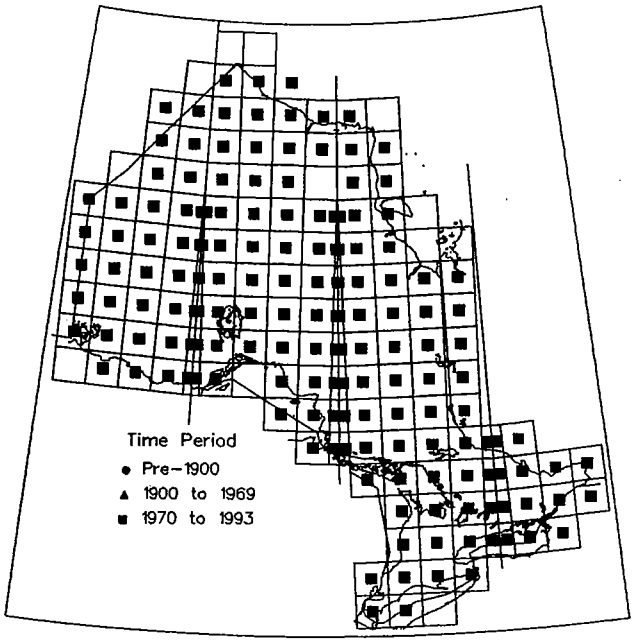
Muskrat

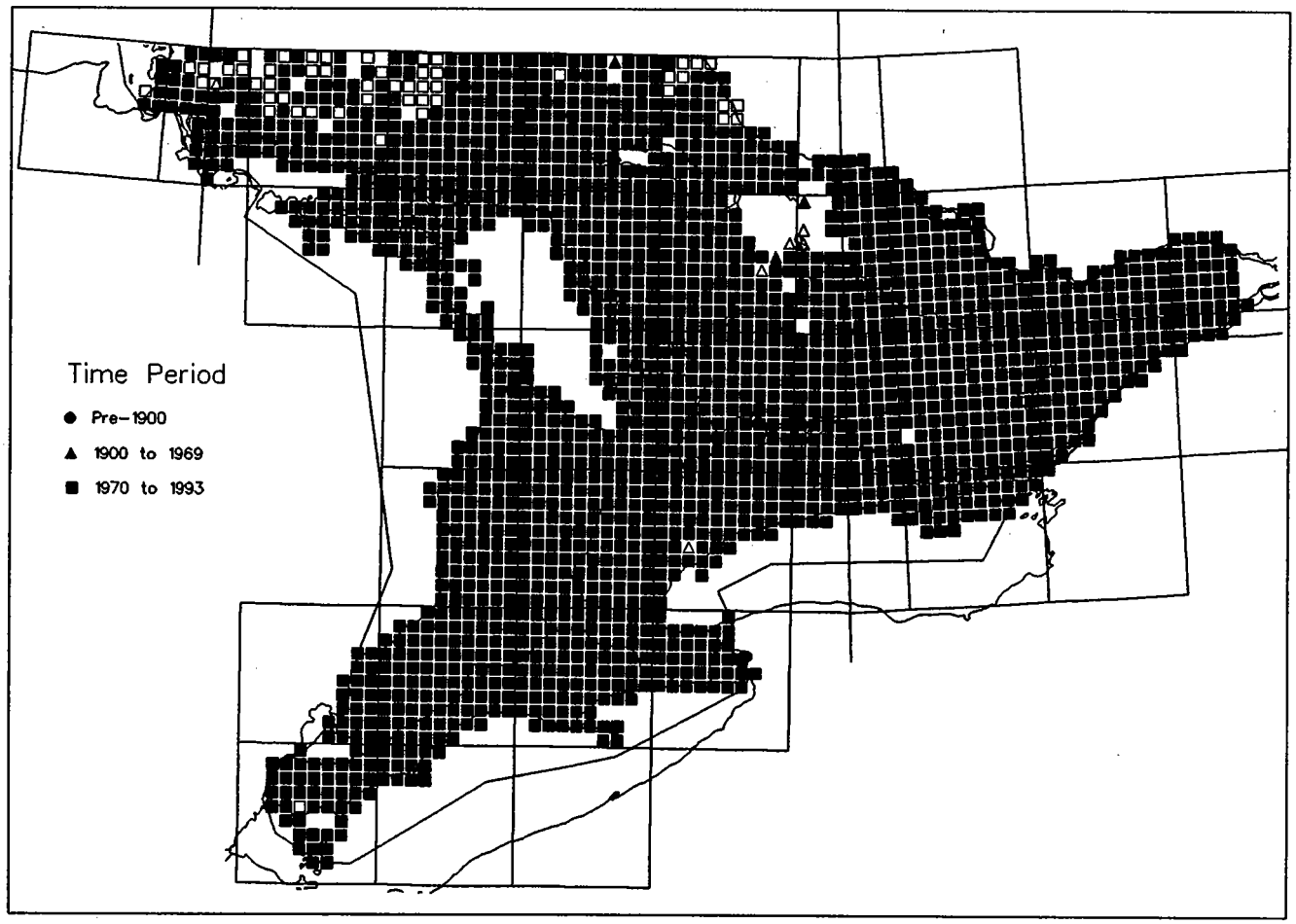
Ondatra zibethicus

The Muskrat is the largest and most aquatic member of the vole family. It resides in marshes, shallow lakes, and slow-flowing streams and rivers where there is abundant vegetation and the water does not freeze to the bottom.

Geographically, the Muskrat ranges across North America except in Tundra regions and the dry southwestern US. In Ontario, Muskrats are common throughout the province. Just as other furbearers are harvested in large numbers every year, so also are Muskrats, providing abundant data on their distribution.

Although the Mammal Atlas map shows Algonquin Provincial Park to be almost devoid of Muskrats, they **do** live in the park. Because trapping is restricted in the park, provincial fur harvest records don't show Muskrat distribution within the park region. Volunteers were able to document some Algonquin park Muskrats, but were not able to provide data for all of the over 100 squares.

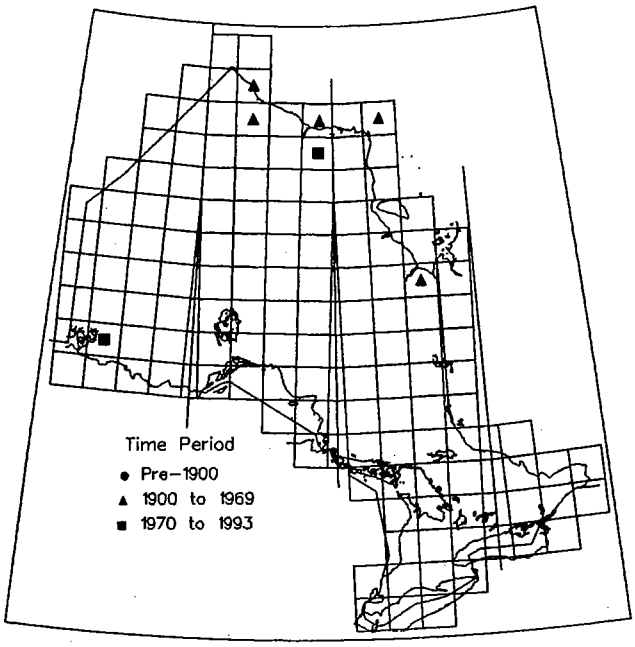




Northern Bog Lemming

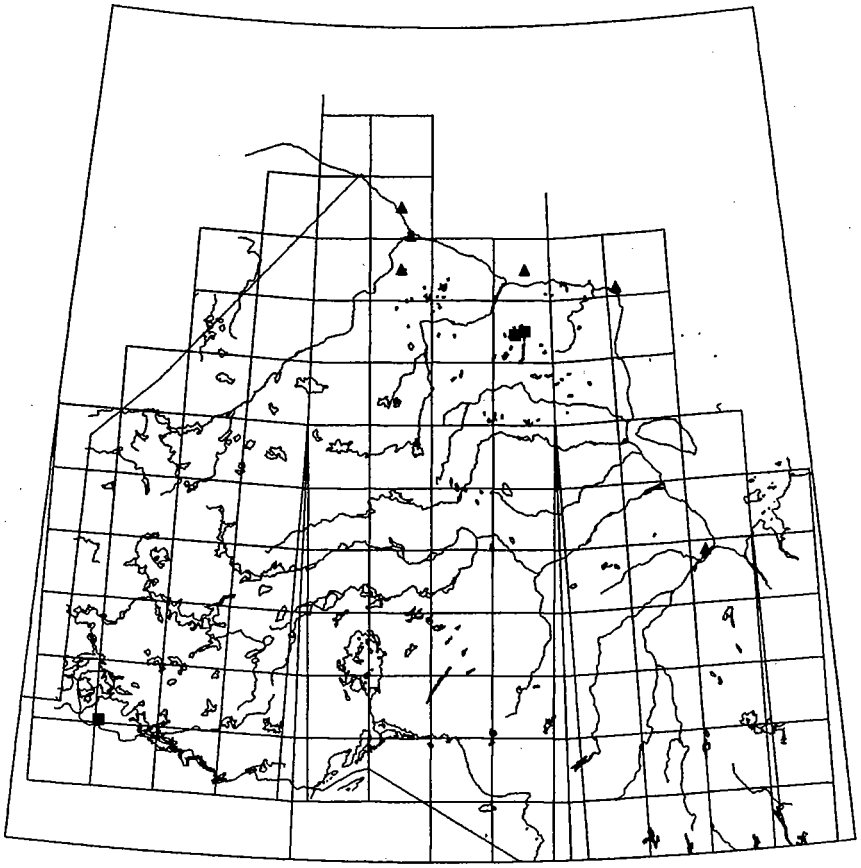
Synaptomys borealis

Although rare, the Northern Bog Lemming has a large range: from Alaska to Labrador across the southern edge of the Tundra, south to Washington, northern Minnesota, the Gaspe New Brunswick, Maine, and New Hampshire. Its distribution within Ontario is largely unknown. A few Ontario records exist from the James and Hudson Bay lowlands, and the Rainy River area. The disjunct distribution in Ontario may be misleading, however. It seems likely that the range of the Northern Bog Lemming is continuous between Rainy River and the Hudson and James Bay lowlands.



The Northern Bog Lemming is found in association with cool sphagnum bogs, but has also been found in moist black spruce-horsetail forest, dry black spruce-lichen woodland, hemlock-beech forest, subalpine meadows, alpine tundra, weedy bluegrass fields, and dry hills of sagebrush (Wrigley 1986).

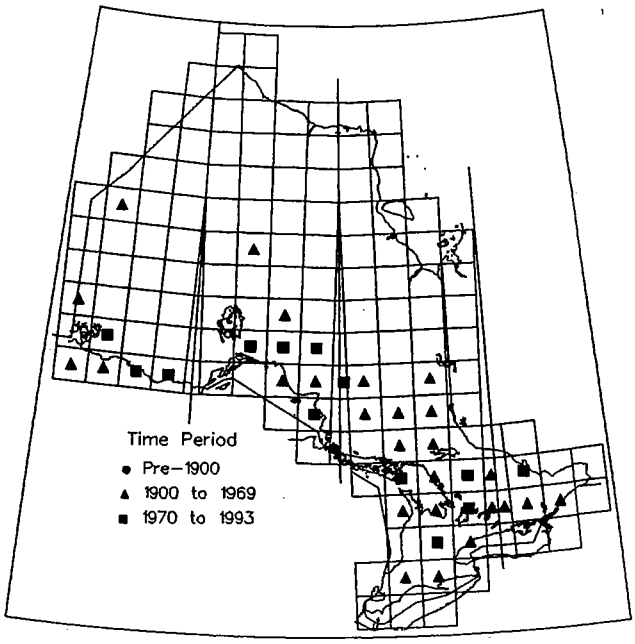
.. Judith Eger



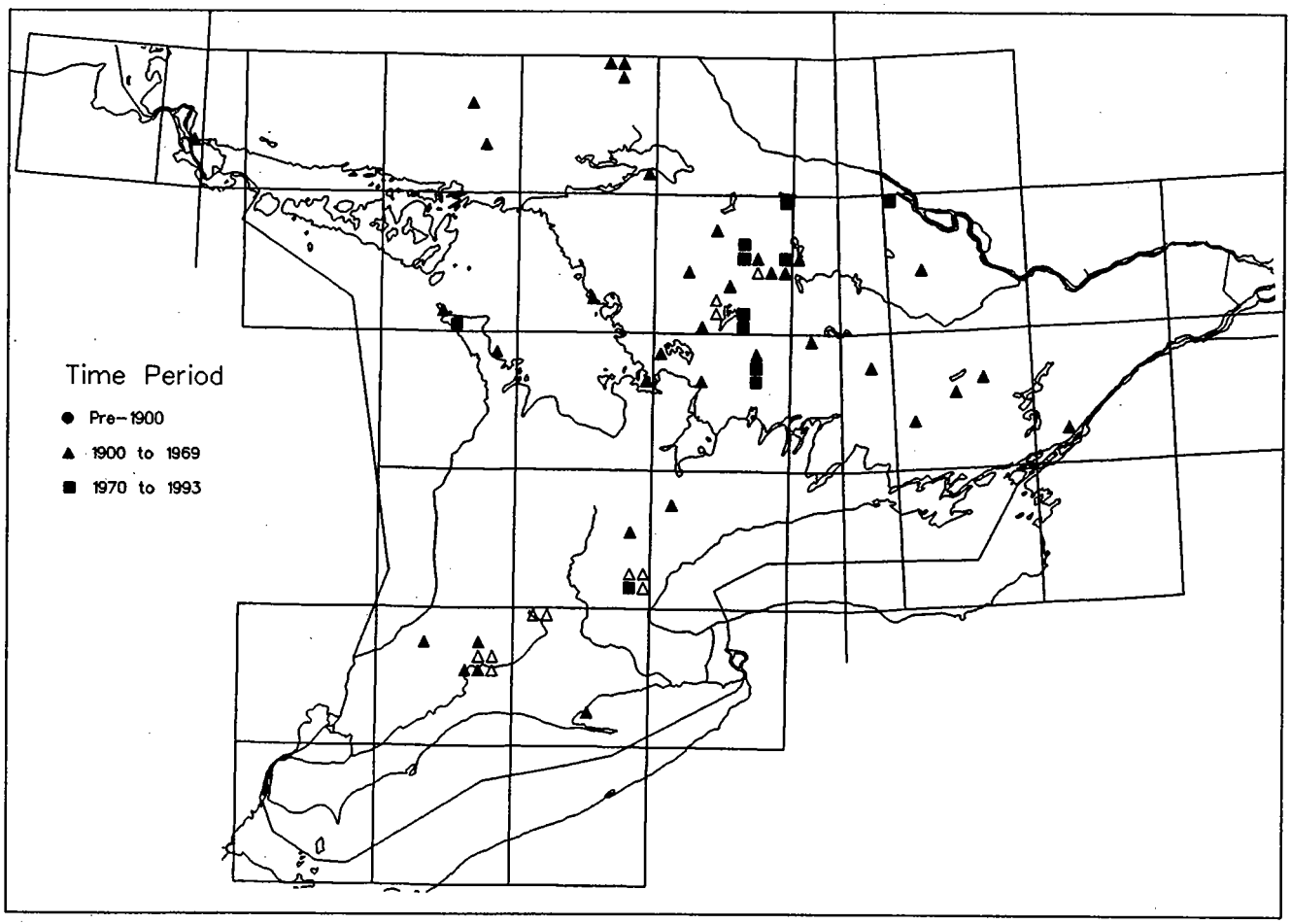
Southern Bog Lemming

Synaptomys cooperi

The Southern Bog Lemming is an uncommon species but has a fairly extensive range. It can be found throughout eastern Canada and the northeastern US. In Ontario, the species has been recorded as far north as Favourable Lake, but is more common in southern regions. The Southern Bog Lemming is a relative of the Northern Bog Lemming and the two species are found sympatrically in Rainy River and possibly north to Favourable Lake. Contrary to its name, the Southern Bog Lemming doesn't only inhabit bogs and other damp areas, but also dry and well-drained uplands covered with grass or forests (Baker 1983).



Naturalists can confuse this lemming with a small Meadow Vole. However, the two can be distinguished by tooth characteristics and tail length. The Southern Bog Lemming has shallow grooves in its upper incisors and a tail less than 25 mm. Distinguishing between the Southern and Northern Bog Lemming can also be difficult, and requires examination of the incisors and cheek teeth. .. *Judith Eger*

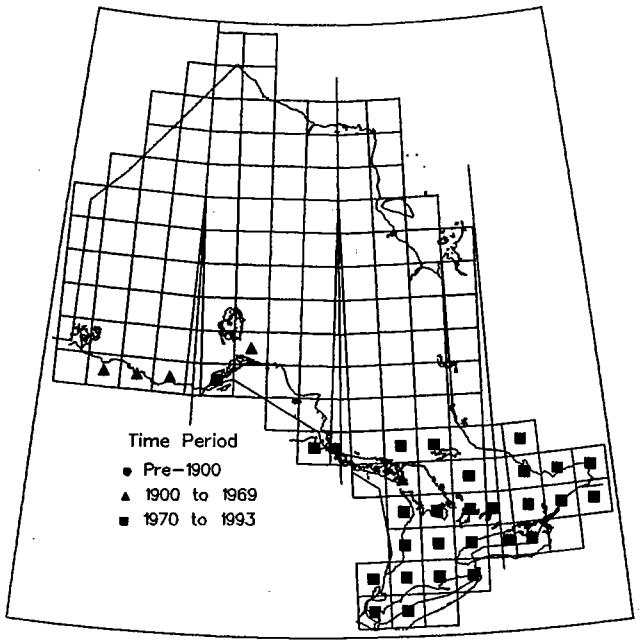


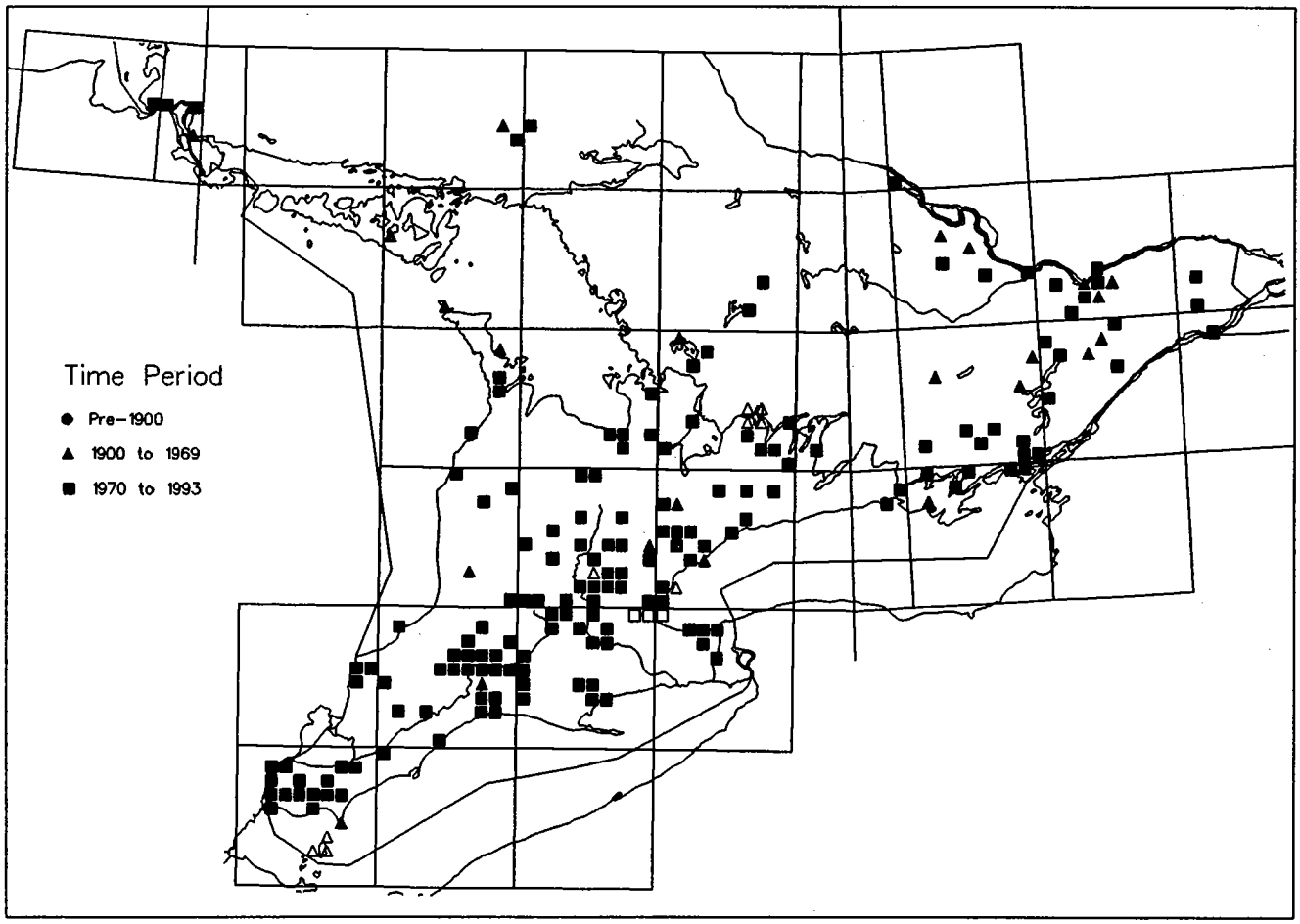
Norway Rat

Rattus norvegicus

The Norway Rat is a large, Old World rat that was inadvertently introduced to North America from Europe. Its distribution coincides with human settlement; permanent populations of the Norway Rat rarely develop in the absence of people (Peterson 1966). Since the settlement of North America by Europeans, the Norway Rat has expanded its range to include all of the US and Mexico, as well as the populated areas of southern Canada. In Ontario, the Norway Rat can be found north to the limit of the railroad.

The Norway Rat often inhabits buildings for shelter and food. To many people, it is a costly pest, damaging food stores, buildings, and furnishings (Peterson 1966).



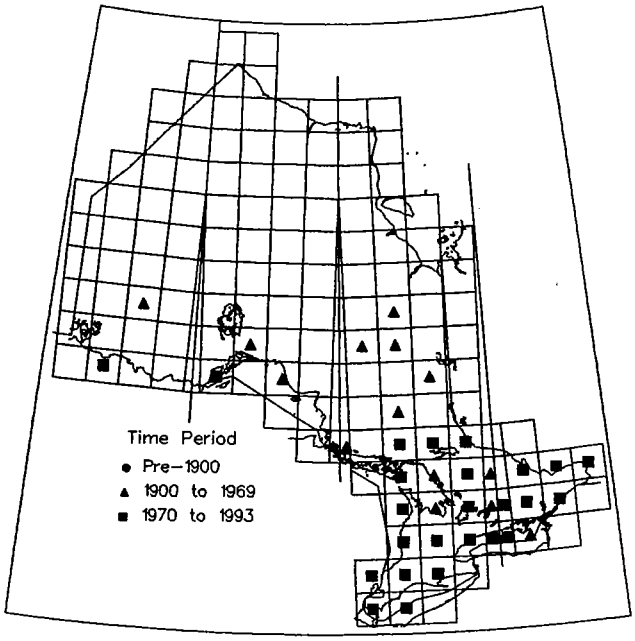


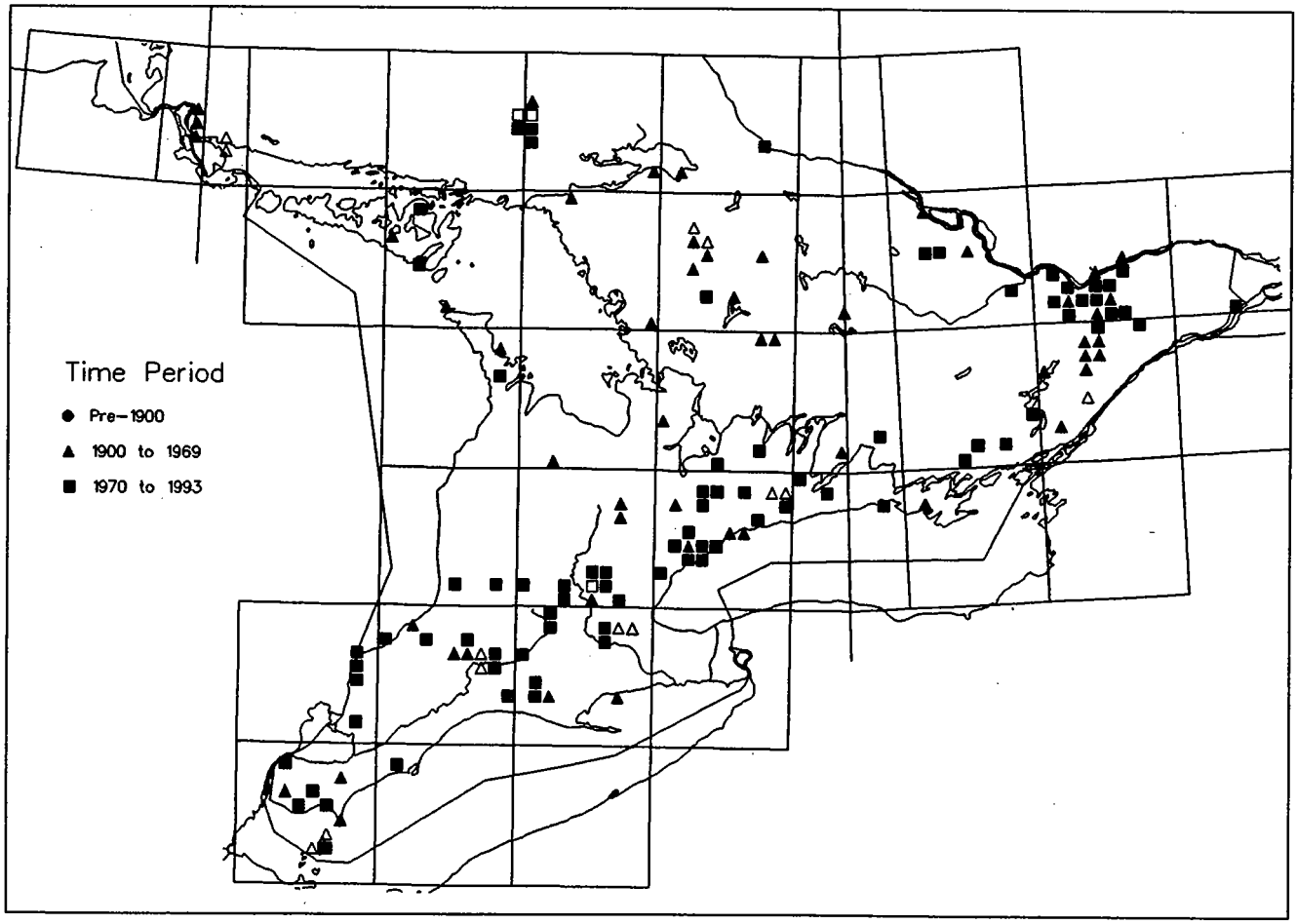
House Mouse

Mus musculus

The House Mouse is the smallest of the Old World rats and mice that were introduced into Canada. It now inhabits all of the continental US and populated areas of southern Canada. In Ontario, House Mouse distribution is similar to that of the Norway Rat, being found in close association with human settlement as far north as Fraserdale and Sioux Lookout (Peterson 1966).

Although the House Mouse does inhabit buildings, White-footed and Deer mice tend to be the two species most often found in homes and cottages. These two native mice are more common than the House Mouse. Distinguishing features of the House Mouse include small size and gray colouring on its back and underparts.



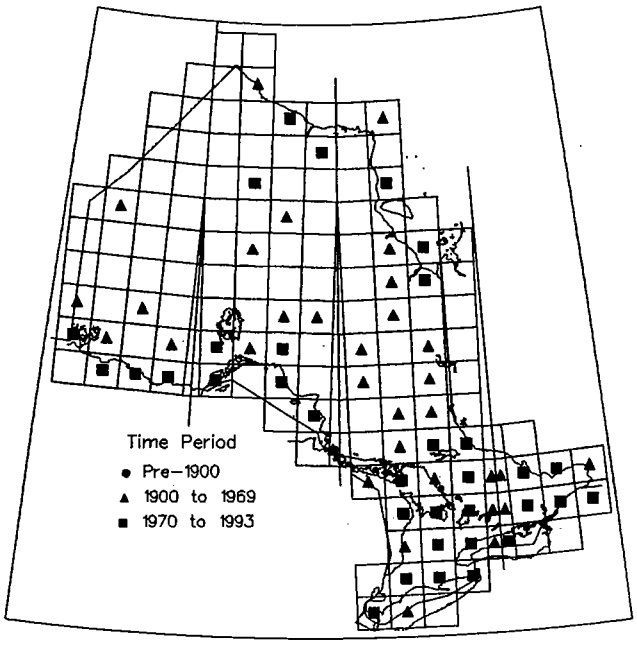


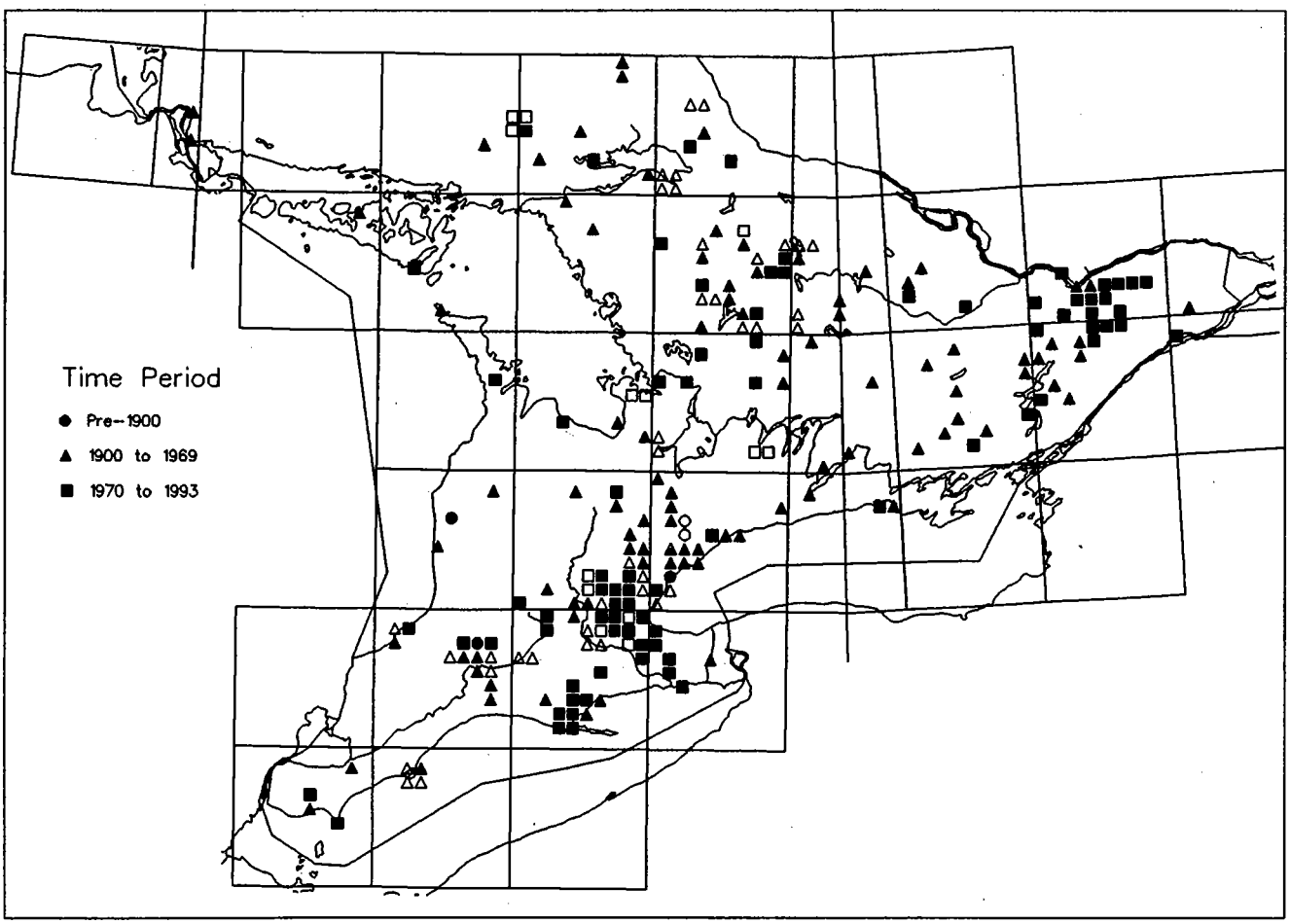
Meadow Jumping Mouse

Zapus hudsonius

The Meadow Jumping Mouse is the most widespread of the four jumping mice found in Canada. It lives throughout the northeastern and central US and eastern and northwestern Canada. In Ontario, the Meadow Jumping Mouse is found from Essex County to the Hudson Bay coast. The presence of this jumping mouse in the Cape Henrietta Maria area (at the junction of James and Hudson bays) is of particular interest because permafrost would make digging hibernation burrows very difficult (Peterson 1966).

Both the Meadow and Woodland Jumping mice are true hibernators. They hibernate from September or October to late April or May. Contrary to its name, the Meadow Jumping Mouse can be found in a variety of open or forested habitats, although it does prefers low, wet meadows (Peterson 1966).

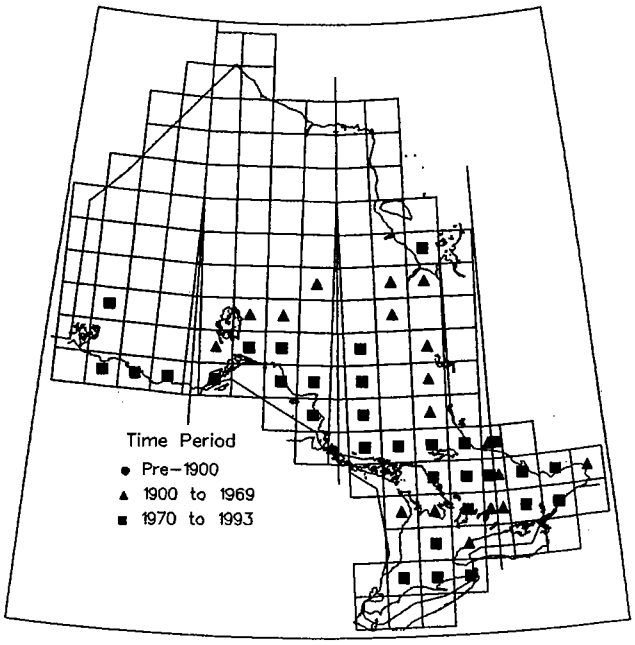




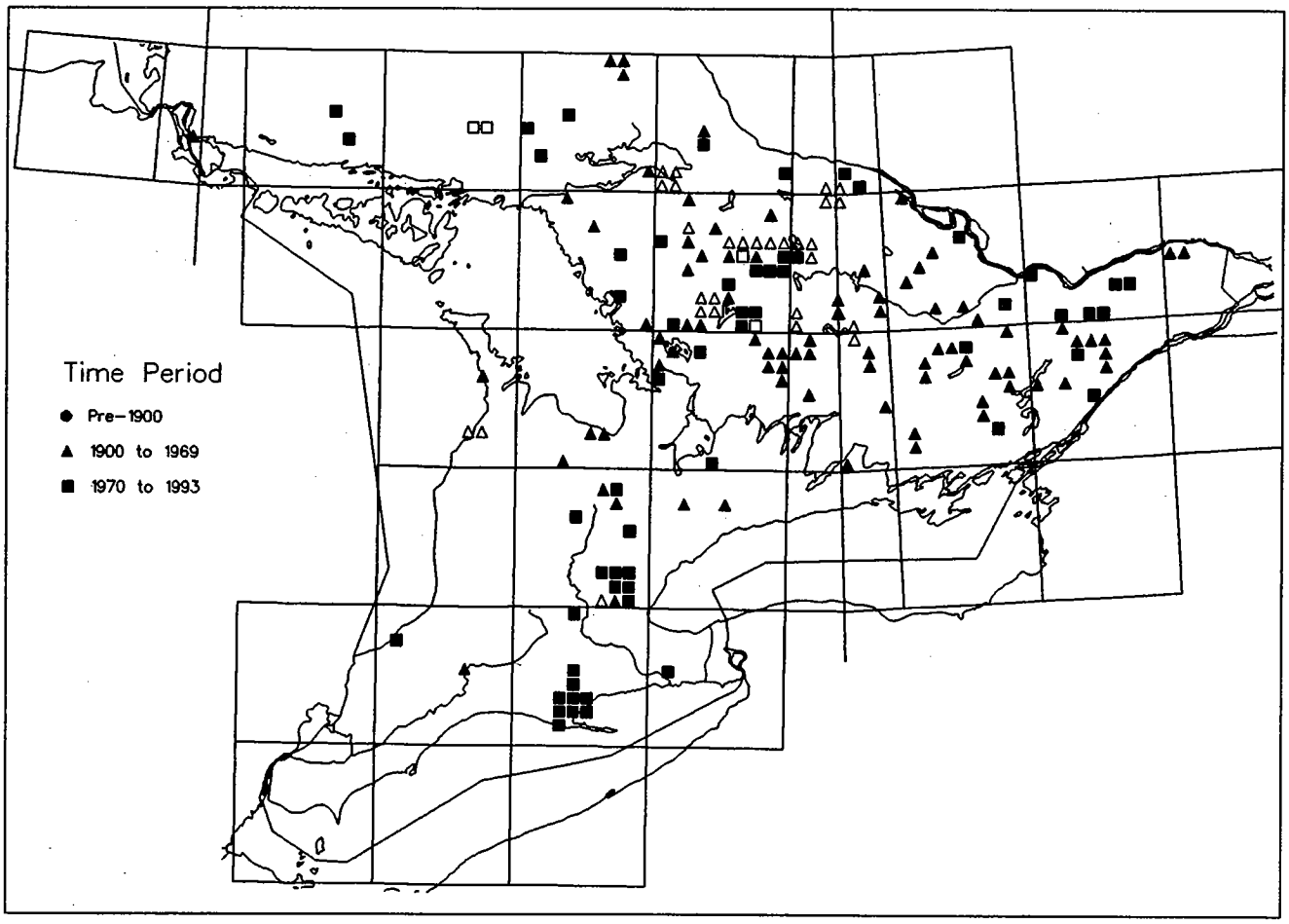
Woodland Jumping Mouse

Napaeozapus insignis

This forest-dwelling mouse can be found in the northeastern US and from the Ontario-Manitoba border through eastern Canada. In Ontario, the Woodland Jumping Mouse ranges throughout southern Ontario from Lake Erie (near Long Point) to southeastern Ontario, and north to Kenora in the west and Moosonee in the east.



The Woodland Jumping Mouse inhabits dry and moist forested areas, distinguishing it from the Meadow Jumping Mouse which prefers low, wet meadows. These habitat preferences are generally sufficient to distinguish the two species; however, the Meadow Jumping Mouse occasionally ventures into dry forests. Positive identification can be made based on the distinct white tip on the tail of the Woodland Jumping Mouse. As well, the Woodland Jumping Mouse lacks the extra peg-like upper premolar found in the Meadow Jumping Mouse (Peterson 1966).



Porcupine

Erethizon dorsatum

Characterized by its thousands of quills, the Porcupine is an easily-identified species found across North America. Porcupines are usually associated with coniferous forests, but do venture into grasslands in wooded riparian areas.

Records of Porcupines in Ontario indicate low numbers in the southwest and north. Small numbers are likely due to a lack of suitable habitat in the southwest, and a lack of observations in the north. The Porcupine seems to have expanded its range south since the 1960s (Peterson 1966), although historically it would have been found in southwestern Ontario.

.. Judith Eger