

Threatened species of the Northern Territory

Dusky hopping-mouse

Notomys fuscus

Conservation status

Australia: Vulnerable

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

Northern Territory: Endangered

Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1976

Description

The Dusky Hopping-mouse is characterized by strong incisor teeth, a long tail, large ears, dark eyes, and extremely elongated and narrow hindfeet, which have only four pads on the sole. The combined head and body length is 91–177 mm, the tail is 125–225 mm long, and the body mass is about 20–50 g. The upperparts may be pale sandy brown, yellowish brown, ashy brown or greyish, while the underparts are white. The fur is fine, close and soft. Long hairs near the tip of the tail form a distinct brush. The Dusky Hopping-mouse has a well-developed glandular area on the underside of its neck or chest. Females have four nipples.

Distribution

The current distribution of the Dusky Hopping-mouse appears to be restricted to the eastern Lake Eyre Basin within the Simpson-Strzelecki Dunefields bioregion in South Australia and Queensland. An intensive survey in the 1990s located the species at a number of localities in the Strzelecki Desert and adjacent Cobbler Sandhills (South Australia) and in south-west Queensland¹.

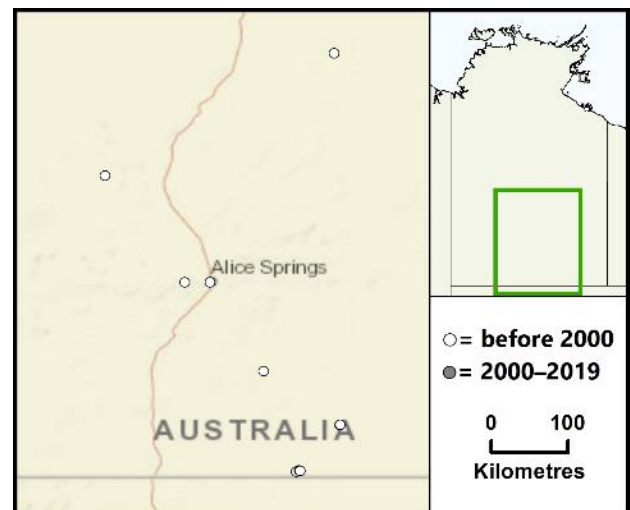


Credit: P. Canty

The species was formerly found across a much wider range that stretched as far west as Ooldea in South Australia and east to the Victoria/New South Wales border.

The species has not been recorded in the Northern Territory (NT) since 1939, when it was collected in sand dunes on Maryvale Station and on Andado Station.

NT conservation reserves where reported: None.



Caption: Known localities of the Dusky Hopping-mouse in the NT (nrmmaps.nt.gov.au)

Ecology and life-history

The Dusky Hopping-mouse occupies a variety of sandy environments that are characterized by the presence of consolidated dunes and perennial vegetation¹. Most sites are close to lakes or drainage lines, and these are the only localities where relatively dense aggregations are known.

Little is known of the breeding biology of this species in the wild other than that it is an opportunistic breeder. In captivity, its breeding pattern is polyestrous, with no evidence of seasonality; thus it breeds throughout the year. Both sexes reach reproductive maturity at 70 days.

Threatening processes

Factors that caused the decline of the Dusky Hopping-mouse have not been positively identified, but are likely to include habitat degradation and predation by feral Cats *Felis catus* and Red Foxes *Vulpes vulpes*.

Conservation objectives and management

There is no existing management program for the Dusky Hopping-mouse in the NT.

Research priorities for this species are to: i) undertake targeted surveys in the Stony Plains bioregion in the NT; and ii) follow up on any reliable potential sightings as soon as possible.

References

¹ Moseby, K.E., Brandle, R., Adams, M., 1999. Distribution, habitat and conservation status of the rare Dusky Hopping-mouse, *Notomys fuscus* (Rodentia: Muridae). Wildl. Res. 26, 479–494.

² Neave, H., Nano, C., Pavey, C., Moyses, M, Clifford, B., Cole, J., Harris, M., Albrecht, D., 2004. A Resource Assessment towards a Conservation Strategy for the Finkel Bioregion, Northern Territory. Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Environment, Alice Springs.