

Threatened Species of the Northern Territory

FAWN HOPPING-MOUSE

Notomy cervinus

Conservation status

Australia: Not listed

Northern Territory: Extinct



Photo: P. Canty

Description

The fawn hopping-mouse is a relatively large rodent (head-body length 95-120 mm, body mass 30-50 g). The tail is longer than the body (120-160 mm) and ends in a tuft of dark hairs. In contrast to the dusky hopping-mouse and spinifex hopping-mouse with which it may be confused, the fawn hopping-mouse does not have a throat pouch. Males may have a glandular area of naked or raised skin (2-3 mm across) on the chest between the forelimbs (Watts and Aslin 1981).

The upperbody colour varies among individuals and ranges from pale pinkish-fawn to grey. The belly is white. The ears are particularly long and the head broad and short. The eyes are very protuberant. Whiskers on the muzzle are extremely long (up to 65 mm).

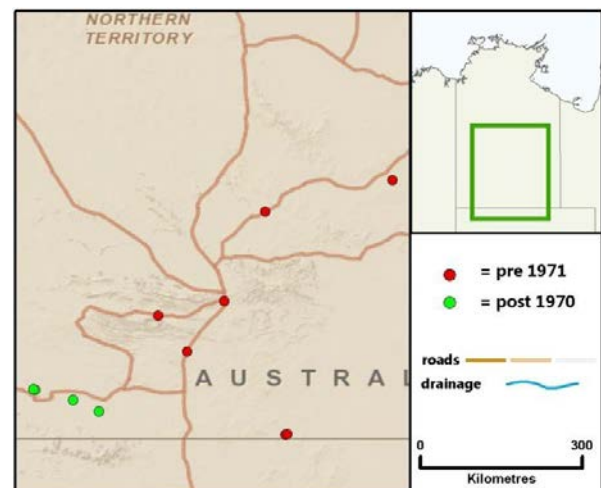
Distribution

The species is patchily distributed on gibber plains and claypans of the Lake Eyre Basin in north-east South Australia and south-west Queensland. In the Northern Territory (NT) there are old records from gibber country near Charlotte Waters in 1895 (Baynes and Johnson 1996). More recent records are from Uluru Kata Tjuta National Park (Great Sandy

Desert bioregion) and Curtin Springs (Finke bioregion), although some authors (e.g. Reid et al. 1993) do not accept the Uluru records.

Conservation reserves where reported:

Uluru Kata Tjuta National Park (unconfirmed).



Known locations of the fawn hopping-mouse

Ecology

The fawn hopping-mouse is a gibber-dwelling species, unlike all other hopping-mouse species that live on sandy substrates. It lives singly or in small family groups of up to four individuals. Burrows are up to one metre deep and have between one and three entrances.

The diet of the fawn hopping-mouse is primarily seeds, but it also eats green plant material and insects when they are seasonally

available. Like other hopping-mice it does not require free water, but can drink very salty water, excreting excess salt in concentrated urine and faeces.

Reproduction in this species appears to be opportunistic; breeding occurring when conditions are favourable. In captivity gestation is between 38 and 43 days, which is about a week longer than in other hopping-mouse species and the one to five fully furred young are born at a slightly more advanced stage (Breed 2008).

Conservation assessment

There are no widely-accepted records of fawn hopping-mice from the NT since the few specimens collected more than 100 years ago. Targeted surveys for the species in 2008-09 on New Crown and Andado Stations, including previous collection localities and suitable gibber plain habitat, failed to detect the species. Other fauna surveys have not recorded the species, including:

- i. extensive trapping as part of the Finke Bioregion survey (Neave *et al.* 2004);
- ii. intensive trapping at seven sites on Andado Station and at Mac Clarke Conservation Reserve; and
- iii. 1994 surveys in suitable habitat for the species around Charlotte Waters (Eldridge and Reid 2000).

The species also no longer occurs in adjoining areas of northern South Australia (Witjira National Park) so there is no opportunity for movement of animals into the NT. Consequently, this species is classified as Extinct in the NT.

Threatening processes

Threatening processes faced by the fawn hopping-mouse have not been identified.

However, possible factors include habitat degradation, predation by introduced carnivores (cats and foxes), and competition with introduced herbivores (including cattle and rabbits).

Conservation objectives and management

As the species is believed to be extinct in the NT, there is no management program for it in the Territory. There are no plans for reintroduction into the NT. Any reliable potential sightings of the species should be followed-up as soon as possible.

Compiled by

Chris Pavey
Simon Ward
[Updated December 2012]

References

- Baynes, A., and Johnson, K.A. (1996). The contributions of the Horn Expedition and cave deposits to knowledge of the original mammal fauna of central Australia. In *Exploring Central Australia: Society, the Environment and the 1894 Horn Expedition*. (eds S.R. Morton and D.J. Mulvaney.) pp. 168-186. (Surrey Beatty and Sons, Sydney.)
- Breed, W.G. (2008). Fawn Hopping-mouse *Notomys cervinus* (Gould, 1953). In *The Mammals of Australia Third Edition* (eds S. Van Dyck & R. Strahan.) pp. 601-602. (Reed New Holland, Sydney.)
- Eldridge, S., and Reid, J. (2000). *A biological survey of the Finke floodout region, Northern Territory*. (Arid Lands Environment Centre, Alice Springs.)
- Neave, H., Nano, C., Pavey, C., Moyses, M, Clifford, B., Cole, J., Harris, M., and Albrecht, D. (2004). *A Resource Assessment towards a Conservation Strategy for the Finke Bioregion, Northern Territory*. (NT Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Environment, Alice Springs.)
- Reid, J. R. W., Kerle, J. A., and Baker, L. (1993). Mammals. In *Kowari 4: Uluru Fauna* (eds J.R.W. Reid, J.A. Kerle and S.R. Morton.) pp. 69-78. (Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service, Canberra.)
- Watts, C.H.S., and Aslin, H.J. (1981). *The Rodents of Australia*. (Angus and Robertson, Sydney.)