



## Shark Bay Mouse (Djoongari) *Pseudomys fieldi* (Waite, 1896)



Photo: Babs & Bert Wells/DEC

### Size

Head and body length

85-115 mm

Tail length

115-125 mm

### Weight

30-61 g

### Subspecies

None recognised.

### Description

A robust mouse with a particularly long and shaggy coat. The dorsal fur is a mixture of pale yellow-fawn underfur and dark guard hairs, giving a grizzly appearance. The ventral hairs and feet are white. The tail is longer than the head and body and is grey and white with a dark tuft of hairs at the end.

### Other Common Names

Shaggy Mouse, Shaggy-haired Mouse, Alice Springs Mouse, Djoongari refers to its indigenous (Pintupi/Luritja) name.

### Distribution

The Shark Bay Mouse was once distributed from Exmouth Gulf to the south coast of Western Australia, through the Murchison region to Alice Springs and south to the Nullarbor Plain, with records also from Dirk Hartog Island and Faure Island in Shark Bay. It was last recorded on the mainland in 1895 near Alice Springs. Surveys for additional populations on the mainland in 1989 around the Shark Bay area failed to detect the species.

The only extant population of the Shark Bay Mouse occurs on Bernier Island in Shark Bay. Populations have been translocated to Doole Island (Exmouth Gulf; failed), North West Island (Montebello Islands) and Faure Island (Shark Bay).

For further information regarding the distribution of this species please refer to [www.naturemap.dpaw.wa.gov.au](http://www.naturemap.dpaw.wa.gov.au)

### Habitat

On Bernier Island, the Shark Bay Mouse inhabits coastal dune vegetation dominated by *Spinifex longifolius* and *Olearia axillaris*. The species occurs in most coastal sandy areas around the island. Occasionally it can be found in the *Triodia/Acacia* heath in the central part of the island. Translocated mice on North West Island are using scree slopes for shelter.

### Behaviour

The Shark Bay Mouse is known to dig tunnels and runways in heaps of seagrass piled up on beaches during winter storms and use above ground nests as day refuges - they do not appear to use burrows as frequently as other species of *Pseudomys*. Animals translocated to Doole Island used hollows for day refuges above the water level in mangrove trees as well as sites among rocks and under *Triodia*.

## Diet

Little is known of the diet of the Shark Bay Mouse. Limited records indicate their diet consists of flowers and leaves, insects, spiders and fungi.

## Breeding

On Bernier Island, breeding occurs in winter and spring though it is possible that breeding may occur throughout the year. A litter of three to four young is produced after a gestation period of approximately 28 days. The young attach to the mothers' teats and are dragged around beneath her when she is on the move. By 30 days they are weaned and independent of their mother and enter the population during November to March. Individuals on Bernier Island are known to live for at least two years.

Breeding observed in captivity showed that the male was sharing the nest box with the mother and young when they were four weeks old. When the mother was absent he tended to behave protectively towards the young.

## Threatening processes

Reasons for decline are not well known, some suggestions include grazing and trampling of vegetation by stock and rabbits and predation by introduced predators (particularly by feral cats).

## Conservation status

Western Australian Wildlife Conservation Act 1950

Schedule 1 – Fauna that is rare or is likely to become extinct  
(Threatened ranked as Vulnerable)

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

Vulnerable

IUCN Red List of Threatened Species

Near Threatened (Version 3.1)

## Management

A recovery plan has been written for this species. Recovery actions include:

- Research into abundance, distribution and biology on Bernier Island.

- Control of introduced predators and competitors.
- Captive breeding and undertake translocations.
- Monitor populations on Doole Island (Exmouth Gulf) and North West Island (Montebello Islands)

## Other interesting facts

- In 1998, scientific research confirmed that the Alice Springs Mouse, which has not been sighted since 1895, was the same species as the endangered Shark Bay Mouse.

## Selected references

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### Further information

Contact your local office of the Department of Environment and Conservation.

See the department's website for the latest information: [www.dec.wa.gov.au](http://www.dec.wa.gov.au).

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