

Australian Threatened Species 2007

Northern hopping-mouse

Notomys aquilo

Conservation status

Australian Government:
Vulnerable (*Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*)

Northern Territory: **Vulnerable**
(*Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 2000*)

Queensland: **Vulnerable**
(*Nature Conservation Act 1992*)

What does it look like?

The northern hopping-mouse (*Notomys aquilo*) is a small, native Australian rodent, with large ears and eyes. It has sandy brown fur on top and white fur below, a body length of up to 11 centimetres long, and weighs a tiny 25–50 grams. The northern hopping-mouse is similar to other native mice but with very long narrow feet, and a very long tail—up to 17 centimetres—with a tuft of fur at the end. As the name suggests, it hops across the ground, similar to a kangaroo.

Where does it live?

The northern hopping-mouse lives in a range of grassland, shrubland and open forest habitats, mostly in sandy areas near the coast, but occasionally further inland. It is mostly known around Groote Eylandt in the Northern Territory, where it is commonly found on coastal dunes and sand sheets. Records show its distinctive tracks have been sighted in sand dunes near Cape Arnhem on

the Northern Territory mainland. There have been no records of the species from Cape York Peninsula in Queensland since the single original record more than 120 years ago.

Northern hopping-mouse lifestyle

The mouse lives in an elaborate, communally-used burrow system. The entrance to the burrow is covered with a thin layer of sand. It is only active at night and eats mostly seeds, and occasionally other vegetable matter and insects. All of its life is spent on the ground as it doesn't climb trees like some other rodents.



Northern hopping-mouse.
© Ian Morris

Northern hopping-mouse

Threats to the northern hopping-mouse

The northern hopping-mouse is listed under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* as Vulnerable. With limited information about this threatened species, it is thought that introduced species and changes to fire regimes are the biggest threats. The mouse is particularly vulnerable to predation by feral cats, as it spends most of its nights foraging on the ground. The change in fire regimes towards more frequent, late dry season, intense wildfires is thought to change the type and structure of the vegetation it inhabits, making it more uniform throughout rather than a mix of vegetation types that it is believed the mouse prefers.

How does it benefit from Protected Areas?

The Indigenous Protected Areas (IPA) programme is part of the Australian Government's National Reserve System. IPAs are areas where Aboriginal Traditional Owners have entered into a voluntary management agreement with the Australian Government to manage the country for biodiversity and cultural values. These protected areas are managed by local people, often as part of an Indigenous ranger programme.

To date, IPAs cover a total area of over 18.5 million hectares Australia wide, and in 2007 the IPA programme (as part of the National Reserve System) is celebrating its 10th birthday.

All of the records and signs of the hopping-mouse during the last 30 years have been in either the Anindilyakwa (declared in 2006, 3,000 000 ha) or the Dhimurru (declared in 2000, 100 993 ha) IPAs. Earlier records of the species were also located within the Laynhapuy IPA (declared in 2006, 690,000 ha). These protected areas are now managed for weeds, feral animals and fire by the Traditional Owners and local Indigenous ranger groups, providing a refuge for the mouse and securing habitat for its existence into the future.

Case study: Anindilyakwa—Indigenous Protected Area—Groote Eylandt Archipelago

In a joint project between the Northern Territory Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts (NRETA) and the Anindilyakwa Land Council, the Indigenous rangers who manage the Anindilyakwa IPA have been researching the distribution of the hopping-mouse and the effect of different survey techniques. Key findings from the work conducted in 2006 are that using a spotlight technique to survey for the mouse along tracks is more successful than trapping

and the mouse prefers floristically-diverse heath-like vegetation that is not too thick.

The rangers have also led an active community education program by talking to schools, Community Development Employment Project workers, visitors to the island, and other community members about the importance of Groote Eylandt for the conservation of the northern hopping-mouse and other threatened species.

What you can do

- Support the system of IPAs in Australia— even though they are in difficult-to-get-to, out-of-the-way places. If you are visiting an IPA, protected area or offshore island, make sure you are not carrying pests like ants, weeds or cane toads with you.
- If you do find a northern hopping-mouse, contact the biodiversity section at the Northern Territory Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts with the location, date, and if possible, a photograph.
- Help the northern hopping-mouse by reporting any activities you see that are likely to harm them or their habitat to the Department of the Environment and Water Resources—Compliance and Enforcement Branch. Visit www.environment.gov.au/epbc/compliance/index.html or freecall 1800 110 395 for more information.

Contacts

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You can find out more information about protecting private property by contacting your state TSN Coordinator, visiting www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/incentives/covenants.html or by contacting the Department of the Environment and Water Resources Community Information Unit, email ciu@environment.gov.au, or freecall 1800 803 772.

Reference

Visit www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/ts-day/index.html

Northern hopping-mouse burrows. © NRETA



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