

Heath mouse

Pseudomys shortridgei

Fact sheet

SHARK BAY World Heritage



Description



The fur of this grey-brown rodent is flecked with dark guard hairs that make the heath mouse look fluffy. It is paler underneath, has a blunt face, bulging eyes and short rounded ears.

Heath mice look similar to bush rats, but are distinguished by their tails. The tails of heath mice are dark above and light underneath while rats have ringed tails.

Head-body
90-120mm

Tail
80-110mm

Weight
55-90g

Diet and habitat



Image: Babs & Bert Wells/Parks and Wildlife

Heath mice eat leaf and stem material supplemented with fungus and insects. Diet can vary from season to season.

They construct multiple shallow burrows, usually under a low bush. Although generally nocturnal, heath mice are sometimes active during the day.

Breeding



The heath mouse breeds during late spring and summer, with females giving birth between December and January. Females begin breeding at 10 to 12 months of age and can produce two litters of three young per year. Young develop quickly and growth is rapid, juveniles reaching adult size in 3-4 months.

Maturity
10-12mths

No. young
3

Lifespan
max 6 yrs

Distribution



Heath mice occur in south-west Victoria, southern SA and southern WA. They were thought to be extinct in WA until rediscovered in 1987, although they have not been found during recent surveys. They are proposed for reintroduction to Dirk Hartog Island as part of the *Return to 1616* project.

Status

Vulnerable

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Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna)
Notice 2015

Numbers of heath mice are declining and are threatened by feral predators, habitat loss and fragmentation.



Department of
Parks and Wildlife

