

Heath mouse

Pseudomys shortridgei



Description: The fur of this grey-brown native 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.

The native heath mouse looks similar to introduced black rats but can be distinguished by their tails. The tails of heath mice are dark above and light underneath while black rats have ringed tails.

Diet and Habitat: Heath mice have a diet that changes throughout the year in response to seasonal availability. During their breeding season they will consume highly nutritious flowers, seeds and berries, but will eat leaf and stem material as well as truffle-like fungus when their preferred foods are unavailable.

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 breeding season lasts four months, occurring once a year during late spring and summer. 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.

Distribution: Heath mice may still occur in south-west Victoria, southern South Australia and southern Western Australia (WA).

They were thought to be extinct in WA until they were rediscovered in 1987.

They are proposed for reintroduction to Dirk Hartog Island National Park as part of the *Return to 1616* Ecological Restoration Project.



Quick facts

Head-body:	90 - 120mm
Tail:	85 - 100mm
Average weight:	55 - 90g
Maturity:	3 - 4 months
Number of young:	3
Lifespan:	max 6 years

Conservation Status

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



Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice 2018



DID YOU KNOW?

Heath mice are semi-nocturnal. They're active in the early evening and early morning and return to their nest at sunrise.