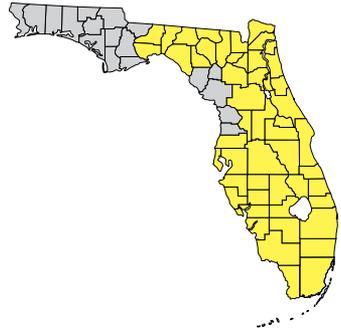


ROUND-TAILED MUSKRAT

Neofiber alleni



Order:	Rodentia
Family:	Cricetidae
FNAI Ranks:	G3/S3
U.S. Status:	None
FL Status:	None



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Description: A large rodent (total adult length is 11 - 15 in. = 285 - 381 mm). Sparsely furred tail is round in cross section, and about half the length of the body. Ears are small (.6 - .9 in. = 15 - 22 mm) and round. Snout is short and tipped with many long whiskers. Longer fur hairs (guard hairs) are dark brown and shiny; underfur is a rich brown, and individual hairs have light-colored bases. Long, sharp toenails are evident on all feet. Constructs dens (houses) by weaving grasses and other marsh vegetation into domes of varying size.

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Similar Species: Black rat (*Rattus rattus*) and Norway rat (*Rattus norvegicus*) have hairless ears and tails and a long, cone-shaped snout. Cotton rat (*Sigmodon hispidus*) has a grizzled appearance with long, lightly furred tail about equal to the body length. Common muskrat (*Ondatra zibethicus*) exceeds 16 in. (406 mm) in total length and has a laterally flattened tail.

Habitat: Shallow marshes of variable size and species composition. Will also use sugarcane, rice, and other agricultural crops grown in moist or submerged soils.

Seasonal Occurrence: Active year-round; nocturnal.

Florida Distribution: Throughout most of Florida generally west to the Apalachicola River excluding the Keys and the northwestern portion of the peninsula.

Range-wide Distribution: Above-mentioned Florida distribution and southeastern Georgia in the vicinity of Okefenokee Swamp.

Conservation Status: Patchily distributed; protected on several state and federal conservation lands, including the extensive marshes of Paynes Prairie and those along the upper reaches of the St. Johns River. Threatened by isolation of populations resulting from development and wetland drainage.

Protection and Management: Maintain natural hydrology in wetlands. Occasional fires are needed to maintain the marsh habitat; because vegetation needed for food and cover grows back more slowly after winter burns, growing-season burns may be preferred.

Selected References: Birkenholz 1963, Brown 1997, Humphrey (ed.) 1992, Whitaker 1996.