

ST. ANDREWS BEACH MOUSE

Peromyscus polionotus peninsularis

Order: Rodentia
Family: Cricetidae
FNAI Ranks: G5T1/S1
U.S. Status: Endangered
FL Status: Endangered



courtesy of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Description: A small mouse (adults generally 5 - 5.5 in. = 127 - 140 mm total length) with a short tail (approx. 2 in. = 52 mm). Dorsal fur is pale buff. Flanks, feet, and underside are white. Dorsal color may either taper down the thighs or end abruptly; color may extend to the tip of the nose or end just behind the eyes; tail may have a dorsal stripe, but is usually all white.

Similar Species: Other subspecies of beach mice are similar in appearance, but do not overlap in range; all but the Santa Rosa beach mouse have darker dorsal fur. Cotton mouse (*Peromyscus gossypinus*) is larger (5.6 - 8.1 in. = 142 - 206 mm), has a relatively longer tail (2.7 - 4.5 in. = 71 - 116 mm), and is chestnut-brown and gray. House mouse (*Mus musculus*) is gray above with a slightly lighter gray underside and has a hairless, nearly unicolor (gray-pink) tail that is generally longer than 2.5 in. (63 mm).

Habitat: Primary, secondary, and occasionally tertiary sand dunes with a moderate cover of grasses and forbs, including sea oats (*Uniola paniculata*), bitter panicum (*Panicum amarum*), Gulf bluestem (*Schizichyrium maritimum*), beach dropseed (*Sporobolus virginicus*), and

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telegraph weed (*Heterotheca subaxillaris*). High, stable areas supporting sand live oak (*Quercus geminata*) may be important following hurricanes that remove substantial dune habitat.

Seasonal Occurrence: Less active when the moon is bright.

Florida Distribution: Historically occurred from the eastern entrance of St Andrews' Bay, Bay County, to St. Joseph Peninsula, Gulf County. Now known only from the north end of St. Joseph Peninsula and eastern Bay County.

Range-wide Distribution: Same as Florida distribution. St. Andrews beach mouse is a subspecies of oldfield mouse, which is common throughout Alabama, Georgia, southern South Carolina, and northern Florida.

Conservation Status: Two populations are protected at St. Joseph Peninsula State Park and Tyndall Air Force Base. Populations were reduced following hurricanes during 1995, but are rebounding.

Protection and Management: Prevent damage to dune habitat: construct boardwalks over dunes; prevent off-road-vehicle (ORV) use on dunes; restore breaks in the primary dune to prevent erosion and flooding during high tides and surges. Remove feral cats, which are thought to cause high mortality.

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