

## PERDIDO KEY BEACH MOUSE

*Peromyscus polionotus trissyllepsis*

**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 or grayish and extends to a widow's peak between the eyes. The nose and cheeks are white. Flanks, feet, and underside are white. Dorsal color on the rump may be tapered or squared but does not extend down the thighs. There is no distinct mid-dorsal stripe. Tail is white (not bicolored).

**Similar Species:** Other subspecies of beach mice are similar in appearance, but do not overlap in range. 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 and secondary sand dunes with a moderate cover of grasses and forbs, including sea oats (*Uniola paniculata*), bitter panicum

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(*Panicum amarum*), and beach dropseed (*Sporobolus virginicus*). High areas behind the dunes, which are important for other beach mice for some portion of their seasonal needs, are generally absent from Perdido Key.

**Seasonal Occurrence:** Less active when the moon is bright.

**Florida Distribution:** Perdido Key.

**Range-wide Distribution:** Perdido Key in western Florida and southeastern Alabama. Perdido Key beach mouse is a subspecies of oldfield mouse, which is common throughout Alabama, Georgia, southern South Carolina, and northern Florida.

**Conservation Status:** Known from Gulf Islands National Seashore and Perdido Key State Recreation Area. The population at Gulf State Park, Alabama, was eliminated by hurricanes Opal in 1995 and Danny 1997.

**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.