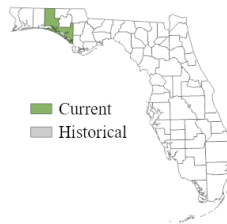


CHOCTAWHATCHEE BEACH MOUSE

Peromyscus polionotus allophrys



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

Description: A small mouse (adults generally 5 - 5.5 in. = 127 - 140 mm total length) with a short tail (approximately 2 in. = 52 mm). Dorsal fur is buff-brown or orange-brown. Flanks, feet, and underside are white. Dorsal and head patterns are variable but are generally as follows: color either extends down the thighs or is squared; mid-dorsal fur is generally darker, forming a broad band down the length of the back; dorsal color may extend to the tip of the nose or end just behind the eyes. Tail may have a dark dorsal stripe, but often is all white.

Similar Species: Other subspecies of beach mice are similar in appearance, but do not overlap in range. The Choctawhatchee beach mouse is generally darker buff or orange-brown than any other subspecies. 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 more than 2.5 in. (63 mm) long.

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 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 Moreno Point, Okaloosa County, to the entrance of St Andrews Bay. Now known only from Topsail Hill, Shell Island, and Grayton Beach.

Choctawhatchee Beach Mouse

Peromyscus polionotus allophrys

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

Conservation Status: Protected from development pressure at Topsail Hill Preserve State Park, Grayton Beach State Park, and Shell Island. Populations were reduced following hurricanes during 1995, but have rebounded.

Protection and Management: 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.

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



courtesy of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service