SANTA ROSA BEACH MOUSE

*Peromyscus polionotus leucocephalus*

**Order:** Rodentia  
**Family:** Cricetidae  
**FNAI Ranks:** G5T1/S1  
**U.S. Status:** None  
**FL Status:** None

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 gray, extending in a narrow band across top of head to between the eyes. White underside extends high up the flank. Cheeks and nose are white. Tail does not have dorsal coloration.

**Similar Species:** Other subspecies of beach mice are similar in appearance, but do not overlap in range. Santa Rosa beach mouse is the lightest of the beach mice. 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*).
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*paniculata*, bitter panicum (*Panicum amarum*), Gulf bluestem (*Schizachyrium 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:**  Santa Rosa Island.

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

**Conservation Status:**  Most secure of the beach mice, with the possible exception of southeastern beach mouse (*P. p. niveiventris*). Populations were reduced following hurricanes during 1995, but have rebounded.

**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.