SANTA ROSA BEACH MOUSE
Peromyscus polionotus leucocephalus

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

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 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: 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: 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