



## The Smoky Mouse – a threatened species

Although it has not been seen in the ACT since 1987, researchers consider it likely the shy native Smoky Mouse (*Pseudomys fumeus*) still occurs in and around the ACT.

The ACT Flora and Fauna Committee declared this elusive mouse as endangered in the ACT in 1998. It has also been listed in NSW, Victoria, nationally and internationally.

Once widespread through Victoria, NSW and the ACT, the Smoky Mouse is now found in only a few places, mainly in Victoria and around Eden in NSW. Despite several surveys, no live mice have been found in the ACT since two were last seen in Namadgi National Park in 1987. Hair evidence has been found of two others. It is likely the species still occurs within and adjacent to the ACT, in low numbers.

About the size of a small rat, the Smoky Mouse can survive in a wide range of vegetation from coastal heath to dry ridgeline forest, sub-alpine heath and fern gullies. It likes sheltering in ground cover such as dense low vegetation or grass tussocks, rocks, logs or leaf litter. It eats legume seeds, epacrid berries and bogong moths when it can, and truffle-like fungi when it needs to. Many die in spring when food can be scarce.

Females produce one to two litters of three to four young a year. Colonies of one male and several females live together in burrows during the spring/summer breeding season. The mice do not usually live longer than two years.



### Conservation threats

Subfossils show the mouse was once widespread, but populations had begun declining even before European settlement. Environmental conditions since Europeans settled in Australia have exacerbated this decline. The main causes of the population decline that continue today as threats include:

- vegetation clearing, particularly for timber, resulting in loss and fragmentation of habitat that reduces the species' ability to disperse and recolonise new areas
- predation by foxes and cats
- inappropriate fire regimes that changed the vegetation, affecting food sources and increasing susceptibility to predation
- climate change, which is predicted to lead to warmer temperatures, less rainfall, and more, and more severe, wildfires that affect habitats and food sources.

### Conservation actions

The ACT Government aims to protect the Smoky Mouse and conserve its habitat, particularly in the ACT's nature reserves. These actions are being driven by an action plan for the mouse.

Conservation actions include:

- surveying for mouse populations in the ACT and monitoring those populations to gain better information about the mice and their ecology
- identifying and protecting their habitat, including managing threats to the recovery of the species
- working with other states and research institutions to research and understand the Smoky Mouse.

### Current status

If the Smoky Mouse is still in the ACT, research indicates it would be in Namadgi National Park, which gives formal protection to the mouse's habitat.

The species is currently being surveyed to gain more information on where the mouse may still occur and to identify and monitor any populations.



Other conservation actions include:

- not constructing new vehicle access tracks, infrastructure or walking tracks in areas most likely to include Smoky Mouse habitat
- controlling feral animals in the vicinity of known Smoky Mouse habitat
- considering the Smoky Mouse habitat in the Fire Management Plan covering Namadgi National Park.

## More information

- Action Plan No. 23: The Smoky Mouse (first edition)
- Action Plan No. 23: The Smoky Mouse (second edition)
- Australian Government environment protection and biodiversity conservation: <http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc/protect/species-communities.html>
- Plans of management for relevant nature reserves in the ACT

## Contact

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## Acknowledgements

Photo courtesy of Gary Mayo.