

KEY LARGO COTTON MOUSE

Peromyscus gossypinus pop. 1

Order: Rodentia
Family: Cricetidae
FNAI Ranks: G5T1Q/S1
U.S. Status: Endangered
FL Status: Endangered



Description: A relatively large mouse (total adult length is about 7 in. = 179 mm; tail length is about 3 in. = 77 mm) with large ears (0.7 in. = 18 mm) and eyes. Fur on upper side is reddish-brown on the sides, grading into dark hazel on the back; underside is white. Furred tail is distinctly bicolored, brown above and white below. Feet are white.

Similar Species: House mouse (*Mus musculus*) (generally smaller, but may overlap in total length) is gray above with a slightly lighter gray underside; tail is hairless and nearly unicolor (gray-pink). Marsh rice rat (*Oryzomys palustris*) is generally larger (7.4 - 12 in. = 187 - 305 mm) and has a sparsely furred tail that is approximately the same length as the body.

Habitat: Rockland hammock (tropical forest) on Key Largo; will occupy early successional stages.

Seasonal Occurrence: Active year-round.

Florida Distribution: Found only on Key Largo; experimental population on Lignum Vitae Key may have been lost to unknown causes. The Key Largo cotton mouse is considered by some to be indistinct from the peninsular subspecies (*P. g. palmarius*).

Range-wide Distribution: Same as Florida distribution. Other subspecies occur from south Florida throughout much of the southeastern U.S. from southern Virginia and Kentucky to eastern Texas.

Conservation Status: Protected in Key Largo Hammock State Botanical Site.

Protection and Management: Allow succession of old orchards and abandoned lots to tropical hammock.

References: Barbour and Humphrey 1982, Brown 1997, Humphrey (ed.) 1992, Whitaker 1996.



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