

## ANASTASIA ISLAND BEACH MOUSE

*Peromyscus polionotus phasma*

**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 (approx. 2 in. = 52 mm). Dorsal fur is pale buff to gray-pink and extends to the forehead and temporal areas. White nose, a patch above each eye, and the base of ears are diagnostic. Flanks, feet, and underside are white. Tail may have a light dorsal stripe, but is usually all white.

**Similar Species:** Other subspecies of beach mice are similar in appearance, but do not overlap in range. 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. Florida mouse (*Podomys floridanus*) is also larger (7.3 - 8 in. = 179 - 203 mm) and similar in color to cotton mouse; hind feet generally have five large pads (plantar tubercles) versus six to seven (rarely five) small pads of beach mice and other *Peromyscus* species. 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*), and beach dropseed (*Sporobolus virginicus*). 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:** Anastasia Island and adjacent beaches to the north.

**Range-wide Distribution:** Same as Florida distribution. Anastasia Island beach mouse is a subspecies of oldfield mouse, which is common throughout Alabama,

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Georgia, southern South Carolina, and northern Florida.

**Conservation Status:** Two small populations are protected at either end of Anastasia Island at Anastasia Island State Recreation Area and Fort Matanzas National Monument. A new population has been established on Guana River State Park north of Anastasia Island.

**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 and Florida Department of Environmental Protection

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