

THREATENED SPECIES OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

LESSER STICK-NEST RAT

Leporillus apicalis

Conservation status

Australia: Extinct.

Northern Territory: Extinct.

Description

The lesser stick-nest rat was a moderately sized native rodent (body mass 60 g) that differed from its larger relative, the greater stick-nest rat, by the narrow brush of white hairs near the tip of its tail.



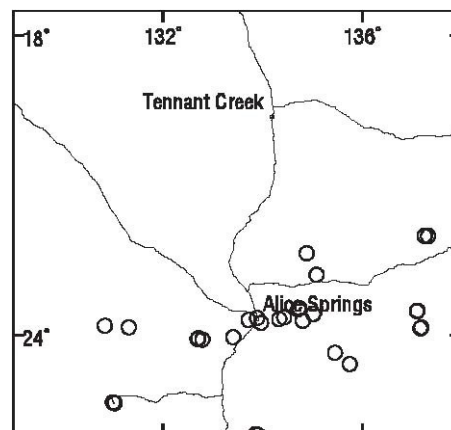
lesser stick-nest rat (J Gould © Museum Victoria)

Distribution

The last specimen of the lesser stick-nest rat was captured near Mt Crombie, south west of the present Amata settlement, South Australia in 1933. However in the nineteenth century it occupied a broad swath of desert and semi-desert land stretching from the Riverina in New South Wales through most of inland South Australia and into the Gibson Desert, reaching the West Australian coast in the Gascoyne region. Examination of middens of this species is providing significant new information on environmental and climatic change in central Australia over a 2500-year time frame.

Conservation reserves where reported:

None (however it formerly occurred in areas that are now included within Uluru Kata-Tjuta National Park, Arltunga Historical Reserve, Trepahina Gorge Nature Park, West MacDonnell National Park and Finke Gorge National Park: Parker 1973; Baynes and Johnson 1996).



Known locations of the lesser stick-nest rat
o = pre 1970

Ecology

The biology of the lesser stick-nest rat is poorly known. Its most notable feature was its construction of nests of sticks, sometimes in the open, but often in caves and rock overhangs.

Conservation assessment

The lesser stick-nest rat is presumed to have become extinct in the NT by the 1940s, following a broad-scale decline extending over at least the previous 30 years (Finlayson 1961; Burbidge *et al.* 1988; Cole and Woinarski 2000).

Threatening processes

The decline and extinction of the lesser stick-nest rat was probably due



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to a range of factors including predation by cats and foxes, and habitat alteration due to the impacts of exotic herbivores and to changed fire regimes.

Conservation objectives and management

The species is presumed extinct. No conservation management plan can offer further help.

Compiled by

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References

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