



Silky Mouse

Pseudomys apodemoides (Finlayson, 1932)

Other common names Silky-grey Mouse, Silky-grey Southern Mouse, Finlayson's Mouse

Conservation status

The Silky Mouse is listed as an **Endangered Species** on Schedule 1 of the New South Wales *Threatened Species Conservation Act, 1995* (TSC Act).

Description (summarised from Cockburn 1995)

Head and Body Length

65-80 (75)mm

Tail Length

90-110 (105)mm

Weight

16-22 (20)g

The dorsal fur of the Silky Mouse is silver-grey, flecked with light brown. The belly is white and the tail is white haired on pink skin with 10-15 grey-brown bands. The Silky Mouse has distinguishing bulging eyes and longer ears compared to the House Mouse.

Distribution

The Silky Mouse is distributed throughout the dry, mallee-heathlands of central-western Victoria and south eastern South Australia (Watts & Aslin 1981; Ayers *et al.* 1996).

In NSW, the species was recorded in 1956 in areas of mesic heathlands at Cryon, between Burren Junction and Walgett (Dickman *et al.* 1993). As no records exist between the southern populations and these northern localities Dickman *et al.* (1993) considered this species to be very rare and possibly extinct from its previously recorded range in NSW.

Recorded occurrences in conservation reserves

This species has not been recorded in any conservation reserves (NPWS 1999).

Habitat

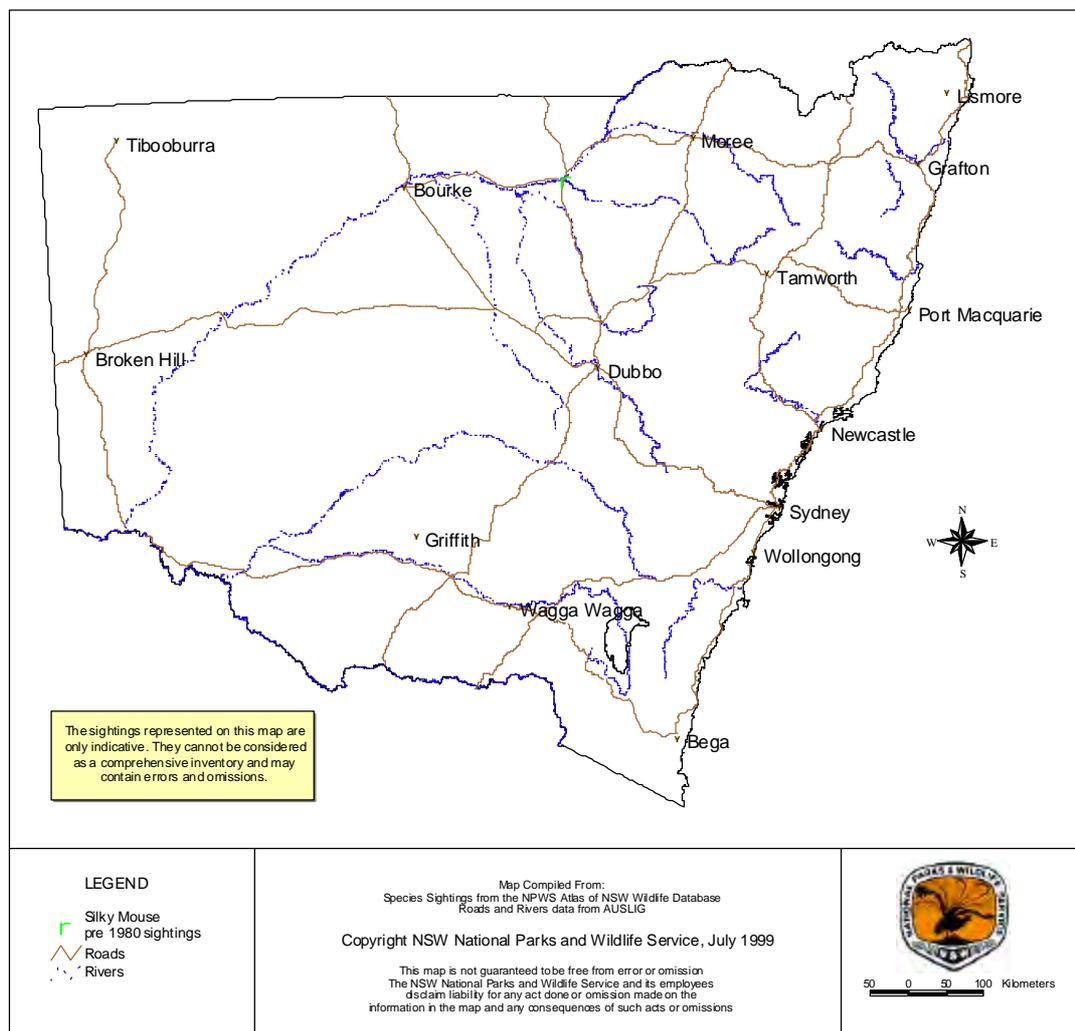
Like many native rodents, the Silky Mouse is found in low numbers in scattered colonies throughout suitable habitat. The species typically inhabits sandy heathlands comprising banksias, tea-trees or broom-bush, preferring areas with a well developed shrub understorey (Watts & Aslin 1981). The preferred dry mallee-heathlands usually contain patches of *Banksia ornata* with sufficient diversity of vegetation to produce seed throughout the year (Cockburn 1995).

The Silky Mouse is a nocturnal cryptic species which shelters in burrows by day. The burrows are large and complex and comprised of several vertical shafts (~2cm diameter), a long tunnel system and a large nesting chamber (Watts & Aslin 1981). Burrows are often placed at the base of a shrub, such as the Desert Banksia. The leaves and roots of the shrub interact with the soil to create local moist areas (Cockburn 1995).

Ecology

The Silky Mouse feeds primarily on seeds and fruit of casuarinas, tea-trees and sword rushes (Watts & Aslin 1981). During winter, the diet is supplemented with nectar and flowers from the Desert Banksia and occasionally, cockroaches (Cockburn 1995). Individuals appear to require a high floristic diversity within their habitat, providing a range of flowering, fruiting and seedling plants in all seasons (Menkhorst 1995).

The Silky Mouse can breed throughout the year when conditions are at their optimum, producing two to five young per litter. Breeding, however, may become seasonal as plant productivity and thus food availability declines (Cockburn 1995).



NPWS records of the Silky Mouse in NSW

Threats

- Loss of habitat through the clearing of native vegetation and associated activities (Ayers *et al.* 1996)
- Competition for food and destruction of habitat by introduced herbivores such as cattle, sheep and rabbits (Ayers *et al.* 1996)
- Predation by foxes and cats
- Changes to fire regimes affecting the availability and timing of flowering, fruiting and seeding in plants (Menkhorst 1995)

Management

- Further research into the present range of the species
- Protection and maintenance of known or potential habitat
- Introduced animal control programs, specifically targeting rabbits
- Alteration of prescribed burning and grazing regimes to ensure the enhancement and maintenance of floristic and structural diversity (Menkhorst 1995)

Recovery plans

A recovery plan has not been prepared for this species.

References

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