



## FACT SHEET

# WILKINTI OR DUSKY HOPPING MOUSE *Notomys fuscus* AND OOARRI OR FAWN HOPPING MOUSE *Notomys cervinus*

Text by Harald Ehmann and Michelle Watson.

Both the Dusky Hopping Mouse and Fawn Hopping Mouse are found in the northern parts of South Australia and adjoining states. Populations of both species can fluctuate greatly depending on seasonal and other factors.

Both species live in small groups in burrow complexes with a series of “pop hole” entrances leading to chambers and tunnels up to one metre below the surface.

### IDENTIFICATION

The Dusky and Fawn Hopping Mice are nocturnal, have long back legs, a tufted tail end and, when travelling at speed, move with a distinctive hopping gait trailing their long tail behind them.

Both species are white below and usually a reddish orange colour above but may be from light fawn to a russet orange. Both reach a head and body length of about 12 cm with a tail length of about 15 cm. Their similar shape, colour and size can lead to confusion between the two species.

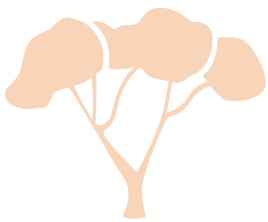
Both female and male Dusky Hopping Mice have a well-developed throat pouch with a prominent fleshy margin covered with stiff white hair. A small hairless pigmented patch

is present on the chest of all male Fawn Hopping Mice and some females, particularly during pregnancy and lactation.

Dusky and Fawn Hopping Mice can be confused with the more common Spinifex Hopping Mouse, which also has a small throat pouch in both sexes. However, this species is usually more grayish in colour, is smaller in size and generally inhabits spinifex covered sandflats and stabilised sandhills. It can however be found in other habitats, particularly after good rains.

### HABITAT AND DISTRIBUTION

Dusky Hopping Mice inhabit soft sandy habitats, preferring dunes with Sandhill Canegrass, Sandhill Wattle, Nitrebush, Sticky Hopbush and other ephemeral plants. The Fawn Hopping Mouse usually inhabits gibber plains with low chenopods and ephemeral plants, often venturing onto adjacent claypans. Both species were formerly widespread but are now thought to be restricted to areas east of Lake Eyre.



Fawn Hopping Mouse. Photograph by Harald Ehmann.

Dusky Hopping Mouse. Photograph by Peter Canty.



## CONTACT US

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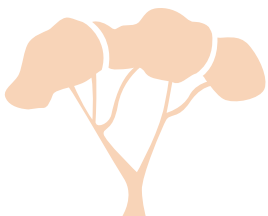


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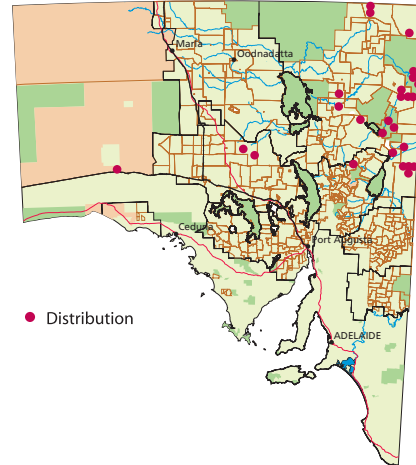
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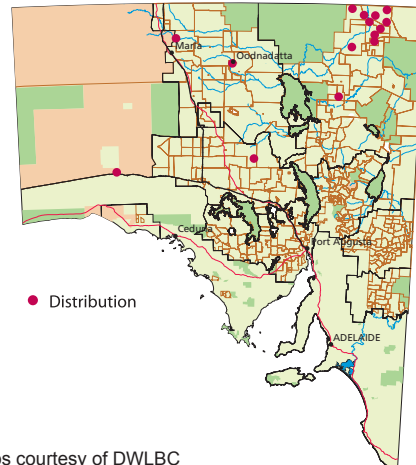
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## DUSKY HOPPING MOUSE DISTRIBUTION IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA



## FAWN HOPPING MOUSE DISTRIBUTION IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA



Maps courtesy of DWLBC

## POTENTIAL THREATS TO DUSKY AND FAWN HOPPING MICE

Following European arrival the distribution and abundance of the Dusky Hopping Mouse has been greatly reduced, probably as a result of competition with rabbits and house mice. Studies have shown that house mice populations initially respond more rapidly to good conditions than Dusky Hopping Mice. However, when house mice start to decline, the hopping mice numbers continue to increase relatively slowly for some time. It is suspected that the rapid increase in house mice numbers after rain has a dampening effect on the recovery of Dusky Hopping Mice.

The Fawn Hopping Mouse's distribution has not had such a marked reduction, possibly because it inhabits the more extensive and harder soils of gibber plains, where it is less likely to be so heavily impacted by competition from rabbits and hunting by foxes.

## CURRENT RESEARCH

Ongoing surveys, using track counts and trapping to indicate the presence of Hopping Mice are being undertaken across the region to clarify the current distribution of both species in relation to predators, competitors like House Mice, and in response to seasonal conditions.

## HOW CAN YOU HELP?

If you have seen any hopping mice within or beyond the locations shown on the distribution maps please let us know. Please note the location (a GPS or map reference would be most helpful) to assist the relocation of the site. A description of the habitat would also be helpful. We will follow up all possible sightings as part of this study. You can also assist by participating in ongoing monitoring of potential habitat using track surveys. Training and resources are available to assist with these surveys.

To report observations or for further information about Dusky or Fawn Hopping Mice or this study please contact the South Australian Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board 8648 5977.

## RESOURCES

Ehmann, H. (2006). South Australian Rangelands and Aboriginal Lands Wildlife Management Manual: a resource handbook. Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation, South Australia.

Moseby K. E., Brandle R. and Adams M. (1999). Distribution, habitat and conservation status of the rare dusky hopping-mouse, *Notomys fuscus* (Rodentia: Muridae). *Wildlife Research* 26 (4): 479-494.

Watts C. H. S. and Aslin H. J (1981). *Rodents of Australia*. Angus and Robertson, Sydney.