

Black Rat (*Rattus rattus*)



Taxonomy:

Family Muridae. The Eurasian black rat is a widespread commensal species that is not native to North America. The taxonomy of this species is complex, with many named subspecies. Specimens from North America are generally considered members of the subspecies *Rattus rattus alexandrinus*, also known as the roof rat.

Description:

Similar to the brown rat but smaller, and a tail longer than the combined head and body length.

Total length: 325-455 mm; Tail: 160-255 mm; Hind foot: 30-40 mm; Weight: 115-350 g.

Distribution:

Generally restricted to southern coastal areas, but occasionally found inland. There are only a few old records of this species from Salt Lake City.

Ecology and diet:

The black rat is a commensal species that is restricted to areas heavily modified by humans. They are generally restricted to buildings. They are major pests, destroying stored foods and other commodities and transmitting disease. They have generally been displaced by the larger and more aggressive brown rat.

Life History:

As with the brown rat, a prolific breeder. The species is more limited by cold temperature.

References:

Durrant 1952; Hall 1981.