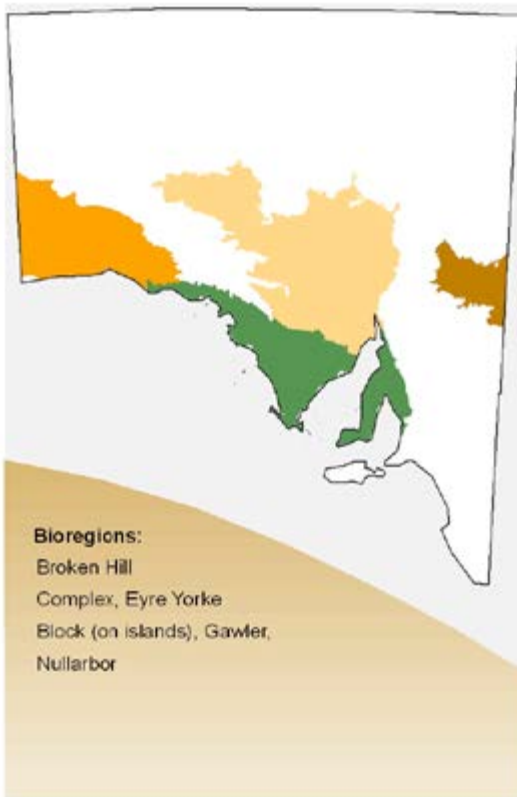


Greater Stick-nest Rat

Leporillus conditor



Map courtesy of Mapping Unit, Customer and Commercial Services.

Map is not intended to indicate spatial distribution of the species, only the bioregions in which the species is found.

Greater Stick-nest Rats are mainly nocturnal rodents about the size of small rabbits. They have blunt noses, large ears and sleek body fur which is grey-brown on their upper and pale grey on their underparts. They are approximately 30cm long including the tail. They are group orientated, gentle and passive creatures that rarely attempt to bite humans. The Indigenous names for this species include 'Wopilkara'.

Diet

Greater Stick-nest Rats are herbivores – their diet consists mainly of fresh plant material, fruits and seeds.

Breeding

Greater Stick-nest Rats breed mostly in autumn and winter and one to four young are born after six weeks gestation. Young become independent after one month of suckling.

Habitat

Formerly widespread in arid SA, their populations were drastically reduced in the late 1800's so that they eventually became extinct on the mainland by the 1930's and only remained on the Franklin Islands off the west coast of SA where there were no foxes or feral cats.

Greater Stick-nest Rats usually live in areas with limestone caves or outcrops of granite and dense low shrub cover. They build communal nests up to one metre high and three metres wide from plant material. Some old nests can still be found on the mainland. These are constructed with sticks, grasses and leaves and sometimes these are glued together with a mixture of faeces and urine that forms a resin-like material when it dries. Nests like these can only survive when made under shelter, as the resin is soluble in water. Nests are often built around a bush or in a hollow tree stump and provide protection from predators and extreme temperatures. An area of grass or other soft vegetation is made in the centre of the more complex nests, and tunnels lead to the outside. The construction is added to or modified by successive generations and larger nests may house communities of 10–20 rats.

Threats

Greater Stick-nest Rats are preyed upon by foxes and feral cats. Their habitat is destroyed by grazing animals such as rabbits, goats and stock. Competition with rabbits and stock for food and habitat areas is another problem these animals face. Native predators include barn owls, tiger snakes and eagles.



The resin these rats create to bind their nests together is so strong and durable when not exposed to water that the nests can last for thousands of years and are studied as fossils!

Conservation

Captive breeding programs in the 1980s have led to the establishment of new populations in fenced enclosures on the mainland and on other small islands where there are no introduced predators. These programs have been successful and led to the change in their listing from endangered to vulnerable.

You can help the Greater Stick-nest Rat by:

- being a responsible pet owner – desex your cats and dogs, keep them inside at night and don't take them into national parks
- learning more about these and other native rodents and telling others why they are important
- supporting the Arid Recovery Program at www.aridrecovery.org.au



Photo by Tony Robinson

Greater Stick-nest Rat

For further information

Public enquiries

For more local information on any of the species in this resource please contact your nearest Natural Resource Centre office on:

Eastwood: (08) 8273 9100

Gawler: (08) 8523 7700

Lobethal: (08) 8389 5900

Willunga: (08) 8550 3400

Education enquiries

For teachers wanting more information about environmental education resources and opportunities please contact the relevant NRM Education sub regional team on:

Northern Adelaide: (08) 8406 8289

Barossa: (08) 8563 8436

Central Adelaide: (08) 8234 7255

Southern Adelaide: (08) 8384 0176

Southern Fleurieu: (08) 8551 0524

