

PERDIDO KEY BEACH MOUSE

(*Peromyscus polionotus trissyllepsis*)

Not in
NRB's

entered
5-18-00
BW

Status

The Perdido Key beach mouse is listed as endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the State of Florida and is protected by the State of Alabama. Three areas of critical habitat are designated: Gulf State Park in Alabama and Perdido Key State Recreation Area and the Perdido Key Unit of Gulf Islands National Seashore in Florida.

Life History

This is one of several Florida subspecies of oldfield mouse restricted to coastal sand dune ecosystems. These small, light-colored mice occupy areas of medium-height primary dunes where secondary dunes are few and scrub dunes are absent. They burrow and excavate nests in the dunes. Their diet consists of various plant seeds and insects. They prefer sand-covered slopes with patches of sea oats, beach grass, other grasses, and herbs. Unlike the house mouse, beach mice are not known to live in buildings or frequent garbage sites.

Range

This subspecies once ranged all along Perdido Key from Perdido Bay in Alabama to Pensacola Bay in Florida. It now occurs only at Gulf State Park and Gulf Islands National Seashore.

Impacts

The former continuous range has been

reduced and fragmented by habitat loss and other factors. Coastal development, navigation channels, intense use by vehicles and pedestrians have damaged or destroyed dunes. Habitat loss and hurricanes and tropical storms are the major threats. In 1979, Hurricane Frederic destroyed the dunes and the beach mouse population at Gulf Island National Seashore. This population was later reestablished by



translocation of beach mice from Gulf State Park, the only existing natural wild population. Additional threats include predation from domestic cats and red fox.

Conservation

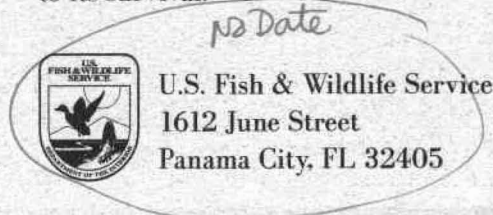
The continued existence and recovery of the Perdido Key beach mouse depends largely on the conservation and restoration of a healthy dune ecosystem on public lands. Plans are to establish a third population at

Perdido Key State Recreation Area.

A coastal zone development plan that includes dune preservation can benefit both landowner and wildlife. Snow fences and plantings of sea oats and other vegetation can help restore destroyed or damaged dunes by protecting beach mouse habitat and adjacent lands from storms and coastal erosion. Coastal construction sited landward of the dunes, controlled beach access points, and limited vehicle and pedestrian use will help restore damaged dunes.

Control of free-ranging and feral domestic cats in beach mouse habitat will help reduce losses due to predation. Good sanitation can prevent establishment of house mouse or other rodent populations that compete with beach mice for resources. Poisons, snap traps, glue boards, and similar techniques should not be used in beach mouse habitat.

Further studies are needed to better understand the Perdido Key beach mouse and its associations in the sand dune ecosystem. This information is vital for our future ability to best protect, conserve, and restore this unique animal and the habitat crucial to its survival.



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