

Species Factsheet: Yellow-necked Mouse (*Apodemus flavicollis*)



info@themmalsociety.org
www.mammal.org.uk
023 8023 7874

Quick Facts

Recognition: Fur is brown on the back and white on the underside. A complete band of yellow fur is evident across the neck area, a reasonably reliable distinction from the similar wood mouse. Large ears, protruding eyes and long tail.

Size: 95-120mm; Tail 77-118mm.

Weight: 14-45g

Lifespan: Few mice survive more than a year and the average life expectancy is 3-4 months.



Distribution and habitat

Found over a restricted range in southern Britain, from Dorset across to Kent and Suffolk, and along the Severn basin from Gloucestershire to Staffordshire. Its distribution is certainly associated with long established woodland sites, but within its range it can turn up in hedgerows and gardens.

General Ecology

Behaviour

These mice are largely nocturnal and are expert climbers. They make full use of the woodland floor and canopy when moving. Home range sizes are generally slightly larger than those of wood mice and home ranges overlap between and within the sexes. Generally their ranges are less than 0.5 hectares, shrinking in the non-breeding season and increasing for males in the spring.

Yellow-necked mice may specialise on eating tree seeds, possibly selecting those species of seed with the highest energy value. Food may be stored in their complicated underground burrow systems. Burrows are often constructed amongst root systems and contain nests furnished with plant material as bedding. The tunnel system can be extensive, covering a wide area and having several entrances. Nests may also be found above ground in tree holes, dormice boxes and in houses.

Diet and Feeding

Feeding primarily on tree seed, fruits, some green plants and invertebrates, their diet is very similar to their close relative the wood mouse.

Reproduction

Yellow-necked mice have successive pregnancies from February to October producing litters of 2-11 young. Males become reproductively active first in the spring and the onset of breeding falls 2-8 weeks earlier than for wood mice where the two species occur together. The pups are born naked and blind, and weigh about 2.8g. Their eyes open after 13-16 days and their distinctive yellow collar is discernible as a grey pre-cursor by then.

Conservation status

The unusual distribution of the yellow-necked mouse remains to be fully explained. The current status of this species is also less than clear, despite being common in some areas. In an endeavour to throw light on these matters, The Mammal Society launched a National Survey which included substantial live-trapping studies in autumn 1998. Yellow-necked mice have no legal protection. The National Survey confirmed the known range and status with no obvious decline and retreats (reasonably common across much of south England), suggesting no urgent conservation needs.