



Black Rat

Rattus rattus

Quick facts

Order Rodentia

Conservation status

GB *N/A - non-native*

RE CE E V NT LC DD

England *N/A*

Scotland *N/A*

Wales *N/A*

Global *Least concern*

GB trend *Unknown*

Size head to tail up to 26 cm

Weight 150 - 280 g

Life span 1 - 4 years

Typically grey-brown above and pale grey underneath, but can be completely black or grey and white underneath. Skin and bristles on tail black. Introduced to the UK in Roman times, the black rat has not been recorded in many cities for decades.

Habitat

In the UK, mainly restricted to dockland warehouses, food processing plants, supermarkets, restaurants, other large buildings - it does not live outdoors in cities. Lives in cavity walls, wall panelling, false ceilings. On islands, occupies rocks and cliffs.

Behaviour

Tends to nest in buildings. Population density depends on habitat type. Predated on by domestic cats, other carnivores such as foxes may take young rats. Brown rat will kill black rat where ranges overlap.

Diet & Feeding

Omnivorous but mainly vegetarian, preferring fruit and agricultural crops.

Reproduction

Females reach sexual maturity at 90 days. Average litter size is 7, but litter size correlates with mother's weight.

Conservation & Threats

Pest control has led to the widespread eradication of this non-native species and it has not been recorded for several decades. There has been no systematic survey of locations likely to retain populations so it cannot be declared extinct, although this is likely. It is plausible there are still small populations present, as it is highly under-recorded and there is a high likelihood of confusion with the brown rat.

Due to the scarcity of records and their scattered nature it is not possible to produce a distribution map. There were 80 positive hectads between 1960 - 1992, 13 between 2000 - 2009, and 1 between 2010 - 2016 - this population has since been eradicated.



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