

New Holland Mouse, thought to be extinct, rediscovered on Tasmania's Flinders Island



The last time a New Holland Mouse was seen in Tasmania was 17 years ago. (Supplied: Deakin University)

ABC News

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For the first time in 17 years, a species of mouse described as a "dumpling on legs" has been discovered on Tasmania's Flinders island.

It was feared the New Holland Mouse, known scientifically as *Pseudomys novaehollandiae*, was extinct, with the last evidence of its existence detected over 12 years ago at Waterhouse Conservation Area.

The last time a New Holland Mouse was trapped was near Wukalina/Mt William in the state's north-east in 2004.

Wildlife biologist with the threatened species and conservation branch of the Department of Primary Industry Parks Water and Environment (DPIPWE), Billie Lazenby said the mouse was a remarkable species.

"Our average house mouse is smelly and tends to invade our houses and raid our food cupboards and even is quite an issue living in the agricultural landscape," she said.

"The New Holland mouse is nothing like that; it has very specific habitat requirements, it tends to be found in pristine areas far removed from human habitation.

"If there was a cuteness factor for mice, the New Holland mouse would get 10 out of 10 stars. It's like a little dumpling on legs, it doesn't have much of a neck, it's really fluffy it has great big eyes and a long tail."

Surveys were conducted across sites where the mouse had previously been detected in Tasmania, and Ms Lazenby said they used a number of techniques to detect the animal.

"One is that we deploy what we call little hair tubes, so they're little pieces of PVC pipe that have some nice yummy, smelly bait in the end, and they have a bit of double-sided tape," Ms Lazenby said.

"So when the small mammals walk in there they leave some hair samples behind, and we can send those hair samples off to a lab, and they can be analysed and they can identify which species they belong to.

"The main technique we use, and the one in which we captured a New Holland mouse recently on Flinders Island, are remote cameras."

Images of the species were captured as it walked in front of the remote camera to sniff a stick dipped in peanut butter and sit on top of a bait canister that was filled with rolled oats, sunflower seeds, peanut butter, and lucerne chaff.

Following the discovery, remote cameras and hair tubes are now in place to monitor the population of the species in the vicinity of where the photographs were taken.

The New Holland Mouse faces several threats, including severe fire events, fire regimes, changes in rainfall patterns, fragmentation of habitat, and predation by and competition with introduced species like house mice and feral cats.

In a statement, Tasmanian Minister for the Environment Roger Jaensch said further survey work would help to inform a national recovery plan for the species.

"Last year, the Tasmanian Government received Commonwealth funding to undertake a conservation assessment of the New Holland Mouse," he said.

"The study on Flinders Island is part of a broader survey across northeastern Tasmania for the New Holland Mouse, which so far has covered eight regions and included setting up more than 259 cameras at different locations.

"We are committed to sharing information and working collaboratively with our interstate counterparts to ensure effective management and recovery of the species across its range."

Later this year DPIPW will host a national workshop to discuss potential causes for the decline, compare management practices across the species and identify key knowledge gaps to help guide future management.