

An Eccentric Rat.



For an introduction to this rat we are indebted to the observer by whose name it may fitly be honoured—Mr. E. J. Banfield, Honorary Keeper of Dunk Island, an island lying a little to the north of Cardwell, in lat. 15, long. 145. Some while ago that gentleman aroused our curiosity by informing us that a rat upon the island made little or no nest for its young, but carried them about clinging to its back or to the outer side of its thighs—a habit, to say the least, very unusual among rats and mice of the genus *Mus*. The female first sent to us by Mr. Banfield as an example of the species had no young with her, nor were her mammæ much in evidence: consequently, the advent of a specimen caught in the act of carrying young was awaited with interest. Fortune at length favoured our correspondent with an opportunity of placing the correctness of his observation beyond question. Of the second example procured by him, he writes: "The other day my dogs turned out a rat which made its escape from them by climbing a shrub, and I was able to secure it. You will see that it has a pair of infants attached to the teats . . . I chloroformed the mother, and noticed that the young lived some time after her." On arrival the young were found detached. The conical corrugated nipples are, compared with the size of the animal, very long: one, especially, 20mm. in length, calls to mind a marsupial teat.

Mr. Banfield finds this rat to be gentle in disposition, never attempting to bite; it is, therefore, fortunate for it that it is under the protection of one who conserves the native life of the island so strictly that he will not allow a gun to be fired on it.

UROMYS BANFIELDI, n.s.

Habit short and full bodied; size about half that of a Black Rat (*M. rattus*); limbs moderate in length, and rather strong; teats 4. inguinal. Fur short, soft, the hairs simple, nearly uniform in length, a few only somewhat elongated; whiskers moderate. Teeth much as in *U. macropus*, but in the lower jaw the second molar is the broadest; in the upper it is nearly as broad and almost as long as the foremost. In the skull the cranium is thin-walled and translucent, the parietal ridges very feeble, the auditory bullæ small; the anterior root of the zygoma near the upper part of its root very slender; the anterior edge of the root convex; the incisive foramina broad and (on one side) reaching to the socket of the first molar.

Colour : Above, russet brown, the hairs lead gray for the basal two-thirds of their length, thence to the tip rufous ; fore and hind paws on upper side pale grayish brown as far as the digits, which are white ; all below, white, the lips brownish white ; tail and a narrow ciliary edge black.

Dimensions :—

	mm.		mm.
Head and body ...	140	Fore limb to elbow	31 = .221 %
„ to root of ears	35 = .25 %*	Tibia ...	36 = .257 %
„ to eye ...	20 = .143 %	Hind foot ...	28 = .2 %
Tail ...	152 = 1.09 %	Fore „ ..	10 = .07 %
Ear ...	15 = .107 %	Skull ...	37 = .264 %
Fur of back ...	9	Skull--breadth of zygomas ...	11

* Percentages of the length of the head and body.



De Vis, Charles Walter. 1907. "An eccentric rat." *Annals of the Queensland Museum* 7, 8–9.

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