



On Glass by Wm. A. Woodhouse

# Common Mouse.

Drawn from Nature by J. W. Audubon

India Printed & Col'd by J. T. Bowen 27th





## MUS MUSCULUS.—LINN.

## COMMON MOUSE.

## P L A T E X C.—MALE, FEMALE, AND YOUNG.

M. Corpore fusco ; subtus ciner ascenti.

## CHARACTERS.

*Dusky gray above, cinereous beneath.*

## SYNONYMES.

MUS MUSCULUS. Linn., 12 Ed., p. 83.

MOUSE. Pennant, Arct. Zool. vol. 1, p. 131.

MUS MUSCULUS. Say, Long's Expedition, vol. 1, p. 262.

" " Harlan, p. 149.

" " Godman, vol. 2, p. 84.

## DESCRIPTION.

The Common Mouse is more generally and familiarly known than any other species, and therefore requires no very minute description. It is small in size ; head, elongated ; nose, sharp ; ears, large, erect, ovate, and nearly naked on both surfaces ; legs, slender ; nails, sharp, slightly hooked ; tail, round, nearly as long as the body, scaly, and slightly covered with short hair.

## COLOUR.

Eyes, black ; incisors, yellowish ; whiskers, mostly black ; fur on the back, plumbeous at the roots, slightly tipped with brownish, giving it a dusky grayish colour ; ears a shade lighter ; under surface, and beneath the tail, obscure ash-colour.

There are some varieties :—very rarely one is found black, others spotted white and black ; one variety is an albino, white with red eyes, breeds in confinement, and produces young with white colour, and the red eyes of the parents.



## DIMENSIONS.

							Inches.
Length of head and body	-	-	-	-	-	-	$3\frac{1}{2}$
“ Tail	-	-	-	-	-	-	$3\frac{1}{8}$
Height of ear	-	-	-	-	-	-	$4\frac{1}{10}$

## HABITS.

We have attempted to shew a portion of a shelf in a pantry, on which stands a china jar, with its indigo-blue peaked mountains, its fantastic trees and its (take them altogether) rather remarkable landscapes, reminding us more of the sweetmeats it contains than of aught in the way of nature; and we have also portrayed a plate, with a piece of hard old cheese in it, on which a Mouse is standing in the act of listening, while another in the plate, and two more on the shelf, likewise appear a little startled, and are expecting to be disturbed ere they can make their intended meal; the little rascals have reason to fear, for the careful housekeeper has heard them of late, squealing in their squabblings with each other, has found the marks of their teeth on the bread and butter, and is determined to get rid of them instantler, if possible; she is calling now to her faithful pussy cat, and inquiring for the trap.

But although the thievish Mouse is often frightened, and may be said to eat his dinner with “a cat” over his head, although he is assailed with pokers, broomsticks, &c., whenever he unluckily runs across the floor, and in fact is killed as often as his death can be compassed by the ingenuity of man, or the cunning and quickness of his ally the cat, the Mouse will not retire from the house, and even where the supply of food for him is small, or in rooms that have long been shut up, he may be found; and would he let our drawings and books alone, we should willingly allow him the crumbs from our table; but he will sometimes gnaw into shreds valuable papers, to make a bed behind some bureau or old chest. He in his turn frightens man at times, and should the hard-hearted hoarding wretch who has made gold his God, while with aged, trembling hands, locked in his inmost chamber, he counts his money-bags, but hear a little Mouse; what a feeling of terror shoots through his frame; despair seems for an instant to be written on his face, and he clutches convulsively the metal to which he is a slave; another moment, and he recovers, but he is still agitated, and hastily secures with locks and bolts the treasure which is to him more precious than the endearments of a wife, the love of children, the delights of friendship and society, the blessings and



prayers of the poor, or the common wants of humanity in his own person.

Many a young lady will scream at sight of a poor little Mouse, and many a brave young man might be startled in the stillness of the night by the noise made by this diminutive creature, especially if given to the reading of the "Mysteries of Udolpho" or the "Castle of Otranto," late in the hours of darkness, alone in a large old lumbering house.

The Common Mouse is a graceful, lively little animal—it is almost omnivorous, and is a great feeder, although able to live on but little food if the supply is scanty. This species has from four to ten young at a litter, and the female suckles her young with tender care. When first born, they are very small, almost naked, and of a pinkish colour. The Mouse has several litters every year. We kept a pair in confinement, which produced four times, having from four to nine in each litter. Dr. GODMAN quotes Aristotle, who says that "a pregnant female being shut up in a chest of grain; in a short time a hundred and twenty individuals were counted."

On examining our corn-crib in the spring, and cleaning it out; although it was constructed with a special view to keep off rats and vermin, being on posts, and the floor raised from the ground some three feet, with boards outside inclining downwards all round, we found and killed nearly fifty Mice. A basket in the crib, hanging by a rope from a cross-beam, in which we had put some choice corn for seed, had been entered by them, and every grain of corn in it devoured. We found in the basket nothing but husks, and the remains of a Mouse's nest. The animal must therefore have climbed up to the roof of the crib, and then descended the cord by which the basket of corn was suspended.

The activity, agility, and grace of the Mouse, have made it a favourite pet with the prisoner in his solitary cell, and it has been known to answer his call, and come out of its hiding places to play with the unfortunate captive, showing the greatest fondness for him, and eating out of his hand without fear.

Of late years, white Mice have been in request in London, where they are taught various tricks, and are exhibited by boys in the streets. It is stated that in order to increase the number of this variety, persons exclude them from the light, this they pretend causes a great many of them to be born albinos. We are however satisfied from personal experience that a pair of albinos, accidentally produced, would continue to propagate varieties of the same colour without the aid of darkness; as is the case in the albino variety of the English rabbit.

## GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION.

The Common Mouse is not a native of America, but exists in all countries where ships have landed cargo, and may be said to tread closely on the heels of commerce. It was brought to America in the vessels that conveyed to our shores the early emigrants.





Audubon, John James and Bachman, John. 1851. "Mus musculus, Common Mouse [Pl. XC, male, female and young]." *The quadrupeds of North America* 2, 277–280. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.322495>.

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