



British Columbia Conservation Foundation



Rats

Presented by Cora Skaien

Keeping Wildlife Wild and Communities Safe

www.wildsafebc.com

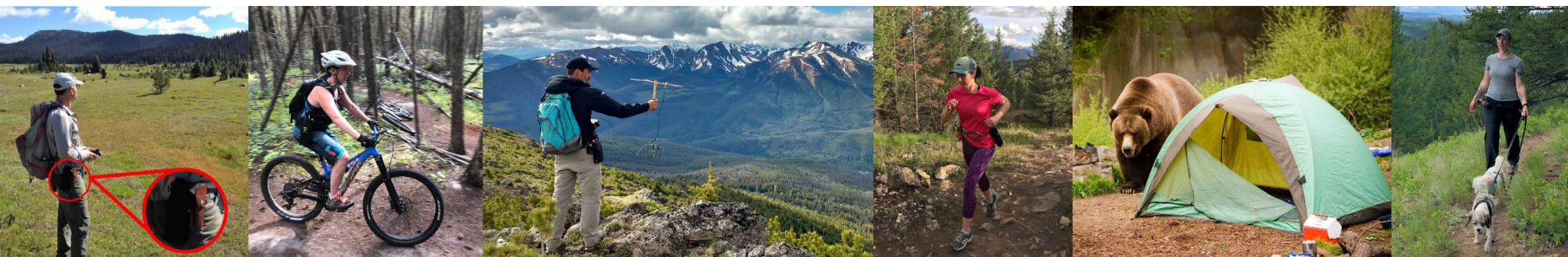
WildSafeBC



“WildSafeBC is the provincial leader in preventing conflict with wildlife through collaboration, education, and community solutions.”

Topics

- 🐾 Rat Species
- 🐾 Rats in BC
- 🐾 Impacts of Rats
- 🐾 Rat Behaviour
- 🐾 Population Explosions
- 🐾 Rat Safety
- 🐾 Managing Attractants
- 🐾 Deterrents
- 🐾 Trapping Rats



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Rat and Mouse: Comparison

Norway Rat

Size: 30-45 cm (12-18 inches)
from nose to end of tail.

DROPPINGS:

Long, Rounded Ends
Avg. Length: 15-20 mm (3/4 inch)



Relatively Small Eyes

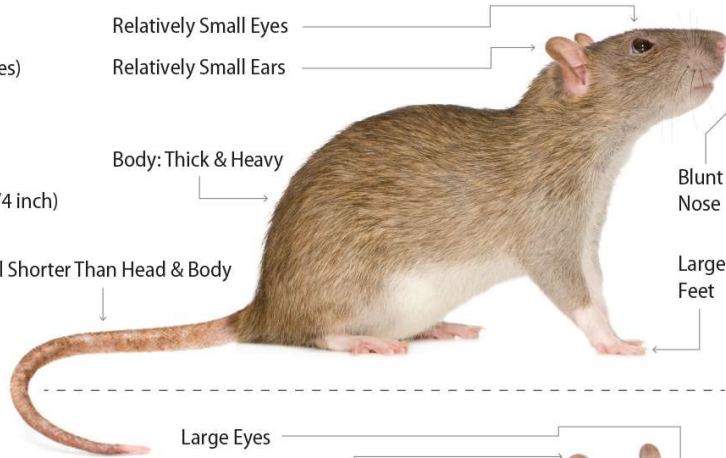
Relatively Small Ears

Body: Thick & Heavy

Tail Shorter Than Head & Body

Blunt
Nose

Large
Feet



Roof Rat

Size: 33-43 cm (13-17 inches)
from nose to end of tail.

DROPPINGS:

Long, Pointed Ends
Avg. Length: 10-15 mm (1/2 inch)



Large Eyes

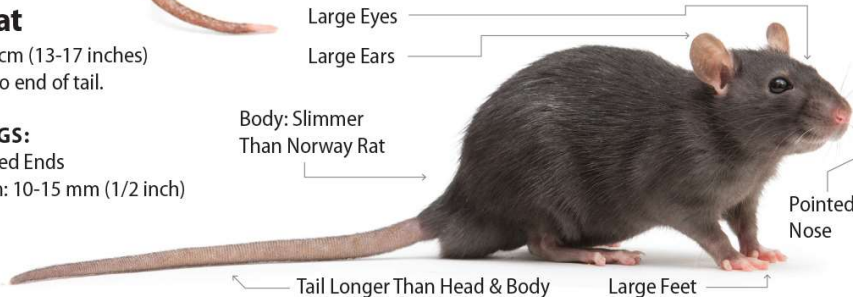
Large Ears

Body: Slimmer
Than Norway Rat

Tail Longer Than Head & Body

Pointed
Nose

Large Feet



House Mouse

Size: 15-17 cm (6-7 inches)
from nose to end of tail.

DROPPINGS:

Small with Pointed Ends
Avg. Length: 4-7 mm (1/4 inch)



Relatively Large Eyes

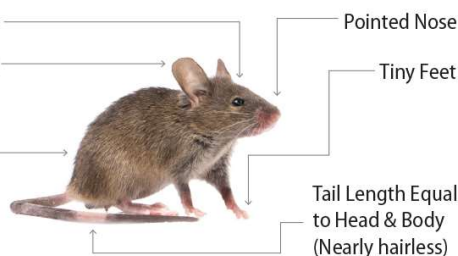
Relatively Large Ears

Body: Small,
Rounder in Shape

Pointed Nose

Tiny Feet

Tail Length Equal
to Head & Body
(Nearly hairless)



Rat Species

Both have a long tail that is mostly devoid of hair.

Norway rats tend to be more stout, greyish-brown in colour, and can weigh up to 0.5 kg with a tail shorter than the length of its body (including the head).

The roof rat tends to have a darker coat with a pale underside. It tends to be slimmer than the Norway rat with a tail longer than its body. Its ears are also proportionately larger

Rats are omnivores (meaning they eat both meat and plant materials), but focus primarily on vegetation, including grains, fruits and vegetables.

Rats in BC

- ❏ Rats are not native to BC and were introduced via boat traffic in the mid-1800s.
- ❏ Once limited to coastal BC communities, Norway and Black Rats are well established in B.C.'s Lower Mainland and coastal islands.
- ❏ More recently they have become established in B.C.'s interior, including throughout the Okanagan Valley (Vernon, Kelowna, Penticton, Osoyoos), Kamloops, the Shuswap area, Revelstoke, and the Kootenay region (Nelson, Castlegar, New Denver, Creston).
- ❏ Rats may be living in more northerly locations but have yet to be reported.



Impacts of Rats

- Can cause significant damage to buildings, electrical wiring, and crops
- Are a threat to native wildlife and have decimated populations of ground-nesting birds
- Prey on small livestock such as chickens, especially their eggs and chicks, and can contaminate feed with their urine and feces
- Known to carry and spread a variety of diseases that can impact human health.



Rat Behaviour

- Roof rats tend to seek shelter at higher levels such as attics while Norway rats tend to live closer to ground level.
- Rats tend to be fearful and prefer to move under cover.
- They are more active at night (nocturnal).
- They will have a nest or den from which they will leave to go on nightly foraging expeditions.
- Normally, rats will forage within 100 m of their den but can travel longer distances if food is scarce.
- Rats are very adaptable when it comes to choosing a food supply and learn from their neighbour's specific foraging techniques.
- Rats can swim and some will even dive for food like mussels and small fish.





Population Explosions

- Rat populations, once established, can increase exponentially in a very short period of time.
- Prodigious breeders; a pair could theoretically produce over 900 offspring within a single year.
- Tend to thrive only in urban areas or areas where food is abundant and winters are mild.

Rat Safety

- Never handle directly, very sharp teeth can lead to a bite or scratch that needs medical attention.
- Rats (and mice) can carry a wide variety of diseases that can be transmitted to humans either through direct contact (bites or scratches) or via indirect means such as contamination by urine or feces.
- Always address rodent infestations in your home and use precautions if you find droppings in sheds and outbuildings.
- Never handle dead wildlife with bare hands.





It is in a home owner's best interest to keep a rat population from establishing itself in the first place; prevention is easier than eradication. Controlling food sources and limiting denning areas are key to keeping rats in check - trapping is, at best, a stop-gap measure.

Attractants and Deterrents

- Rats require food, water and shelter. Controlling food and water sources, limiting denning areas and using exclusion techniques are key to keeping rats in check.
- Trapping rats may be required once access to habitat needs have been addressed.
- Using poisons to kill rats may also result in their predators becoming ill or dying



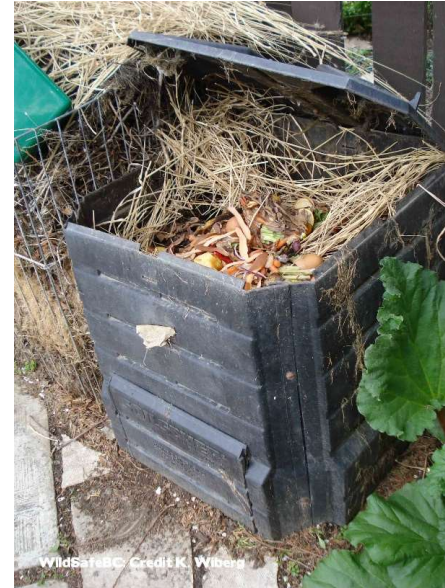
Managing Attractants

- Keep all garbage securely stored until the day of collection.
- Feed pets indoors, or if fed outdoors, bring in any feed that is not immediately eaten by your pets. Rats will quickly target any type of pet food left out.
- Take bird feeders down at night and feed only during winter months. Bird feeders attract a wide variety of wildlife and rats can climb along wires, ropes or steel posts. Be sure to clean up ALL spilled seed under the bird feeder.



Managing Attractants Cont'd

- Ideally you will use a rodent or bear-resistant composter, however lacking that, manage your compost properly and turn regularly and right to the bottom to ensure that rats cannot nest underneath the compost. Line the bottom of your compost with wire mesh to exclude rats.
- Clean up all fallen fruits and nuts from trees.
- Store dry food and animal feed in rodent-proof containers such as glass or metal.
- Repair any leaky plumbing or garden hoses.



Deterrents: Remove Cover and Shelter

- Block all openings that are greater than 6 mm to exclude mice and rats with durable materials.
- Use 6 mm (1/4") wire mesh for vents where air flow is required.
- Repair cracks in foundations or footings.
- Remove unnecessary wood piles, heavy brush, unused sheds or equipment.
- Keep the perimeter of your building clear of stored lumber or plantings.
- Store lumber and firewood on stands 30 to 45 cm off the ground.
- Prune overhead branches that may provide access to your balcony, roof and/or attic.
- Build sheds on concrete foundations.
- Do not store old cars or furniture outside.



Trapping Rats

- Trapping rats may be required once access to food, water and shelter has been addressed.
- Contact a local, reputable pest control agent if you need assistance with removing rats.
- If you plan to remove rats yourself, avoid using methods that result in unnecessary suffering or that might impact native species or pets.
- If using snap traps, ensure that they are strong enough to kill quickly and that they are inaccessible by pets, wildlife and children.
- Remember to never handle dead animals with bare hands.
- Refer to guidelines and best practices provided by the [Province of British Columbia](#) for more suggestions.

Thank you



Rats

One pair of rats can
produce over 900
offspring in 1 year



Rat populations are expanding in BC.

Reduce access to food, water and shelter to keep numbers in check.



Manage Attractants:

- Secure garbage.
- Feed pets inside or bring in unconsumed food promptly after feeding.
- Keep birdfeeders and bird seed inaccessible to rats and other non-target species
- Store dry food and animal feed in rodent-proof containers made of glass or metal
- Remove sources of water such as leaky plumbing or garden hoses.
- Manage your compost well and rake to the bottom.



Remove Cover and Shelter:

- Keep a tidy yard and store firewood or lumber on stands 30-45 cm above the ground.
- Build sheds on concrete foundations.
- Block or repair any openings to your home > 6mm with durable materials.



Remove Rats Responsibly and Humanely:

- Avoid using poisoned bait.
- Traps should be kept away from pets, children and other wildlife.
- Seek a reputable pest control company if you need help.

More tips and solutions are available at wildsafebc.com

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