



Cricetomy spp

Common name: **Giant Rat**Latin name: **Cricetomy spp**Local name: **الجقر**

INTRODUCTION

Very large 'rat-like' rodents, with long whip-like tails that are partially white. The upper parts are grey to grey-brown and the underparts are lighter but not white. Hair around the eye usually forms a dark ring and ears are large, thin, and mobile.

Giant rats are hunted in the wild and eaten as local game.

LIVELIHOODS AND CULTURE

Human interaction

The African Giant Pouched Rat (*Cricetomys gambianus*) has been trained to smell tuberculosis and land mines in certain areas of Africa.

Cultural value

The species is eaten throughout its range. It is eaten as game in different african cultures.

Cultural expression

The local name of this animal is given to some people in the past.

THREATS

Generally common and often commensal with humans.

ECOLOGY

Type:

Wild

Role in Ecosystem:

These animals assist with maintaining a healthy ecosystem through the soil structure modification, aeration, and hydration. Also regarded as pests and carry zoonotic pathogens.

HABITAT

Forest and woodland on plains and mountain slopes, on rocky outcrops as well as suburban and urban gardens, and in some cities has become a 'sewer rat'.



Food

Omnivore

Feed on a great variety of plant parts including fruits and seeds, and also takes insects, snails, and crabs.



Movement and Communication

Scent-marks home range but level of territoriality not known. Mainly terrestrial but can climb well.



Social Habits

Social

Mainly nocturnal, but may be active during the day if not disturbed. Excavates own burrows but also uses hollow trees and on occasion piles of plant debris. Occupied burrows usually closed from inside and each may have 2-6 entrances. Large cheek pouches (sometimes called Giant Pouched Rats) used to ferry food back to burrow. Home ranges 1-4 ha, but occasionally to 10 ha.



Reproduction

Viviparous

Drops 2-4 (rarely 1-5) young, weighing 20-30g, after a gestation period of 28-36 days. Births seasonal and aseasonal in different parts of range. Pups leave burrow only after about 40 days.



Attributes



length 60-90 cm

tail length 36-46cm

weight 1-3 kg

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