

TRAITS

Roof Rat

Other Names:

Alexandrian rat,
black rat, fruit
rat and ship rat.

Body. Body is slender, 6½ to 8 inches (17 to 20 cm) long. Average weight is 6 to 12 ounces (170 to 340 g).

Teeth. The gnaw pattern of rats is 1/8 inch. Rats are able to gnaw through wood, lead, aluminum, copper, cinder block and uncured concrete.

Whiskers. Whiskers on the face and guard hairs on the sides and back help an animal with poor eyesight stay safely against walls, under objects, and in burrows. Whiskers are also used to detect motion and test surfaces, e.g., glue traps, before stepping on them.

Food Preferences and Consumption.

Omnivores. Seeds, fruits, vegetables, eggs and grain. Rats visit fewer food sites than mice, but eat more at each site. Consumes 1/2 to 1 ounce of food daily. Drinks up to 1 ounce of water daily.

Geographic Range

Roof rats are best suited to warm climates but are often associated with marine ports. In the United States, they are found along the Pacific Coast, the lower half of the Atlantic Coast, throughout the gulf states, along major river systems (i.e. Mississippi River) and in Hawaii. In Canada, they are found along the Pacific Coast, the southern Atlantic Coast, and occasionally in extreme southern Ontario.

Habits. Able to swing, jump and climb, roof rats usually enter and nest in upper portions of buildings. May nest outside in trees (especially palm), ivy and similar vegetation. Burrow very little. Nocturnal. Most activity and feeding takes place between a half hour after sunset and a half hour before sunrise. Strong social hierarchy.

Ears. Ears are large and cover the eyes if bent forward.

Eyes. Eyes are large and prominent. Because rats are color blind and have poor eyesight, they primarily see light, shadow and movement.



Tail. Hairless and longer than the head and body – 7½ to 10 inches (19 to 25 cm) long. Uniform color from top to underside.

Nose. Nose and muzzle are pointed. Roof rats have an acute sense of smell.

Color. Varies from black to brownish-gray. The underside varies from gray to white.

Droppings. Droppings have pointed ends and are about 1/2 inch (1 cm) or less in length. Fresh droppings are soft and dark in color. A roof rat averages 30 to 180 droppings per day.



COMPARISON

