

Damaraland Mole Rat

Cryptomys damarensis



Physical Characteristics

- The breeding male and female within a colony are the largest individuals.
- The body is slender with short legs.
- The ears lack external pinnae. The pelage is thick, with sensitive guard hairs, sometimes referred to as vibrissae.
- Large, protuberant incisors are used for burrowing. The lips close behind the incisors to prevent dirt from entering the mouth.

Habitat and Range

- Habitat: Semi-arid regions, including woodlands, savannah, and secondary forest habitats.
- Range: Southwestern and Central Africa, primarily in Botswana and West Zambia.

Average Size

- Length: 3.94 to 11.81 in (100 to 300 mm)
- Weight: 86 to 202 g (3.03-7.12oz)

Average Lifespan

- In the Wild: Unknown
- In Zoos: 12 years

Behaviors

- Damaraland mole rats have an evolved caste system. This system is like that seen in bees and ants, where a single breeding queen is supported by many workers.
- There are individuals designated for the work of tunnel digging, caring for successive litters, and the foraging and storing of food.
- Damaraland mole-rats communicate and often act aggressively by means of squeaks, grunts, and growls when confronting members of another colony.

Diet

- In the Wild: Primarily herbivorous, eating mainly roots, bulbs, tubers, and aloe leaves. They also consume invertebrates, such as earthworms, cockchafer larvae, and white ants.
- In the Zoo: vegetables and insects.

Reproduction

- Damaraland mole-rats have evolved a cooperative breeding system, where only one mating pair are actively breeding.



- Females can reach reproductive maturity at about 1.5 years of age. However, since reproduction is suppressed in all but the breeding pair, it is difficult to estimate how early reproductive maturity might be reached.
- A pregnant female spends most of her time within a chamber designated as the nesting area. The mother provides young with milk for about 82 days.

Conservation

- Status: Least Concern
- Predators: Unknown, but snakes are guessed to be their primary predator.

Classification:

- Kingdom: Animalia
- Phylum: Chordata
- Subphylum: Vertebrata
- Class: Mammalia
- Order: Rodentia
- Family: Bathyergidae
- Genus: *Cryptomys*
- Species: *C. damarensis*

Interesting Facts

- It is believed that these animals lack the ability to see, although the surfaces of their eyes are used to detect air currents.