

***Myocastor coypus* (mammal)**[Ecology](#)[Distribution](#)[Habitat Matches](#)[References
and Links](#)[Contacts](#)**Taxonomic Name:** *Myocastor coypus* (Kerr, 1792)**Synonyms:****Common Names:** coipù, coypu, nutria, ragondin**Ecological Category:** mammal

The coypu is a large semi-aquatic rodent which originated from South America. However, due to escapes from fur farms there are now large feral populations in North America, Europe and Asia. Their burrows penetrate and damage river banks, dikes and irrigation facilities. Feeding on wetland plants could devastate large areas of the reed swamp.

Description

Large rodent, superficially rat-like, pelage brown and yellow-brown, cylindrical tail. Webbed hindfeet, footprint up to 15 cm long, imprint of web often visible. Feaces cylindrical, up to 70 mm long, with fine longitudinal striations.

General Impacts

Their burrows undermine the banks of rivers and dykes. Eating the young shoots of reeds and their rhizomes, coypus could completely clear entire beds, converting them into open water areas. It threatens the habitat and survival of rare marshbirds, such as bitterns and marsh harriers.

Notes

It prefers habitats near the water, animals are rarely observed over 100 m away from river. Severe winter could reduce reproductive success and adult survival.

Geographical Range

Native to South America. It has been introduced in many countries of North America, Europe, Asia, and Africa. It invades rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, especially areas of reed swamp and other marshland communities.

Invasion pathways to new locations

Other: Fur farms, introduced for fur exploitation.

Local dispersal methods

Escape from confinement

Self-propelled (local)

Management Information

Management of coypus includes shooting and trapping. Eradication is the management option to be favored with small and medium populations. The eradication campaign in England was achieved using cage traps and employing 24 trappers for 8 years, with a cost £ 2.5 million (Gosling, 1989).

Nutrition or Nutrient Requirements

Herbivorous, it eats wetland plants and crops. Selective feeding caused massive reduction in reed swamp. Occasional feeding on freshwater mussels are reported. It practices coprophagy.

Reproductive Mode

Placental. Sexual. Significant relationship between winter severity and female reproduction in the following spring. Prenatal embryo losses are high until 13-14 weeks of gestation.

Reproductive Output

Mean Litter size (5-6)2-9; prenatal embryo losses are common during cold winter and in females in poor health condition.

Lifecycle Stages

It breeds throughout the year; post-partum oestrus. Sexual maturity 3-10 months. Gestation 127-138 days. Lactation 8 weeks. Potential longevity 6 years.

This species has been nominated as among 100 of the "World's Worst" invaders

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Last Modified: 24/05/2002 15:43:20