CRITICALLY ENDANGERED
in the Far South East

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When you read or talk about the threat to Koala's with the logging in Bermagui and Murrah, and we are all horrified by that, but spare a thought for this little fellow too: The Smoky Mouse. He is **Critically Endangered** and the only known population in NSW is in a small 10 x 6 kilometre area within Nullica State Forest and the adjoining South East National Park.

The Smoky Mouse (Pseudomys fumeus) is similar in size to a small rat, with a head and body length averaging about about 90 mm and a tail averaging 140 mm. The average adult weight is 52 grams (ranging between 38 - 68 grams). The fur is fine, soft, pale grey to bluish-grey above, with a grey to white belly and a ring of dark hairs around the eye. The tail is long, narrow and sparsely furred, mostly pale to pinkish, with a narrow, dark stripe along the upper surface.

The biggest threat to this species is loss of the understory healthy shrubs it needs for food and shelter. When the Smoky Mouse was first trapped in Nullica State Forest in 1994 a large part of its area had not been logged. Also, a significant part of the adjoining National Park had previously been logged. Logging exclusion zones were implemented and the Smoky Mouse in this area has been continually monitored. However, these exclusion zones are only small, and since 1994 Forestry has been given licence to log nearly all the surrounding landscape. Furthermore, in 2009 Forests New South Wales burned approximately 70 hectares of the protected area. Forest New South Wales was consequently prosecuted and found guilty of endangering a critically threatened species. They were fined earlier this year in the Land and Environment Court.

What this all means to the Smoky Mouse, who has such a tenuous hold in NSW, is that his environment has to be very much under threat. It is not only from the logging and the burning and the consequent fragmentation and changes to his surrounding habitat but the threat of the introduction of Cinnamon fungus. This causes dieback of the healthy species and could result in a total loss of the understory shrubs. The Cinnamon fungus is spread through run off and mud on vehicle tyres and is known in the area.

I would like to thank Dr. Linda Broome, Senior Threatened Species Officer, Office of Environment and Heritage for her help and for permission to use her photo. She continues to monitor the Smoky Mouse.

Thanks also to Judy Dickmann, Member of the NSW Volunteer Organisation - WIRES (Wildlife Information, Rescue and Education Service)