

The Dune Molerat

They are pretty common in the sandy areas of Wilderness, from the Dune Molerat trail near Rondevlei to the Touw River mouth, but one usually only comes across their burrows.

Species Profile

Common name: Cape Dune Molerat **Scientific name:** *Bathyergus suillus*

Identification:

The Cape Dune Molerat is said to be the largest subterranean mammal in Africa. It has a cylindrical body which is covered in short thick fur and has short limbs and a short tail. The tail consists of a stiff fringe of hair which helps with controlling the soil while digging. The Cape Dune Molerat is well adapted to digging with its small eyes and with no external ear pinnae. It has a flat bear nose which is very tough and also consists of valvular nostrils. The most characteristic feature of the Cape Dune Mole Rat is its white protruding incisors. Behind its incisors the lips close to prevent it from swallowing sand while digging or when feeding. These mole rats also have very strong claws for digging.



Size:

The Cape Dune Molerat can grow to be large with a length of 250mm to 350mm and a weight ranging from 1 – 2.5kg.

Distribution and habitat: found all along the soft coastal sands of the Western Cape, especially in the coastal Strandveld .

General behaviour:

Dune mole rats are usually very solitary, aggressive and also territorial. Each mole rat has its own burrow which it maintains and is spaced apart from its neighbours. It is very rare to see these animals above ground but they are often forced to go above ground when the water table rises after heavy rain.

Food:

These mole rats are vegetarians and their diet consists mostly of bulbs, tubers, leaves as well as the stems of plants.

Predators: These include snakes, jackals, caracal and also eagles.

Life span: Anything from 12-15 years - quite a long life span for its size.

Reproduction:

Not much is known about this aspect of the molerat biology. It is known that molerats give birth during the summer months and usually to a litter size of 3-4 new-borns.