

# Aussie rodent becomes first 'climate change extinction'

February 19 2019

---



The rat-like Bramble Cay melomys lived on a tiny island at the top of the Great Barrier Reef and had not been seen in a decade

Australia officially declared a Great Barrier Reef rodent extinct on Tuesday, making it the first mammal believed to have been killed off by human-induced climate change.

The rat-like Bramble Cay melomys—whose only known habitat was a small sandy island in far northern Australia—has not been spotted in a decade.

Researchers from Queensland determined a key factor in its disappearance was "almost certainly" repeated ocean inundation of the cay—a low-lying island on a coral reef—over the last decade, which had resulted in dramatic habitat loss.

Australia's environment ministry on Tuesday said it had officially transferred the animal to the "extinct" list.

The declaration was expected. The researchers completed a wide-ranging survey in 2014 in a bid to track down the species, but found no trace.

Available data on [sea-level rise](#) and weather events in the Torres Strait region "point to human-induced [climate change](#) being the root cause of the loss of the Bramble Cay melomys", a study released in 2016 said.

The *Melomys rubicola*, considered the Great Barrier Reef's only endemic mammal species, was first discovered on the cay in 1845 by Europeans who shot the "large rats" for sport.

© 2019 AFP

Citation: Aussie rodent becomes first 'climate change extinction' (2019, February 19) retrieved 20 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2019-02-aussie-rodent-climate-extinction.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.