

Nature Notes

The Shrew



Although looking like a very small, long-nosed mouse, the shrew is not in the rodent family. Rather, it is an insectivore that lives on a variety of insects such as beetles, ants, moths, butterflies, slugs and earthworms.

BC is home to 16 species of shrews but the most likely species to



be found in the Kimberley Nature Park (KNP) is the Common shrew (*Sorex cinereus*). Adaptable to many habitats, the Common Shrew can be expected to call any part of the KNP home but is most likely to be found in the wetter parts of the Park.

Mating usually takes place in the spring with one or two litters of

Shrew on hand Photo by David Nagorsen 4-5 young being produced each year. Less than half the young will survive more than 5 months, few will survive longer than a second summer.

Living life in the fast lane, the shrew has a heart rate of over 800 beats/minute and therefore needs almost constant inputs of food, typically eating 80-90% of their bodyweight each day.

Shrews have been found to be active in short, 2 minute periods through the day with the most active period being after dark. These tiny creatures do not hibernate in winter but are capable of entering torpor to reduce energy needs. Some species



are able to reduce their body weight by shrinking the size of bones, skull and internal organs by 30-50% in order to get through winter.

Shrew on moss Photo by Andy Sands

Keep a sharp eye out for this seldom seen inhabitant of the KNP!

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