

Pogonomys championi n.sp., a new murid (Rodentia) from montane western Papua New Guinea

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ABSTRACT. *Pogonomys championi* n.sp. is a medium-sized montane *Pogonomys* with grey-based ventral fur. It shares similarities with both *Pogonomys macrourus* and *Pogonomys sylvestris*, but also has some unique features. Thus far *P. championi* n.sp. is known only from the Telefomin and Tifalmin Valleys, Papua New Guinea, at altitudes of between 1,400 and 2,300 m. At these localities the species is common, and in the Telefomin area at the lower end of its altitudinal range, it is probably sympatric with *P. macrourus*.

Pogonomys championi n.sp. nests communally underground, with up to seven individuals sharing a nest. They ascend into trees at night to feed.

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Dennis & Menzies (1979) clarified a long-standing confusion in murid taxonomy when they demonstrated, on the basis of morphometrics and chromosomes, that *Chiruromys* and *Pogonomys* are two distinct and not closely-related genera. In their concept of *Pogonomys* within New Guinea, three species were recognised: *P. macrourus* (Milne-Edwards, 1877), a medium-sized species from low-mid altitudes which has pure white ventral fur; *P. loriae* (Thomas, 1897), the largest species, also from low-mid altitudes and which almost always has pure white ventral fur; and *P. sylvestris* Thomas, 1920, the smallest, which is found at high altitudes and has grey-based ventral fur.

The aim of this study is to modify Dennis and Menzies' scheme by the recognition of a fourth species. This species is known only from mid-high altitudes in the western part of Papua New Guinea. When I first obtained specimens during 1984 I assumed they were *P. sylvestris*, but further study, and comparison with material held in the Australian Museum and the American Museum of Natural History, indicate that they represent an undescribed taxon.

Colours where capitalised follow Ridgway (1886). AM M = Australian Museum mammal specimen. AMNH = American Museum of Natural History

mammal specimen. MZB = Bogor Museum (Indonesia) mammal specimens. All measurements are in millimetres, and weights in grams. Dental nomenclature follows Musser (1981).

Systematics

Pogonomys Milne-Edwards, 1877

Pogonomys championi n.sp.

Figs 1, 2, 5, Tables 1, 2

Type material. HOLOTYPE AM M13502, male puppet skin and skull with dentaries. Collected by S. Van Dyck on 10 Feb 1984 at Ofektaman, Telefomin Valley, West Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea (5°04'S 141°34'E; P.N.G. Topographic survey sheet No. 7282 Telefomin, 1:100,000 series). Alt. 1,400 m. PARATYPES (n = 1) Sol River Valley, 2,300 m, (5°05'S 141°35'E), coll. T. Flannery, 14 Feb 1984: AM M13646, adult male skin and skull. (n = 13) Ofektaman, 1,400 m, (5°04'S 141°34'E), coll. S. Van Dyck, 9-12 Feb 1984: AM M13463-4, M13660, M13664, male skins and skulls; AM M13640, M13646, female skin and skulls; AM M13718-9, M13721-4, whole males in spirit; AM M13720, whole female in spirit. (n = 13) Tifalmin, 1,800 m, (5°07'S 141°25'E), coll. T. Flannery, L. Seri, 11 Apr 1987: AM M17727, M17729, M17731, males in spirit; AM M17728, M17730, M17732-3, females in spirit; AM M17721-2, M17725-6, male skins and skulls; AM M17723-4, female skins and skulls.