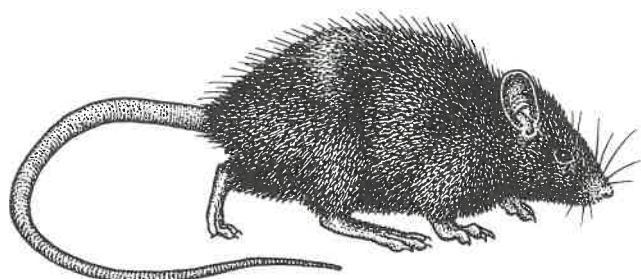


# *Rattus rattus* (LINNAEUS, 1758)



P. Twisk

## Distribution

**World:** presumably native to South-East Asia and after the postglacial period widespread worldwide as a result of human activities.

**Europe:** present in most European countries with the exception of Fennoscandia, where it is now extinct, except for one site in Denmark. In the British Isles confined to a few ports and islands. Sporadic in the Pannonian Plain and Poland; probably extinct in Slovakia.

## Geographic variation

Three different colour morphs have been described: 'rattus' (all black), 'frugivorus' (brown above and white below with a sharp demarcation line) and 'alexandrinus' (brown back and pale grey below). Many subspecies have been described from Asia. Two chromosomal forms exist. The Asian type is characterized by the diploid number  $2N = 42$ , while the Oceanic (or the European) type possesses the diploid set of 38 (or rarely 40) chromosomes.

## Habitat

Highly commensal in Atlantic and continental Europe. In Mediterranean countries, particularly on islands, also occurs outdoors around human settlements as well as in the countryside and agricultural areas. It can build nests in trees and the upper part of buildings.

## Black rat; Ship rat

AL	Miu i zi i kanaleve	LT	Juodoji žiurkė
BG	Черен плъх	LU	Hausrat
CZ	Krysa obecná	LV	Melnā žurka
DE	Hausratte	MK	Домашен стаорец
DK	Sort rotte	MT	Far Iswed
EE	Kodurott	NL	Zwarte rat
ES	Rata negra	NO	Svartrotte
FI	Mustarotta	PL	Szczur śniady
FO	Svarta rotta	PT	Ratazana-preta
FR	Rat noir	RO	Șobolanul negru
GR	Μαυροποντικός	RU	Черная крыса
HR	Kućni štakor	SE	Svart råtta
HU	Házi patkány	SI	Črna podgana
IR	Franncach dubh	SK	Potkan tmavý
IS	Svartrotta	TR	Ev sıçanı
IT	Ratto nero	YU	Црни пацов

## Population status

Very common in Mediterranean countries. The species showed great declines and local extinctions in the British Isles, where its presence is now limited to sea ports and two offshore islands, and in central and eastern European countries where river ports along Danube are possible ways of access and spreading as in Hungary and adjacent regions. After a decline almost to extinction, the black rat has recovered in The Netherlands since about 1968, finding a new biotope in modern piggeries; a similar change has been reported from eastern Germany.

## International legal & conservation status

None.

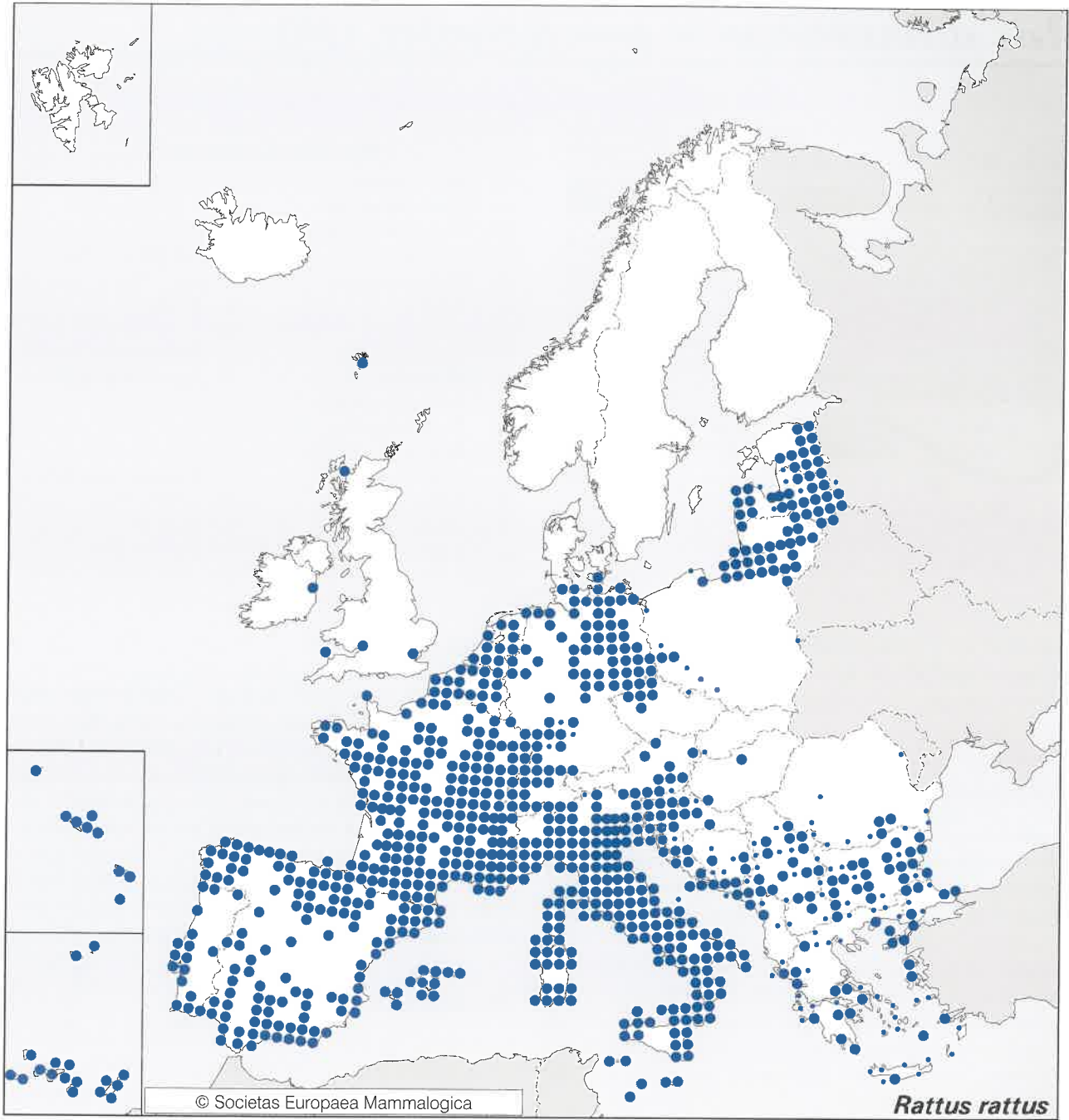
## Other information

The black rat is considered a pest, causing severe damage to stored food and crops. It has been a very important vector of diseases, especially for plague epidemics in past centuries. Nevertheless, nowadays *Rattus norvegicus* is a more efficient vector of diseases. Viral, bacterial and protozoal diseases are the most dangerous for man.

## Literature

Becker (1978b) – review  
Jabir *et al.* (1985)  
Yosida (1980) – review

G. Amori & M. Cristaldi



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*Rattus rattus*