

The Jamaican Coney, a Protected Species and another of our National Treasures



DESCRIPTION

The Jamaican Coney, also known locally as “Mountain Rabbit” or “Indian Coney,” is a land mammal found in the rocky, forested areas of Jamaica. It is also known as the Jamaican Hutia and is endemic (*found only*) to the Island. It is a distant relative of guinea pigs.

The Jamaican Coney is reddish brown to black in colour and ranges in size from 33cm to 45cm (13in-18in) in length. It has a small tail with tufts of black fur. Due to its massive head, short neck and legs, the Jamaican Hutia takes on a squat and stout appearance. They weigh between 1000g and 2000g.

BEHAVIOUR

The Jamaican Coney is nocturnal (active at nights) and feeds on roots, bark, shoots, fruit, and foliage of many different plants. They spend most of their time on the ground but they also jump and climb. Coneys can run fast when startled, however, they generally move about in a waddling manner.

Coneys are social creatures living in family groups ranging from two to ten individuals. Reproduction is slow with litters of only 2 pups twice per year.



DISTRIBUTION

Not much is known about the distribution of the Jamaican Coney on the island because of its secretive habits. Once considered to be plentiful and widespread, the animal is now restricted to remote limestone areas in hills and mountainous regions where there is an abundance of natural crevices and tunnels. Currently, the largest known population is found in the eastern end of the island in the parishes of Portland and St. Thomas.

THREATS

Coneys are threatened by:

- Habitat destruction due to loss of forests
- Mongooses and dogs
- Illegal hunting by man

LEGISLATION

The Jamaica Coney is protected by law under the Wild Life Protection Act. This means that it is illegal to harm, capture, kill or have Jamaican Coneys in one's possession. Should anyone be found guilty under this Act, **such a person can be fined a maximum of \$100,000 or 12 months imprisonment or both.**

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?

- Don't kill, harm or capture Jamaican coneys
- Practice proper farming techniques by controlling bush fires during land clearing
- Don't destroy Forests
- Report breaches of the Wild Life Protection Act to NEPA or to the police

For more information on Jamaica's Protected Species and the laws protecting them contact:

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and Planning Agency**

The Jamaican Coney

or Jamaican Hutia
(*Geocapromys brownii*)

