

## The Sudano-Sahelian Dalton's Mouse, *Praomys daltoni*, in Mauritania, Eastern Assaba mountains

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An expedition to the remote areas of Mauritania, that included Assaba and western part of Afollé mountains, was undertaken between 6th and 26th of November 2012. In this short communication we provide a new occurrence location for *Praomys* (previously *Myomys*) *daltoni* (Thomas, 1892), a Sudano-Sahelian species, outside its known range. This new information implies a northward extension of *Praomys daltoni* range in the western part of its distribution. It also suggests that this range may be fragmented, and that at northern latitudes it may be restricted to Saharan mountains and human settlements. Confirmation of this pattern will need further intensive investigation. This new record supplements known distribution data of the species (Bryja *et al.* 2010; Granjon & Duplantier 2009; Musser & Carleton 2003; Van der Straeten & Decher 2008) and testifies for the importance of the Saharan mountains in shaping biodiversity patterns of the region (Dobigny *et al.* 2001).

A single adult male of Dalton's Mouse, *Praomys daltoni* (Fig. 1), was observed and captured at night 19-20th of November 2012 in north east Assaba mountains near Oued El Ouadhahane, on the eastern slopes of the Tarf el Mgueissem (170m a.s.l.), at 16°03'11.81"N, 11°40'11.76"W (Fig. 2). This location represents the northernmost occurrence of this species in the

western part of its distribution and, to our knowledge, the first observation in Mauritania (Figure 2; Brito *et al.* 2010; Bryja *et al.* 2010; Granjon & Duplantier 2009; Musser & Carleton 2003; Padial & Ibanez 2005). This location is placed around 260 km south to the global species northernmost location, found 1400 km to the east, in the Adrar des Iforas massif, near the city of Kidal (18°26'N, 01°24'E) in northern Mali (Dobigny *et al.* 2001). This finding is also remarkable in that it corresponds to a real outdoor occurrence (closest human settlement of Kankossa is around 19 km from the location), contrary to most of the closest locations from Mali and Senegal. In Mali, the nearest localities of occurrence of *P. daltoni*, i.e. Argueta (14°57'N, 11°02'W), Topokone (15°02'N, 10°35'W), Monzou Bougou (14°59'N, 10°01'W), Boulou (15°10'N, 09°31'W) and Makana (15°08'N, 09°27'W) harbour true commensal populations. In Senegal, *P. daltoni* is present in villages and nearby fields of the Upper Valley of Senegal River such as Gouniang (14°49'N, 12°26'W) or Diboli (14°29'N, 12°13'W) but again, not in entirely natural outdoor habitats (Bryja *et al.* 2010; Granjon & Duplantier 2009).

In the southern part of its distribution *P. daltoni* inhabits lowland savannah woodlands with tall grass, sometimes on rocky hillsides. In the north, including the new location here reported, it is

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mostly found in mountainous areas. In all instances, it can be found inside and around human settlements, an adaptation that undoubtedly

participates to explain the large latitudinal range it occupies in West Africa.

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**Figure 1.** Photographs of captured Dalton's Mouse, *Praomys daltoni*, and habitat of the eastern slopes of Assaba mountains where it was found (photographs by ZB).

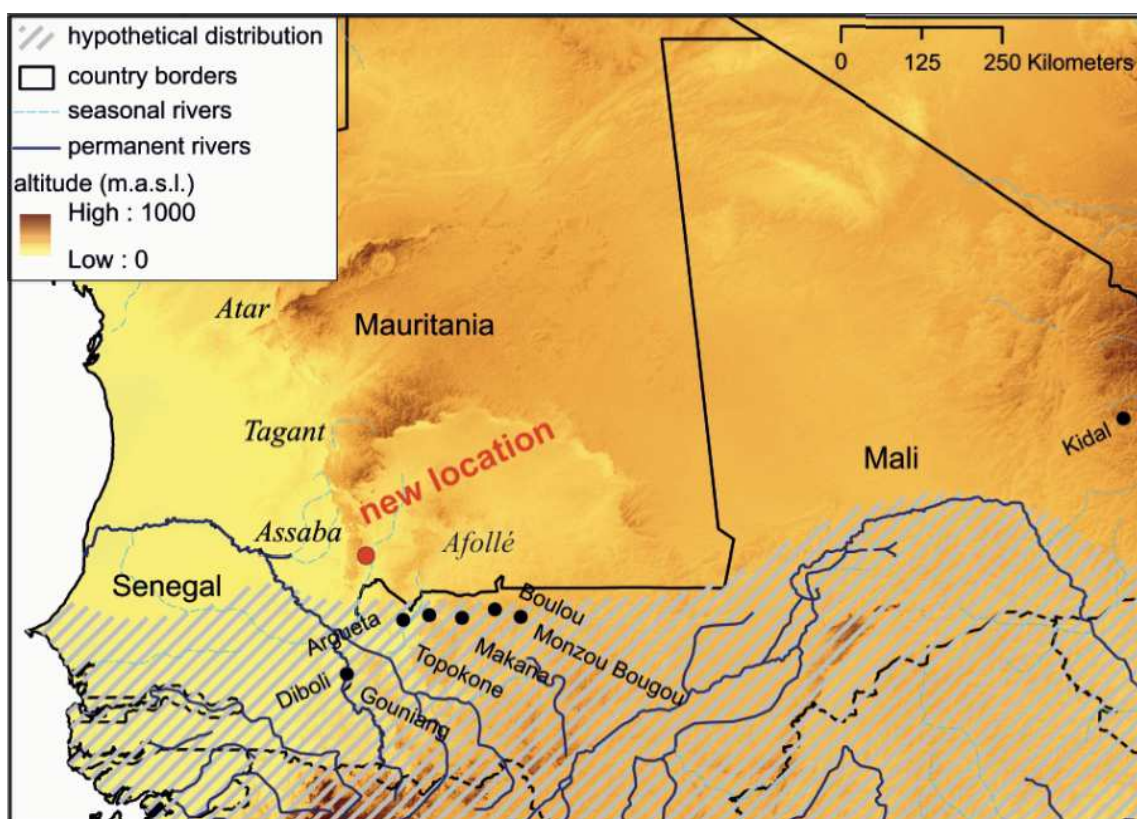


Figure 2. Distribution map of *Praomys daltoni* in Mauritania and surrounding areas. Hypothetical distribution after IUCN. Dots represent known (black) and new (red) locations.

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