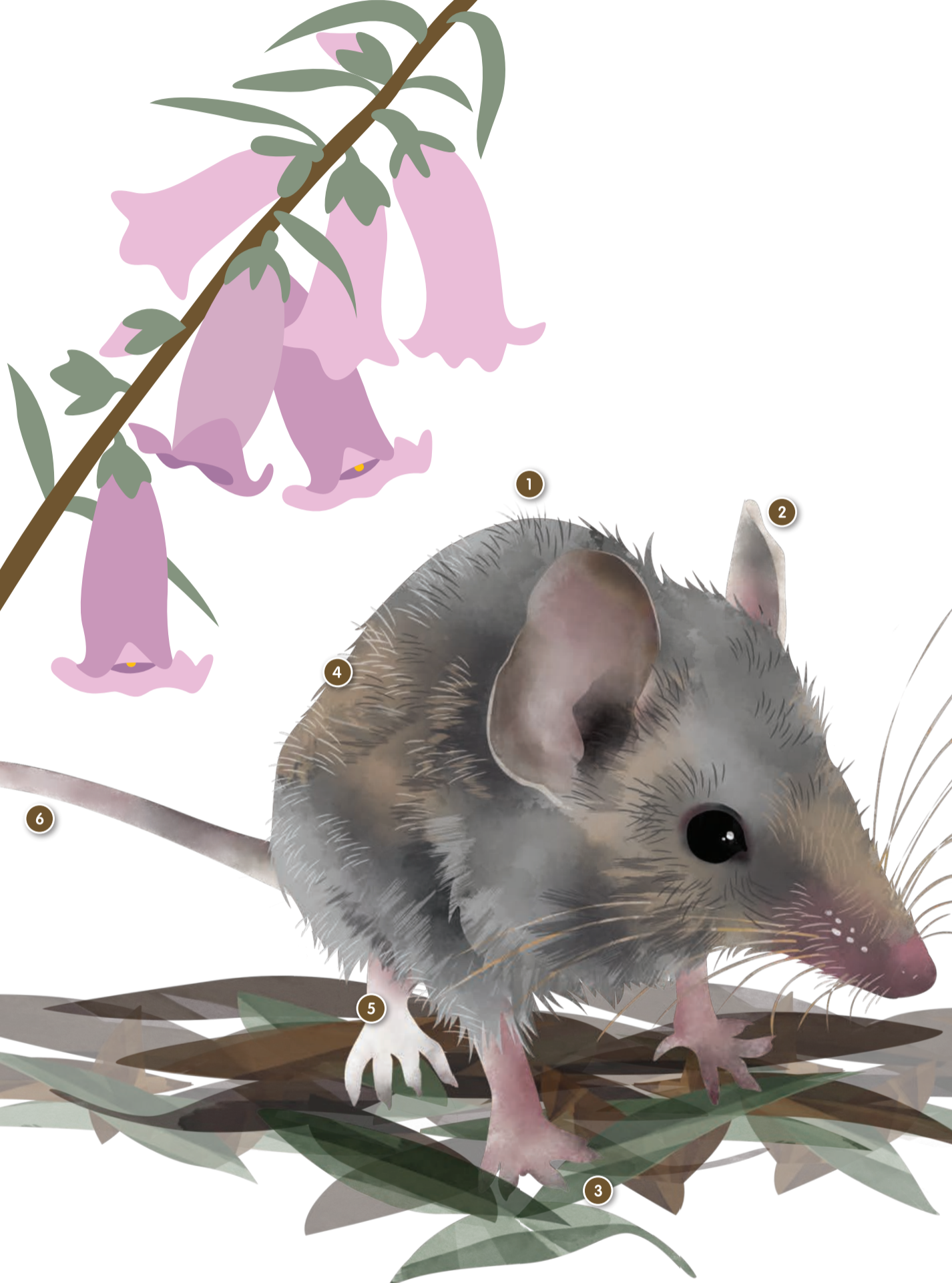


White-footed Dunnart

Sminthopsis leucopus

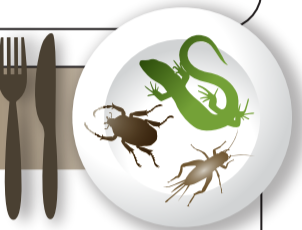


Habitat



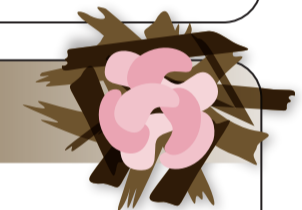
White-footed Dunnarts live along Victoria's coast and near mountain bases. They love heathlands and woodlands with a thick, heathy understory. Heathy plants are stunted, messy and dense. White-footed Dunnarts like this habitat because it creates good hiding places for hunters. They build their nests in tree hollows, under or inside fallen logs, and in leaf litter under the heath.

Diet



These nocturnal carnivores usually snack on insects. Each night, White-footed Dunnarts race through the leaf litter and climb trees and rocks looking for insects like crickets and beetles to munch on. When they need more energy, these cute little hunters will track down skinks and small lizards. They use their sharp teeth and claws to rip apart their delicious dinner.

Life stages



Dunnarts are marsupials that live fast and die young. They look for mates non-stop in July and August. Males get so sick and tired from this that they die before their first birthday. Females carry up to ten babies in their pouch for two months, then put them in a nest. After one month, baby dunnarts move out and find their own homes. Females only live for just over a year.

Threats

VULNERABLE

White-footed Dunnarts are vulnerable to habitat loss, bushfires and feral animals. Habitat clearing removes important shelter for dunnarts and their prey. When fires burn too hot, too often and out of season, dunnarts have nowhere safe to hide and their food disappears. Even though they are fierce, these marsupials can still be eaten by foxes and feral cats.

Conservation



Heathlands may look messy and prickly, but they are beautiful and important homes. Rangers care for this habitat by using controlled fires. Using small fires creates hiding places for animals like dunnarts. Fire removes weeds and makes space for native shrubs like colourful Common Heath to regrow. Feral cats and foxes don't belong in heathy habitats. Controlling these pests is important.

Features and adaptations

- 1 Look like mice but are fierce native predators
- 2 Big eyes and ears to make travelling in the dark easy
- 3 Sharp teeth and claws to catch and rip apart their prey
- 4 Brown-grey fur to help camouflage among the heath
- 5 White hind-feet with special grippy toes and paw pads for climbing
- 6 Long tails to help balance as they climb trees, logs and rocks

