

## Damaraland Mole Rat

(*Cryptomys damarensis*)

**Habitat and Distribution:** Live underground in dry woodlands, savannas, and secondary forests of Southwestern and central Africa.

**Size:** Up to 11½ inches long and 7 oz.

**Wild Diet:** Roots, tubers, bulbs and aloe leaves, as well as the occasional earthworm and insect larvae.

**Predators:** Snakes

**Life Span:** Unknown, but estimated to be about 10 years based on the African mole rat.

**Reproduction:** There is only one breeding pair per colony. They are thought to breed only once per year (in captivity twice per year is common). After a gestation of 78-112 days, 1-3 young are born. Offspring are weaned at about 82 days.

**Behavior:** Damaraland mole rats are one of only two mammals to display eusociality, a cooperative breeding system where colony members devote their lives to the reproductive success of one breeding queen. Labor is divided up among sterile workers. These workers dig tunnels, care for the young, forage for and store food, etc. Colonies excavate elaborate tunnels systems to find food, and spend nearly their entire lives underground. Individuals may disperse and attempt to find mates and set up new colonies when conditions are favorable for digging and foraging. Damaraland mole rats communicate using squeaks grunts and growls, as well as tail pulling and sparring.

**Conservation Connection:** Secure

**Interesting Facts:** Mole rats have slender bodies and short legs. The breeding pair are the largest individuals in the colony, with the male slightly larger than the female. Damaraland mole rats have large incisors that extend well beyond their lips even when the mole rat's mouth is closed. This allows them to dig with their incisors without getting dirt in their mouths.

