

# SKULL MOUNTAIN



Petroglyphs in Darlost's Cave, oral histories collected

from the native islanders, and the fossil record reveal that Skull Mountain once supported a large population of Island mice. Although the exact population size is unknown, the historical record suggests that there were at least several hundred Island mice living on Skull Mountain at one time.

These mice were likely identical to the adjacent Misty Mountain population located across the valley to the west. Native islanders tell stories of their ancestors braving Skull Mountain's daunting slopes and poisonous fumes to collect Island mice from the top of Skull Mountain for use in ceremonial garments. However, Skull Mountain erupted in the late 18th century, spewing molten lava down its sides and extirpating its only population of Island mice.

Researchers disagree as to why the Island mouse has not recolonized Skull Mountain, but it's likely a combination of geographic isolation due to Skull Mountain's steep topography and the poisonous gas plume that lingers over the mountaintop habitats.

