

MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE



As soon as Chuck Darlost first washed ashore Darlost's Island's westernmost beach, he immediately encountered the strange, new mice with large ears feeding on green beetles plucked from holes in the warm sand.

Chuck immediately scribbled his discovery and survey notes on an old, soggy pub napkin retrieved from his pocket, which he then sealed in a glass flask affixed to his hip. In honor of his first observation and spur-of-the-moment ingenuity to preserve important data, Darlost



named this group of Island mice the Message In a Bottle (MIB) population. Darlost counted 500 individuals in this population and described the MIBs as one of the most "robust and hardy" on the Island. Current population estimates are extrapolated from fur trade sales and anecdotal reports from Cannibal Cove teenagers who travel to the MIB coast on spiritual journeys.



Although the MIB population is relatively isolated from anthropogenic stressors today, and largely freed from the cold winter trade winds due to the mountain shadow, it suffers from Darlost's Fire, an introduced bacterial disease that serves as a continual reminder of Darlost's Island's first European visitor. See the species factsheet for more information on this disease, which thins the coat of MIB Island mice, provides a pinto color, increases risk of exposure to cold temperatures, and increases collection.



MIB mice infected with Darlost's Fire, prized by tourists for their pinto pelage are harvested by the native islanders to support a lucrative fur trinket trade. Experts fear that the MIB population has decreased over time since Darlost's arrival due to the fur trade, and over-collection could increase with an increase in tourists to the Island.



The Resort Company has proposed to construct a "party beach" on the MIB, as an extension of its Island Adventure excursion, which would transport tourists and coolers of tropical beverages in all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) from Cannibal Cove to the MIB coast. The Native Islander Building Council initially rejected this proposal due to incompatible use and the potential for spreading Darlost's Fire to other Island mice populations, but the Resort Company has declared that they will try again.

Survey Year	1865	1996	1997	1998	1999-2001	2002	2003	2004	2005-2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
# of Individuals	500	~350	~400	~400	~300	Unknown	~300	~300	~300	~250	~250	~250	~300