

## **Abstract**

Rats are an important group of rodents originating and living mainly in southeast Asia. They are important pests and reservoirs of zoonosis. Yet, about many species we only have basic information. Here, I summarized available information about 66 species of the genus *Rattus* and 10 species of the genus *Bandicota*, *Diplothrix*, *Limnomys*, *Nesokia* and *Tarsomys*. I focused on distribution, ecology and morphology (body length, tail length, hind foot length and ear length) and their mutual relationships. The body length differs between phylogenetic lineages and between habitats. The other morphological characters (tail length, hind foot length and ear length) correlated with body length. Further, I describe an adaptive radiation of rats. Rats are separated into several lineages, differing in their geographic distribution and ecology. Moreover, many species are commensal, that is benefiting from close relationship with humans. Commensalism species can be found in several lineages of rats, therefore commensalism probably developed independently more than once. The commensalism was originated several times. I discuss why are some commensal species more successful than others.

**Key words:** adaptive radiation, *Bandicota*, commensal species, ecomorphology, *Rattus*, rodents, southeast Asia