



Figure 2: **Mammals: The Recently Departed**

Hardest hit by extinctions in the last 500 years are rodents, bats and insectivores. Surprisingly, no rhinoceroses, bears, or cats of any sort have disappeared since A.D. 1500, despite their seemingly tenuous hold on survival at present.

* Species became extinct some time after A.D. 1500, precise date not known.

New World Extinctions: Where Next?

The New World has suffered two well documented waves of mammal extinction since the arrival of people at least 15,000 years ago. The first wave, striking between 12,000 and 13,000 years ago, affected mainland areas and resulted in the extinctions of at least 135 species. The second hit thousands of years later, in the West Indies and the Galapagos. In the West Indies, more than 80 percent of the land mammal fauna was lost. Some scientists predict that a third wave will soon strike a number of New World 'hot spots' - areas with high species diversity and severe habitat loss.

Interestingly, near-shore islands and the continental Americas have suffered only a handful of documented species extinctions in the past 10,000 years, despite the enormous human impact throughout this period. Practically the same is true of Africa and Eurasia but not of Australia, which has had almost five dozen mammal extinctions since humans arrived there some 40,000 years ago.

