



Photo Credit: Arnold Sciberras

**Scientific Name:**

*Crocidura sicula calypso*

**English:**

Sicilian Shrew

**Maltese:**

*il-ġurdien geddumu twil  
ta' Għawdex*

The Sicilian Shrew is a small mammal, endemic to the islands of Sicily and Gozo. In 1989, the subspecies *calypso* was identified as endemic to Gozo. The latter does not occur on mainland Malta, from where it seems to have disappeared. It occurs in sub-urban areas, open shrubland, maquis, gardens and arable land, where it hides under stones, logs and leaf litter. Additionally, in 2011 and 2012, this species was also reported from the island of Comino.

Although not directly related to mice and rodents, the Sicilian Shrew has a mouse-like appearance with a long, pointed snout and white teeth. It grows to 8-12cm (including the tail) and its body is covered by short fur. Its back is dark grey whilst its abdomen is white. Being mostly nocturnal, this mammal has a good sense of smell and highly sensitive whiskers, which compensate for its poor eyesight. Even though shrews feed mainly on small invertebrates, they are also known to scavenge on the remains of reptiles and rodents. Following breeding, females give birth to five young, with probably more than one litter per year.

Even though the population status of the Sicilian Shrew is good, pesticides in agricultural areas and predation from domestic cats are often considered to be a concern for this species. The Sicilian Shrew is protected through both national and regional legislation, and one must not kill or harm such peculiar species.