

Threatened species of the Northern Territory

Black-footed rock-wallaby (central Australian)

Petrogale lateralis centralis

Conservation status

Australia: Vulnerable

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

Northern Territory: Near Threatened

Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1976

Description

The Black-footed Rock-wallaby is a medium-sized wallaby with a body mass of 2.8–4.5 kg. It has short, dark brown fur on its back fading to grey on the shoulders and a buff to pale grey belly. The face is marked by a sandy cheek stripe and a dark stripe between the nose and eye. The ears are dark brown near the tip fading to fawn at the base. A dark stripe extends from between the ears, down the spine to the upper back. The feet are grey brown with black toes. The forearms are sandy above and darker below with dark brown to black paws. A white stripe with a wider dark brown stripe immediately below starts in the armpit and extends along the flank. The tail is longer than the head-body length and is dark grey at the base, becomes browner with a dark brown to black brush tip¹.

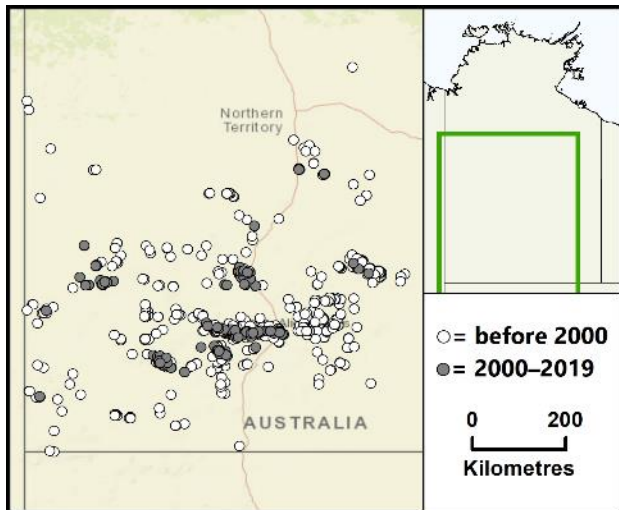


Credit: D. Portelli

Distribution

The central Australian subspecies is centred on the MacDonnell Ranges bioregion of the southern Northern Territory. In the NT, its range extends north to the Davenport and Murchinson Ranges, east to the Jervois Range, west to the Western Australian border and south to the South Australian border. Outside the NT, it occurs in the Gibson Desert of Western Australia^{2,3} and in the Anangu-Pitjantjatjara lands of northern South Australia. Five subspecies are recognised. Only the central Australian subspecies is known to occur in the NT, however the identity of animals in the western Tanami and Great Sandy Deserts is uncertain¹. Other subspecies of Black-footed Rock-wallabies occur in Western Australia and islands off the coast of South Australia¹.

NT conservation reserves where reported: Alice Springs Telegraph Station Historical Reserve, Arltunga Historical Reserve, Davenport Range National Park, Emily and Jessie Gap Nature Park, Finke Gorge National Park, Kuyunba Conservation Reserve, Karlu Karlu / Devils Marbles Conservation Reserve, Ruby Gap Nature Park, Trephina Gorge Nature Park, Watarrka National Park, Tjoritja/West MacDonnell National Park.



Caption: Known localities of the Black-footed Rock-wallaby in the NT (nrmaps.nt.gov.au)

Ecology and life-history

The species occurs in rocky ranges, cliffs, gorges outcrops and associated steep rocky slopes and boulder fields. They feed on grasses, herbs and some leaves and fruits are also eaten⁴. They can survive without water though drink when water is present. Water requirements are reduced by sheltering during the day in caves and under boulders where it is cooler and relative humidity is higher. They usually emerge in the late afternoon or early evening to feed. In cooler weather animals may bask in the sun.

Threatening processes

Predation by the introduced Red Fox and cat are considered the key threats, particularly for small and/or isolated subpopulations. Additional threats are fire regimes that degrade habitat (reduce food supply and shelter) and introduced herbivores that degrade habitat. The decline of local subpopulations in the southern NT coincides with the time of arrival of the Red Fox after the establishment of the European Rabbit.

Conservation objectives and management

There is no existing management program for the species in the NT. A national Recovery Plan for five species of rock-wallaby includes the central

Australian subspecies of the Black-footed Rock-wallaby (as *Petrogale lateralis* MacDonnell Ranges race)⁶.

Management priorities in the Northern Territory are to: i) continue to monitor key subpopulations of the species both in the NT; and ii) protect key subpopulations by carrying out fox and feral cat control where they appear threatened by predation.

References

- ¹ Eldridge, M.D.B., Potter, S. 2020. Taxonomy of Rock-Wallabies, *Petrogale* (Marsupialia : Macropodidae). V. A Description of Two New Subspecies of the Black-Footed Rock-Wallaby (*Petrogale lateralis*). Aust. J. Zoology 67, 19-26.
- ² Eldridge M.D.B., Bell J.N., Pearson D.J., Close R.L., 1992. Identification of rock-wallabies in the Warburton Region of Western Australia as *Petrogale lateralis* MacDonnell ranges race. Aust. Mammal. 15, 115-119.
- ³ Pearson D. 1992. Distribution and abundance of the Black-footed Rock-wallaby in the Warburton region of Western Australia. Wildl. Res. 19, 605-622.
- ⁴ Eldridge, M.D. B., Close, R.L. 1995. Black-footed Rock-wallaby *Petrogale lateralis*. In van Dyck, S., Strahan, R. (Eds.), The Mammals of Australia. 2nd Edition. Reed Books, Sydney, pp.377-381.
- ⁵ Gibson, D.F. 2000. Distribution and conservation status of the Black-footed Rock-wallaby, *Petrogale lateralis* (MacDonnell Ranges race), in the Northern Territory. Aust. Mammal. 21, 213-236.
- ⁶ Pearson, D. J. 2013. Recovery plan for five species of rock wallabies: Black-footed rock wallaby (*Petrogale lateralis*), Rothschild rock wallaby (*Petrogale rothschildi*), Short-eared rock wallaby (*Petrogale brachyotis*), Monjon (*Petrogale burbidgei*) and Nabarlek (*Petrogale concinna*) 2012-2022. Department of Parks and Wildlife, Perth, WA.