

Threatened species of the Northern Territory

Central hare-wallaby

Lagorchestes asomatus

Conservation status

Australia: Extinct

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

Northern Territory: Extinct

Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1976

Description

The Central Hare-wallaby is a small hare-wallaby known to science from a single skull collected in 1932¹. Indigenous people of the Western Deserts described an animal believed to be the Central Hare-wallaby that was about the size of a rabbit, hopped like a kangaroo, and had long, soft, grey fur, hairy feet and a relatively short and thickened tail¹.

Distribution

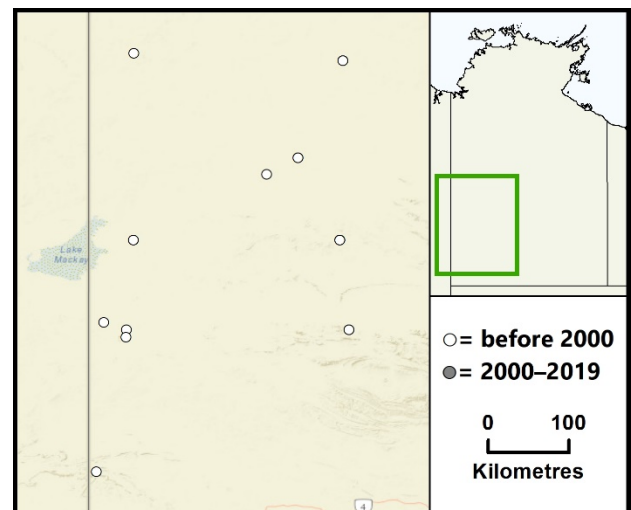
The only confirmed specimen of the Central Hare-wallaby, a skull removed from a fresh carcass, was collected between Mt Farewell and Lake Mackay in the Northern Territory in 1932¹. An unconfirmed specimen, a broken dentary, was collected from Chilla Well in the NT, about 180 km east-north-east of Lake Mackay (date unknown).

Traditional Indigenous Ecological Knowledge suggests the species was formerly widespread in the Gibson, Great Sandy and Tanami Deserts of the NT and Western Australia¹.

NT conservation reserves where reported: None.



Credit: South Australian Museum



Caption: Known localities of the Central Hare-wallaby in the NT (nrmaps.nt.gov.au)

Ecology and life-history

The biology of the Central Hare-wallaby is known only from anecdotal information provided by Indigenous people¹. The species occurred in sandplains and dunes with spinifex. Like the Mala *Lagorchestes hirsutus*, Central Hare-wallabies sheltered in a shallow depression under a spinifex hummock or in a short burrow that they constructed. Central Hare-wallabies did not readily flush from their shelter and were easy to capture. Its diet comprised grass (including

spinifex), leaves, seeds and fruits of the Quandong *Santalum acuminatum*.

Threatening processes

The cause of the decline and extinction of the Central Hare-wallaby is not fully understood. It is likely that a combination of habitat modification due to altered fire regimes and predation by feral Cats *Felis catus* and Red Foxes *Vulpes vulpes* was responsible for its extinction². Competition with European Rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus* and habitat degradation by introduced herbivores may have also played a role in causing the decline of this species².

Conservation objectives and management

As the Central Hare-wallaby is presumed to be extinct, there are no conservation objectives for the species.

References

¹ Burbidge, A.A., Johnson, K.A., Fuller, P.F., Southgate, R.I. 1988. Aboriginal knowledge of animals of the central deserts of Australia. Aust. Wildl. Res. 15, 9–39.

² Woinarski, J.C.Z., Burbidge, A., Harrison, P., 2014. The Action Plan for Australian Mammals 2012. CSIRO Publishing, Canberra.