

Nature Notes

Junior Ranger

QUOLLS

One hundred years ago, two of Australia's four species of Quoll could be found throughout the Northern Territory. Now the Western Quoll is gone and the Northern Quoll is barely hanging on.

Quolls are ferocious night time marsupial hunters. They are a similar size to domestic cats and are easily recognisable by the white spots on their back. They'll eat anything from insects up to mammals the size of small kangaroos.

They live fast and die young. In the wild, females live for a maximum of three years while males are lucky to live for two. Females will have about six babies that spend six to eight weeks in her small pouch. After that she has to leave them in some sort of den while she ventures out to hunt.

The **Western Quoll** has suffered the same fate as many medium sized mammals from Central Australia. A complex combination of changed fire regimes, land clearing, disease, predation and competition for food from cats, foxes and dogs, as well as droughts have all taken a toll. People have also killed them for breaking into chicken coups, and many others have been accidentally poisoned by baits meant for foxes and wild dogs.



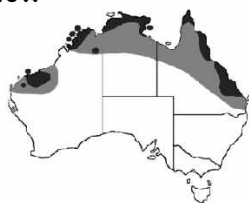
Western Quoll
Dasyurus geoffroii



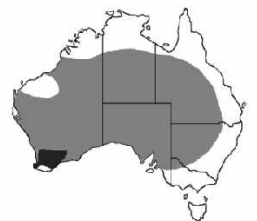
Northern Quoll
Dasyurus hallucatus

The **Northern Quoll** faces many of the same problems. On top of that they now have to deal with cane toads. Cane toads seem to be an irresistible meal to a quoll, but unfortunately even just mouthing a cane toad is enough to bring death within twenty minutes. Some studies have shown that many other animals that eat cane toads eventually adapt and learn not to eat them, but so far it looks like quolls don't.

Northern Quolls, or 'barkuma', as the Yolgnu people of Arnhem Land know them, were much more common before European settlement. They prefer to live in rocky country or open woodlands closer to the coast.



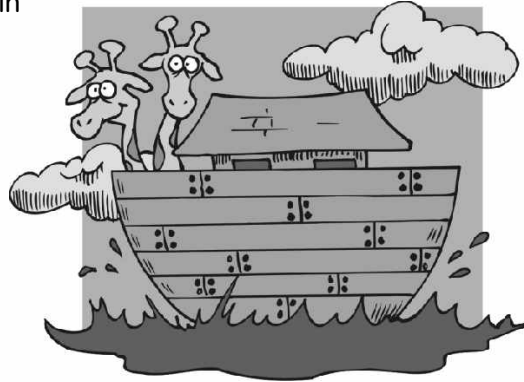
Western Quolls used to occur over most of Australia. Now they are only found in the south west of WA. Central Australian Aboriginal people know them as 'chilpa' or 'kuningga', and they are still associated with many important ceremonies.



NB. Black shows where they now live, grey shows where they used to be found.

PROJECT ISLAND ARK

During 2004, Parks and Wildlife in conjunction with traditional land owners and other agencies started catching **Northern Quolls** on the mainland and taking them to Islands off our north coast. This isn't just to give them a holiday! It is hoped that by taking them to places that cane toads can't get to, we should be able to keep them safe until we work out a way to control the dreaded cane toad.



This scheme has been named **Project Island Ark**. Not as in an arc, or ring of islands, but as in the biblical story of Noah's Ark. The story goes that Noah took two of every animal onto his ark (boat) so that they could repopulate the earth after the Great Biblical flood. Now we are trying to save quolls from a 'flood' of cane toads!

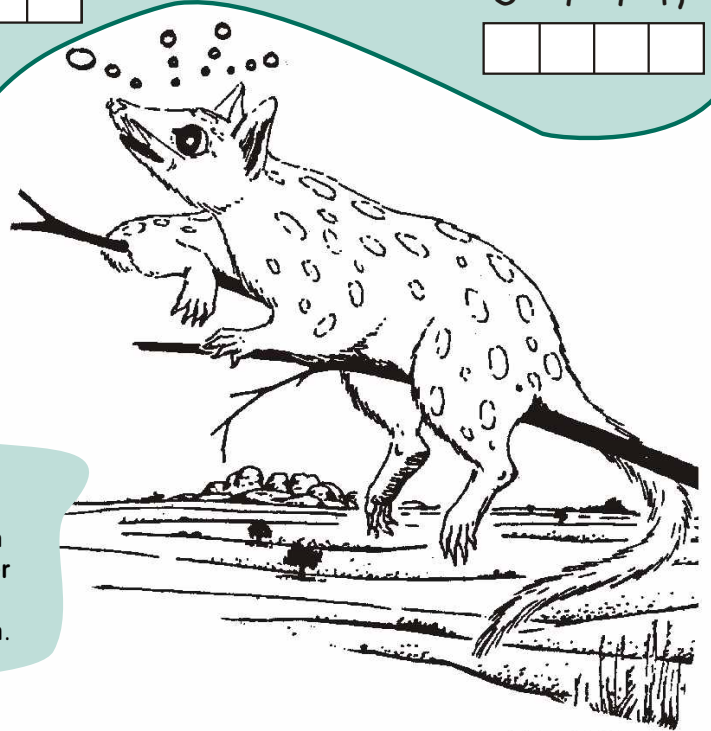
1=A	5=E	9=I	13=M	17=Q	21=U	25=Y
2=B	6=F	10=J	14=N	18=R	22=V	26=Z
3=C	7=G	11=K	15=O	19=S	23=W	
4=D	8=H	12=L	16=P	20=T	24=X	

WHAT IS CHILPA THE QUOLL THINKING ABOUT FOR DINNER?

6	18	15	7	19							
7	18	1	19	19	8	15	16	16	5	18	19
15	16	9	4	5	18	19					
7	5	3	11	15	5	19					

13 9 3 5

5 7 7 19



DID YOU KNOW...

The **Eastern Quoll** *Dasyurus viverrinus* is extinct on the mainland and the **Spotted-tailed Quoll** (or **Tiger Quoll**) *D. maculatus* has become very rare. Thankfully they are both fairly common in Tasmania.

Want to learn more about quolls?

Check out the reference books *The Mammals of Australia* edited by Ronald Strahan and *A Field Guide to the Mammals of Australia* by Menkhorst and Knight.

