

Threatened Species of the Northern Territory

WESTERN QUOLL CHUDITCH

Dasyurus geoffroii

Conservation status

Australia: Vulnerable

Northern Territory: Extinct

Description

The western quoll is a large carnivorous marsupial (body mass of males up to 2 kg; females 1 kg) easily recognized by its body pattern of conspicuous white spots on a brown background. Its tail ends in a black bush. It is considerably larger than the northern quoll.

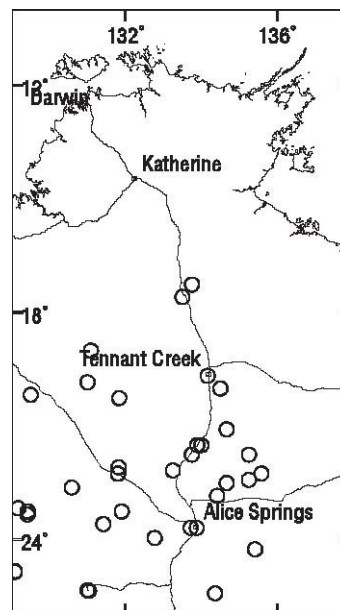
Distribution

The western quoll formerly had an extensive range from western Queensland and New South Wales across central Australia to the Western Australian coast. The species now only occurs in jarrah forests, woodlands and mallee shrublands in the southwest corner of Western Australia.

In the NT, it occurred widely across arid and semi-arid areas (Parker 1973; Burbidge *et al.* 1988).

Conservation reserves where reported:

None (although it formerly occurred in areas that are now included within Uluru Kata-Tjuta National Park and West MacDonnell National Park.)



Known locations of the Western Quoll
○ = pre 1970

Ecology

In central Australia the western quoll occupied all types of country, whereas within its current distribution it appears to favour climax vegetation associations (unburnt for >20 years).

The western quoll is active at night and is both arboreal and terrestrial, although it feeds primarily on the ground. The diet consists of mammals (including rabbits), birds, lizards, frogs, carrion, insects and crustaceans.

Daytime shelter sites include hollow limbs, burrows of other species, and holes in termitaria. The species occurs at low population densities; average male home range size is 400 ha, that of females is 55-120 ha.

Individuals mature at 12 months and females give birth (up to 6 young) from May-September. Young are weaned at 22-24 weeks of age.

Conservation assessment

The western quoll was formerly common across large areas of central Australia (Finlayson 1961; Johnson and Roff 1982; Burbidge *et al.* 1988), but is presumed to have become extinct in the NT in the 1960s, following a broad-scale decline extending over at least the previous 50 years (Finlayson 1961; Johnson and Roff 1982; Burbidge *et al.* 1988). Several unverified reports of the species have been obtained by Parks and Wildlife over the past 20 years.

Threatening processes

The decline of the western quoll in the Northern Territory is attributed to a range of factors including habitat alteration (mostly brought about by changes in fire regime), and competition for food and predation by cats and foxes.

Conservation objectives and management

There are no imminent plans to re-introduce this species to the NT. A captive colony is housed in the nocturnal house of the Alice Springs Desert Park.

Compiled by

Chris Pavey
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References

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