



Brush-tailed rock-wallaby

Petrogale penicillata



What do they look like?

The brush-tailed rock wallabies' most notable feature, as their name implies, is the distinctively bushy tail. They are medium-sized wallabies with the adults ranging from six to eight kilograms. They are very agile, moving confidently and swiftly around their rocky habitat using their long, thickly furred tail for balance and padded feet for grip.

Brush-tailed rock-wallabies have very distinctive facial markings with a white cheek stripe and a black stripe from the eye to the back of the head. Their bodies are brown with grey shoulders and darker feet. This allows them to camouflage themselves well in their habitat and they are often hard to spot.

CONSERVATION STATUS

Australian Government:

VULNERABLE

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

New South Wales:

ENDANGERED

Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995

Victoria:

THREATENED

Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1998

Image credit: www.hermonslade.org.au

Introduction

These unique and beautiful acrobats of the marsupial world leap and bound their way around rocky outcrops and cliff ledges in rugged and steep country near the east coast of Australia. Of the 15 species of rock wallaby in Australia, most have disappeared from their original range and are now considered threatened.

Did you know?

Brush-tailed rock wallabies can climb tall trees with their sharp claws and strong legs. They can also climb almost vertical rocks.

Where do they live?

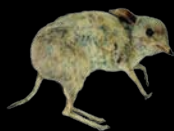
The brush-tailed rock-wallaby can be found in fragmented populations roughly following the Great Dividing Range from southeast Queensland to Western Victoria's Grampians. They live on rocky escarpments, granite outcrops and cliffs, which have caves and ledges for shelter and face north for warmth.

They graze on native grasses found in surrounding habitat at dawn and dusk. They also feed on the foliage and fruits of shrubs and trees as well as roots and bark.



1930*

Tasmanian tiger
EXTINCT



1950*

Pig-footed bandicoot
EXTINCT



1970*

Carnaby's black-cockatoo
ENDANGERED



1990*

Gilbert's potoroo
CRITICALLY ENDANGERED



2000*

Flatback turtle
VULNERABLE



2008*

What's going to be
NEXT...?

Brush-tailed rock-wallaby life history and ecology

Brush-tailed rock wallabies are highly territorial over their home range, which is about 15 hectares. They are social wallabies and live in family groups consisting of two to five adults with juveniles and joeys.

Threats to the brush-tailed rock-wallaby

Life is tough for brush-tailed rock wallabies. They have been deprived of available habitat due to a combination of factors including clearing of native vegetation, exotic plant invasion and changed patterns of fire across the landscape. Impacts, such as these, on their habitat have caused the brush-tailed rock-wallaby to disappear from much of the southern and western part of its range.

The brush-tailed rock-wallaby must also cope with introduced predators and competition with feral goats, sheep and rabbits. This competition forces them to search for food outside their natural ranges. In the past brush-tailed rock wallabies were considered pests and were hunted for their skins, also contributing to a massive decline in numbers.

Introduced predators

The introduction of foxes has had a major impact on brush-tailed rock wallabies. Foxes were introduced into Australia soon after European settlement and are now well established over most of the non-tropical mainland, including in rock wallaby habitat. They are believed to have contributed to the extinction of several small mammal species.

Habitat loss

Loss of habitat continues to be an issue for brush-tailed rock wallabies. Residential and tourist developments adjacent to some colonies are causing habitat modification, making it harder for wallabies to find homes.

Case Study – Conserving the brush-tailed rock-wallaby

After an extreme bush fire in 2003, the Friends of Currawinya Landcare highlighted the need for better fire management on Currawinya and applied for a TSN Community Grant under the auspices of West of Ranges Landcare Inc.

Currawinya is a 2800ha property which is being actively managed for conservation. The Clarence River flows through this gazetted wildlife refuge and is home to some of Australia's most threatened species including the brush-tailed rock-wallaby. Inappropriate fire regimes have been identified as a threatening process for rock wallabies and the loss of these animals from Currawinya would be devastating.

The project surveyed known rock wallaby colonies using scat (dropping) searches and plotting the areas and corridors they use. This information was then incorporated into a fire management plan to ensure safe fire practices for the property.

The four known colonies were observed over two months and the corridors of vegetation used by the rock wallabies to move around the property were recorded. Low intensity mosaic burns were conducted as an experiment to gain an understanding of controlled burning techniques, which will help reduce the intensity of bush fires in the future.

The project was a success with observations of rock wallabies providing valuable insights about this threatened animal. Importantly, the Friends of Currawinya Landcare now have improved knowledge of fire behaviour, which will help conserve the rock wallabies for the future.

What you can do

- If you manage, live on or own land that is habitat for rock wallabies, contact your local TSN Coordinator to find out how you can help.
- Leave your pets at home when you go into the bush, or if you choose to take your dog, keep it on a lead so that it does not chase wildlife.
- Report any rock wallaby sightings to park rangers, National Parks and Wildlife staff or TSN.
- Avoid trying to tame rock wallabies (or other wildlife) by feeding them. Tame wallabies are more susceptible to predators. Unnatural foods can also lead to serious health problems.
- Help the brush-tailed rock-wallaby by reporting any activities that you see that are likely to harm them or their habitat to the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts – Compliance and Enforcement Branch. Visit www.environment.gov.au/epbc/compliance/index.html or freecall 1800 110 395 for more information.

Contacts

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W www.wwf.org.au/tsn

References

Department of Sustainability and Environment (Victoria), Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby Flora and Fauna Guarantee Action Statement, <http://www.dse.vic.gov.au>.

Department of Environment and Climate Change (New South Wales, brush-tailed rock-wallaby profile, <http://www.threatenedspecies.environment.nsw.gov.au>.