



Black-flanked Rock-wallaby *Petrogale lateralis* (Gould, 1842)

Size

Head and Body length

446-570 mm

Tail length

320-605 mm

Weight

2.3-6.5 kg



Photo: Gareth Watkins/DEC
Petrogale lateralis lateralis

Subspecies

Four subspecies require management in Western Australia:

- *Petrogale lateralis lateralis*
- *Petrogale lateralis hacketti*
- *Petrogale lateralis* (MacDonnell Ranges race)
- *Petrogale lateralis* (western Kimberley race)

Other Common Names

Warru refers to the Aboriginal name for *P. I. lateralis* in the western deserts.

Description

Dark to pale grey-brown above, paler on the chest and dark brown on the belly. The face is dark with a white or sandy-brown cheek stripe. Dark brown to black dorsal stripe from between the ears to below the shoulders. Coat is thick and woolly particularly around the rump, flanks and base of tail. Tail has a slight brush on the end. Pelage often becomes lighter and browner in summer. There are colour variations between the subspecies.

Distribution

Petrogale lateralis lateralis was formerly confined to suitable habitat in central and southern Western Australia, including Depuch, Salisbury and Barrow Islands. Current populations remain restricted to suitable habitat in the Little Sandy Desert, Cape Range, Wheat belt, and Barrow and Salisbury Islands. Translocated populations occur at Querekin Rock (private property) Avon Valley National Park, Paruna Sanctuary, Walyunga National Park and Cape Le Grand National Park.

Petrogale lateralis hacketti is restricted to three islands in southern Western Australia: Mondrain, Wilson, Westall Islands (Recherche Archipelago).

Petrogale lateralis (western Kimberley race) is known only from the Edgar Range, Erskine Range and possibly the Grant Range and nearby areas of the west Kimberley of Western Australia.

Petrogale lateralis (MacDonnell Ranges race) was formerly widespread in central desert regions of the Northern Territory, South Australia, and Western Australia. Distribution and abundance has declined to fragmented populations over most of the former range.

For further information regarding the distribution of this species please refer to www.naturemap.dec.wa.gov.au

Habitat

Granite outcrops, sandstone cliffs and scree slopes in ranges with hummock grassland and occasional fig trees and low shrubs, caves, and coastal limestone cliffs.

Behaviour

The Black-flanked Rock-wallaby is a shy and wary animal, feeding at night in open areas of grass close to shelter of rocks.

Diet

The diet includes grasses, herbs, leaves and fruits. Rock-wallabies do not need to drink, and conserve water by sheltering from the hot day-time temperatures in caves.

Breeding

Sexual maturity is reached at 1-2 years. Breeding can be continuous after this time, but varies in response to seasonal rainfall. A feature of their reproduction is embryonic diapause, where the developing embryo becomes dormant until conditions are right for it to continue to develop.

Threatening processes

Petrogale lateralis lateralis is the subspecies which has suffered the largest known range decline. Predation by foxes is known to have reduced populations in the Wheat belt and on Depuch Island, and is presumed to be the main cause of the local extinctions of most other *Petrogale lateralis lateralis* populations. Other reasons for decline may include predation by feral cats and degradation of habitat resulting from grazing by sheep, goats and rabbits.

Petrogale lateralis hacketti has had no population decline recorded, but remains vulnerable to fire, feral predators or competitors due to its small population size and restricted distribution.

Petrogale lateralis (western Kimberley race) has had no evidence of decline recorded, but remains vulnerable to predation by foxes, feral cats, dingoes and wild dogs.

Petrogale lateralis (MacDonnell Ranges race) is susceptible to predation by foxes, feral cats, wild dogs and dingoes, habitat modification and competition for food with, rabbits, camels and livestock. Changed fire regimes are also believed to have contributed to their decline.

Conservation status

For all subspecies/races:

Western Australian Wildlife Conservation Act 1950

Schedule 1 – Fauna that is rare or is likely to become extinct
(Threatened ranked as Vulnerable)

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

Vulnerable

IUCN Red List of Threatened Species

Near Threatened (Version 3.1)

Management

A Recovery Plan has been drafted, however other management actions required include:

- Fire management around some colonies.

- Ongoing fox control around existing and future populations.
- Monitor existing populations.

Other interesting facts

- Although these rock-wallabies pair for life, the females will mate with different males.
- The long tail is important for balancing the animal when hopping among rocks.
- Rock-wallabies can also climb trees with sloping trunks.
- A study of rock-wallabies in the Wheat belt was one of the first in Australia to prove the benefits of controlling foxes to assist fauna recovery (see studies by Jack Kinnear).

Selected references

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Maxwell S., Burbidge A.A, Morris K. (Eds) (1996). *The 1996 Action Plan for Australian Marsupials and Monotremes*. Wildlife Australia, Canberra.



Photo: David Pearson/DEC
Petrogale lateralis (MacDonnell Ranges race)

Last updated 24 October 2012, for further enquiries please contact fauna@dec.wa.gov.au

Further information

Contact your local office of the Department of Environment and Conservation.

See the department's website for the latest information: www.dec.wa.gov.au.

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