

## Black-footed Rock-wallabies *Petrogale lateralis*

Conservation Status: Endangered and Vulnerable

### Identification

There are four subspecies of black-footed rock wallabies *Petrogale lateralis* that occur in Western Australia: black-flanked rock-wallaby *Petrogale lateralis lateralis*, Recherche rock-wallaby *Petrogale lateralis hacketti*, MacDonnell Range rock-wallaby *Petrogale lateralis* subsp. (MacDonnell Ranges) and West Kimberley rock-wallaby *Petrogale lateralis* subsp. (West Kimberley).

The species *Petrogale lateralis* is widespread but the subspecies are geographically separated which has resulted in them being morphologically and/or genetically distinct. In general, they are a small wallaby with a thick and woolly coat of dark grey-brown fur with a paler chest. They have distinct markings including a white to sandy cheek-stripe, a dark brown to black dorsal stripe from between the ears to beyond the shoulders, and a white and a black lateral stripe from the armpit to the hip. The paws are dark brown to black. The long tail ends in a slight black brush.

*It is important to note that the western brush wallaby Macropus irma also has a distinct white facial stripe and black paws. Consider the other distinctive features, as well as the location and habitat of the sighting, when trying to identify the animal.*

Head and Body Length: 45-52cm

Tail Length: 44-61cm

Weight: 4.7kg (males) and 3.4kg (females)

### Taxonomy

Family: Macropodidae

Genus: *Petrogale*

Species: *lateralis*

Other common names: warru

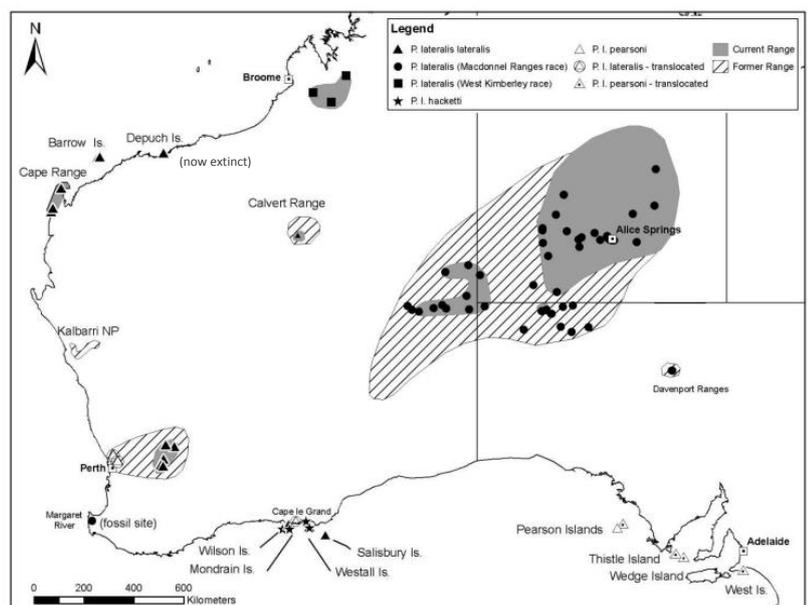
There is some taxonomic uncertainty about whether the MacDonnell Range and West Kimberley rock-wallabies are subspecies or races of *Petrogale lateralis*.

### Distribution and Habitat

The black-flanked rock wallaby was historically widespread but patchily distributed in central and southern Western Australia but is now restricted to parts of Cape Range, Calvert Range in the Little Sandy Desert, granite rocks in the Avon Wheatbelt area, gorges in Kalbarri National Park, and Barrow and Salisbury Islands. The McDonnell Range rock-wallaby was historically distributed across a large area of central Australia, but is now known only from a small number of scattered and isolated



*Petrogale lateralis lateralis* in Ningaloo. Photos: David Pearson/DBCA



A map with the general distributions of the various subspecies of the black-footed rock-wallaby (Parks and Wildlife, 2013).

ranges in Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory. The Recherche rock-wallaby is known to occur on only three islands off the coast of Esperance in the Recherche Archipelago, and the West Kimberley rock-wallaby is known to occur on only a small number of scattered ranges and rocky outcrops in the west Kimberley.

As the common name suggests, rock-wallabies have a preference for rocky habitats. They occur on a wide variety of rock types but require complex caves and crevices as opposed to large, smooth surfaces. Permanent water does appear to be an essential component of rock-wallaby habitat.

For further information regarding the species distribution, please refer to [www.naturemap.dpaw.wa.gov.au](http://www.naturemap.dpaw.wa.gov.au).

## Community Involvement

If you think you have seen a rock wallaby, fill out a [fauna report form](#) and send it to the Department's Species and Communities Branch at [fauna@dbca.wa.gov.au](mailto:fauna@dbca.wa.gov.au). The Department keeps track of the distributions of threatened species to help monitor population trends and inform management decisions.

The Department runs a variety of volunteer projects across WA including scientific research, community education and manual labour. Further information about these opportunities can be found on the Department's [webpage](#).

## Biology and Behaviour

Rock-wallabies are generally crepuscular and nocturnal, meaning they are most active at twilight and at night. They spend daylight hours sheltering in deep and multi-entranced caves, crevices, cliffs, overhangs or boulder piles. These complex rocky habitats provide cool refuge from hot temperatures and shelter from predators. At twilight, they emerge to feed on a variety of grasses, herbs, forbs, leaves, seeds and fruit. They tend to browse close to rocky refuges to provide a quick escape from predators. Rock-wallabies are extremely agile, and they have strong hind legs and feet with textured pads, allowing them to bound quickly and easily across their rocky habitats.

Breeding can occur year-round, but with peaks during high rainfall seasons. They give birth to one young, which remain in the pouch for 6-7 months. Breeding commences from 18 months of age, and the life span is up to 12 years.

## Conservation Status

All four Western Australian subspecies of *Petrogale lateralis* are recognised as a threatened species under State and Commonwealth legislation. In Western Australia all four subspecies are listed as fauna that is 'likely to become extinct' in the wild (Specially Protected) under the [Wildlife Conservation Act 1950](#) and have been assigned the threat status rankings of Endangered (black-flanked and West Kimberley rock-wallabies) and Vulnerable (Recherche and MacDonnell Ranges rock-wallabies) using [International Union for Conservation of Nature \(IUCN\)](#) criteria. Nationally the species are listed as Endangered (black-flanked rock-wallaby) and Vulnerable (Recherche, MacDonnell Ranges and West Kimberley rock-wallabies) under the Commonwealth [Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999](#).

The main current threats to all four subspecies include:

- Fox, wild dog and feral cat predation;
- Competition for food and shelter with introduced herbivores;
- Habitat loss and degradation from land clearing, mining and weed incursion;
- Limited genetic variation due to small population size and population fragmentation; and
- Climate change leading to a decline in rainfall and higher summer temperatures.

## Management

### Recovery Plan

A [national recovery plan](#) has been produced for five species of rock wallabies that occur in Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory: black-footed rock wallaby *Petrogale lateralis*, short-eared rock wallaby *Petrogale brachyotis*, monjon *Petrogale burbidgei*, nabarlek *Petrogale concinna* and Rothschild rock wallaby *Petrogale rothschildi*. This plan outlines the recovery actions required to ensure the survival of populations and improve the conservation status of the five species. Recommended actions for *Petrogale lateralis* from this plan include:

- Conduct feral predator control, manage feral herbivores and manage habitat, and monitor management actions to determine effectiveness.

- Prevent the introduction of feral predators, competitors, weeds or disease to islands
- Conduct translocations and captive breeding to establish new populations or supplement existing populations.
- Survey and monitor populations.
- Undertake research to improve understanding of biology, management and monitoring techniques.

### Existing Conservation Measures

The Rock Wallaby Recovery Team, led by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, has been assisting with the implementation of recovery actions as outlined in the current recovery plan since 2012.

The Department's [Western Shield](#) wildlife recovery program conducts feral fox baiting at a range of known rock-wallaby locations, and intensive fox and feral cat baiting is undertaken at the Wheatbelt sites. The Department, often in partnership with Aboriginal ranger groups and NRM, also undertakes other introduced predator, goat and rabbit control activities, prescribed burning and habitat rehabilitation at various rock-wallaby locations. Regular monitoring is also conducted of known rock-wallaby locations and surveys undertaken for new populations.

The Department, in partnership with [WWF](#), constructed a predator-proof fence in 2013 around Nangeen Hill, a nature reserve in the Wheatbelt, to protect the subpopulation of black-flanked rock-wallabies. [AWC](#) also has a small subpopulation of black-flanked rock-wallabies within their Paruna Sanctuary in the Avon Valley.

Black-flanked rock-wallabies had been considered extinct from Kalbarri National Park for 20 years, but two were sighted in a gorge in 2015. Following the rediscovery, the Department and WWF have translocated black-flanked rock-wallabies from the Wheatbelt in an effort to re-establish the Kalbarri population.

### Citation

Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions. (2017). *Fauna Profile - Black-footed Rock Wallabies Petrogale lateralis*. Retrieved from <http://www.dbca.wa.gov.au/>

### Key References and Further Reading

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