

Northern quoll

(*Dasyurus hallucatus*)

The northern quoll is smaller, slimmer and more delicately proportioned than its southern cousin, the chuditch. Otherwise, its appearance and life history is similar. Like the chuditch, it has attractive, camouflaging white spots on the brown fur covering its head and upper body, a pointed tapering snout and an aggressive disposition. It often lives in and around dwellings inhabited by people.



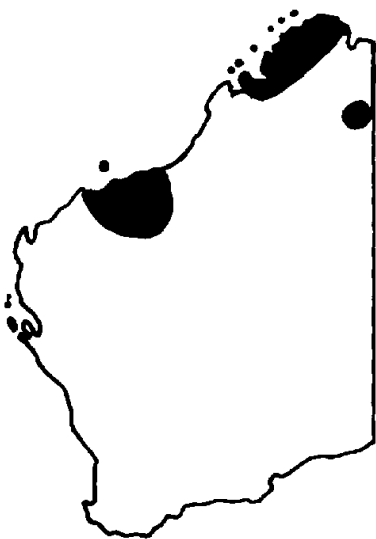
Photo: Babs & Bert Wells/Department of Environment and Conservation

Description:

This species has the white spotted brown fur characteristic of all quolls. The tail is brown but has no spots. Its underparts are cream to white. Northern quolls also have grooved pads on their hind feet, which may help them to climb on smooth rocky surfaces. They are larger than a rat and adults weigh between 300 and 900 grams, with males far larger and heavier than females.

Other names:

Little northern native cat, satanellus, north Australian native cat.



Key to map:

Black = present distribution

Status and distribution:

This mammal is found in the Pilbara and Kimberley regions of northern WA and across the rest of northern Australia to Queensland. However, it is absent from the central deserts of these regions. Now regarded as endangered, it has declined from drier parts of its range and in areas occupied by cane toads.

Preferred habitat:

The northern quoll is found largely in broken rocky country sparsely covered by vegetation, such as open forests, savannah and woodland.

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Life history:

These nocturnal mammals hunt native rodents and small marsupials, birds, reptiles and insects. They supplement this diet with figs and other fruits. By day they sleep in a hollow log or rocky crevice. Northern quolls spend much of their time on the ground. The males often aggressively defend a home range and its resident females from other males. Females often remain in the place where they were born but most males leave at an early age. The female has no pouch, but they develop enlarged nipples partly surrounded by a flap of skin when in breeding condition. Between one and eight hairless young are born in July. They remain attached to the nipples for eight to 10 weeks. By September, the surviving young will be left in dens and suckled to about five months of age.



Where to see them:

They like to raid rubbish bins at camping sites. Visitors to stations such as Mount Hart, in the Kimberley, may see them in the garden if spotlighting at night. Northern quolls are numerous on Koolan island in the Buccaneer Archipelago. They are also seen on islands off the Burrup Peninsula and at Python Pool in the Millstream–Chichester National Park.