

CHUDITCH

Dasyurus geoffroii (Gould, 1841)

OTHER COMMON NAMES: Western Quoll, Western Native-cat.

SYNONYMS: Two subspecies of the Chuditch have been described; *D. g. geoffroii* from Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia, and *D. g. fortis* from Western Australia. Doubt now exists as to the validity of this taxonomy.

BIOLOGICAL STATUS: Extinct in NSW, QLD, SA, and NT. Now only found in the south-west of WA, where it is regarded as a threatened species.

DESCRIPTION: A medium-sized (up to 1.8kg) carnivorous marsupial with brown fur on the back and sides and white spots except on the tail. The fur below is creamy-white and the tail, which is two thirds the head-body length, has a distinctive black brush for much of its length. It can be distinguished from the Spotted Tail Quoll (*D. maculatus*) by the lack of spots on the tail and its smaller adult body size, and from the similarly sized Eastern Quoll (*D. viverrimus*) by the presence of five toes on the hind foot instead of four. The relatively large eyes and large, rounded ears emphasis the nocturnal, predatory habits of this species. It also possesses sharp claws, suitable for climbing trees. Adult males weigh up to 50 percent more than adult females. Chuditch are seasonal breeders, producing up to six young between June and August. Young are deposited in hollow den logs or burrows at about 60 days of age. They disperse between December and February when about 170 days old. In the wild, Chuditch live for three to four years, longer in captivity.

SIMILAR SPECIES: *Dasyurus viverrimus* (Eastern Quoll) and *D. maculatus* (Spotted tail Quoll).

ORDER POLYPROTODONTA

FAMILY DASYURIDAE

K.D. MORRIS Wildlife Research Centre, Department of Conservation and Land Management, P.O. Box 51 WANNEROO, W.A. 6065.