Western Brush Wallaby
Macropus irma (Jourdan, 1837)

Size
Head and body length
1200 mm

Tail length
540–970 (720) mm

Weight
7.0–9.0 (8.0) kg

Subspecies
None recognised

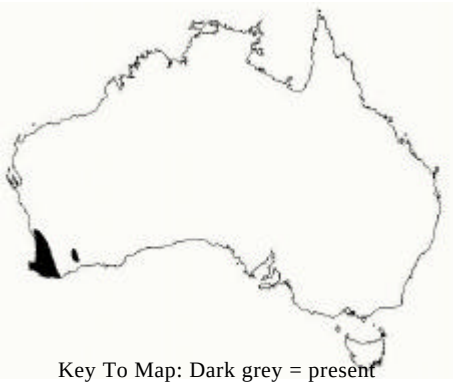
Photo. Babs & Bert Wells/Department of Conservation and Land Management

Description

Pale to mid grey with distinct white facial stripe, black and white ears, black hands and feet. Long tail with crest of black hair towards extremity. Moves fast with head low and tail extended.

Other common names
Black-gloved wallaby

Distribution



Key To Map: Dark grey = present distribution

The western brush wallaby was very common in the early days of settlement and periodically large numbers were traded commercially for skins.

Their range has been seriously reduced and fragmented due to clearing for agriculture and there is a significant decline in abundance within most remaining habitat. The western brush wallaby is now distributed across the south-west of Western Australia from north of Kalbarri to Cape Arid.

Habitat

The western brush wallaby's optimum habitat is open forest or woodland, particularly favouring open, seasonally wet flats with low grasses and open scrubby thickets. It is also found in some areas of mallee and heathland, and is uncommon in karri forest.

Behaviour

The western brush wallaby is a grazer like the larger kangaroos, rather than a browser. It has not been studied in detail. Activity is greatest in the early morning and late afternoon and it rests during the hotter part of day, singly or in pairs in the shade of a bush or in small thickets. It is more diurnal in its habits than other macropods in the region.

Diet

Little is known of the western brush wallaby's food preferences but it appears to be able to manage without free water. One study has found that the western brush wallaby consumed 29 species of plants including *Carpobrotus edulis, Cynodon dactylon and Nuytsia floribunda* which represented the three most common dietary items.

Breeding

The breeding season has not been defined accurately but young are born some time from April to May, emerging from the pouch in October or November.

Threatening processes

A dramatic increase in the number of foxes in the early 1970s in south-western Australia appears to have led to a decline in the numbers of western brush wallaby. It is thought that juveniles not long out of the pouch may fall prey to this predator. The western brush wallaby is now uncommon throughout its range but its numbers increase in response to fox baiting. It is thought that foxes may take young wallabies and there is also evidence that illegal hunting may affect their abundance in some areas.

Conservation status

2000 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species	Lower Risk (near threatened)
Western Australian Wildlife Conservation Act	Not Listed (Priority 4)
Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act	Not listed

Management

The western brush wallaby was fully protected in 1951. As no detailed biological studies have been completed for this species it is recommended that the following actions be undertaken:

- Monitor abundance at selected sites throughout range, including areas where fox control has been implemented.
- Conduct research aimed at clarifying the reasons for the species decline.

Other interesting facts

- The western brush wallaby is a speedy animal, able to weave or side-step with ease as it moves low to the ground with its long tail extended, and so is clearly adapted to life on the open ground.

Selected references

Christensen, P. (1995). Western Brush Wallaby. In R. Strahan (Ed.) The Mammals of Australia. Australian Museum and Reed Books. Chatswood, NSW.

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

Wann, J. M. and Bell, D. T. (1997). Dietary preferences of the black-gloved wallaby (*Macropus irma*) and the western grey kangaroo (*M. fuliginosus*) in Whiteman Park, Perth, Western Australia. *Journal of the Royal Society of Western Australia* 80: 55–62.

Website links

http://www.naturebase.net/projects/west_shield.html
http://www.naturebase.net/news/NewsData/html/cn_00011.html
http://www.ea.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/action/marsupials/26.html