

Tammar Wallaby

Macropus eugenii (Desmarest, 1817)

Size

Kangaroo Island wallabies

Head and body length

590–680 (643) mm in males

520–630 (586) mm in females

Tail length

380–450 (411) mm in males

330–440 (379) mm in females

Weight

Western Australian wallabies

2.9–6.1 (4.6) kg in males

2.3–4.3 (3.7) kg in females



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

Subspecies

Three subspecies are recognised:

- *M. e. derbianus* (Western Australia)
- *M. e. decres* (Kangaroo Island, South Australia)
- *M. e. eugenii* (South Australia mainland)

Description

Dark, grizzled grey-brown above, becoming rufous on the sides of the body and the limbs, especially in males. Pale grey-buff below.

Other common names

Dama wallaby (South Australia)

Distribution



Key To Map: Dark grey = present distribution; Mid-grey = historic (> 30 years)

Distributed throughout most of the south-west of Western Australia from Kalbarri National Park to Cape Arid on the south coast and extending to western parts of the Wheatbelt. Populations also occurred in parts of southern South Australia. The tammar wallaby was disappearing from agricultural areas by 1909.

The tammar wallaby is currently known to inhabit three islands in the Houtman Abrolhos group, Garden Island near Perth, Middle and North Twin Peak Islands in the Archipelago of the Recherche, and at least nine sites on the mainland — including, Dryandra, Boyagin, Tutanning, Batalling (reintroduced), Perup, private property near Pingelly, Jaloran Road timber reserve near Wagin, Hopetoun, Stirling Range National Park, and Fitzgerald River National Park. The tammar wallaby remains relatively abundant at these sites which are subject to fox control. They have been reintroduced to the Darling scarp near Dwellingup, Julimar Forest near Bindoon, Avon Valley National Park and to Karakamia and Paruna Sanctuaries.

Habitat

Dense, low vegetation for daytime shelter and open grassy areas for feeding. Inhabits coastal scrub, heath, dry sclerophyll (leafy) forest and thickets in mallee and woodland.

Behaviour

The tammar wallaby is nocturnal. During the day they rest in low scrub and, although they begin to move at dusk, they do not leave the scrub until after dark and return to it before dawn. Individuals have defined home ranges that overlap the home ranges of others. While several wallabies have been observed feeding in the same area, no social grouping has been observed, except between females and their young at foot.

Diet

The tammar wallaby is herbivorous and its diet consists mostly of grasses. Evidence suggests it requires drinking water for its survival. One study found up to 24 plant species in the diet, including *Gastrolobium bilobum*, *Danthonia setacea*, and *Corymbia calophylla*.

Breeding

The breeding cycle is only well known for the Kangaroo Island subspecies (*M. e. decres*). The tammar wallaby is one of only two macropod species that show a strictly seasonal patterns of breeding. Most young are born from late January to March and within a few hours of giving birth the female mates. The resulting embryo remains quiescent during lactation. The quiescent embryos are reactivated within a few days after mid December, and the young enter the pouch about 40 days later, 12 months after the mating at which they were conceived. The single young is suckled in the pouch for eight to nine months and leaves the pouch in September or October (October to November in Western Australia). Females become mature at about nine months while they are still suckling, but males do not become mature until nearly two years old. The rate of reproduction is high, with more than 90 per cent of all females carrying a pouch-young by the end of the breeding season. In some years many pouch-young are lost, particularly by one-year-old females. In all years, mortality is high among juveniles during their first summer and may reach 40 per cent.

Threatening processes

Fox predation, and loss of suitable thickets due to inappropriate fire regimes and land clearing.

Conservation status

• <i>M. e. derbianus</i>	
2000 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species	Lower Risk (near threatened)
Western Australia Wildlife Conservation Act	Not Listed (Priority 4)
Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act	Not listed
• <i>M. e. decres</i>	
2000 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species	Lower Risk (near threatened)
Western Australia Wildlife Conservation Act	N/A
Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act	Not listed
• <i>M. e. eugenii</i>	
2000 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species	Extinct in the Wild
Western Australia Wildlife Conservation Act	N/A
Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act	Extinct

Management in Western Australia

The following management actions are recommended:

- Monitor tammar wallaby populations at forest and woodland sites as part of threatened species reintroduction programs and broad scale fox control programs.
- Implement appropriate fire regimes to ensure regeneration of shelter thickets.

Other interesting facts

- The tammar wallaby was the first 'kangaroo' seen by Europeans (in 1629) by the crew of the Dutch ship *Batavia* stranded near the Wallabi Islands in the Houtman Abrolhos off Geraldton.
- Tammar wallabies were so named because they were once common in Tamma (*Allocasuarina campestris*) thickets.
- Lifespan is approximately 11 years for males and 14 years for females.
- In semi arid areas such as the Abrolhos Islands, tammar wallabies are able to drink sea water when fresh water is unavailable.

Selected references

Poole, W. E., Wood, J. T. and Sims, N. G. (1991). Distribution of the Tammar and relationships of populations as determined by cranial morphometrics. *Wildlife Research* 18, 625-639.

Smith, M.J. and Hinds, L. (1995). Tammar 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.

Shephard, K.A., Wardell-Johnson, G.W., Longergan, W.A. and Bell, D.T. (1997). Diet of herbivorous marsupials in a *Eucalyptus marginata* forest and their impact on the understorey vegetation. *Journal of the Royal Society of Western Australia* 80: 47-54.

Anon. (1998). Bush Telegraph: Two More Mammals off the Threatened List. *LANDSCOPE* 13(4): 5.

Website links

http://www.naturebase.net/projects/west_shield.html

<http://www.ea.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/action/marsupials/13.html>

<http://www.ea.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/action/marsupials/26.html>

<http://www.geobop.com/mammals/Marsupialia/Diprotodontia/Macropodidae/>

<http://www.perthzoo.wa.gov.au/bushwalk.html>