

Black-flanked Rock-wallaby *Petrogale lateralis* (Gould, 1842)

Size

Head and body length
475–521 mm in males
446–486 mm in females

Tail length

320–606 mm in males
320–597 mm in females

Weight

2.3–7.1 kg



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

Subspecies

Four subspecies require management in Western Australia:

- *P. l. lateralis*
- *P. l. hacketti*
- *P. lateralis* (MacDonnell Ranges race)
- *P. lateralis* (western Kimberley race)

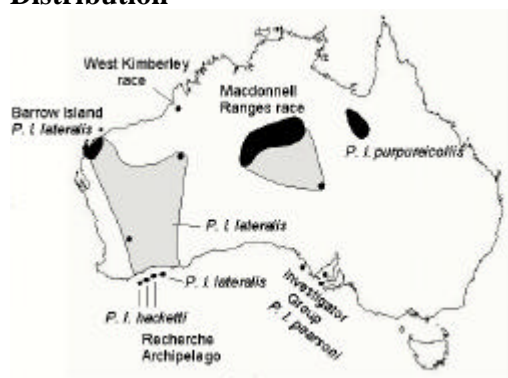
Description

Dark to pale grey-brown above, paler on the chest and dark brown on the belly. The face is dark with a white or sandy-brown cheek stripe. Dark brown to black dorsal stripe from between the ears to below the shoulders. Coat is thick and woolly particularly around the rump, flanks and base of tail. Tail has a slight bush on the end. Pelage often becomes lighter and browner in summer.

Other common names

Warru, refers to the Aboriginal name for *P. l. lateralis* in the western deserts.

Distribution



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

P. l. lateralis.

Formerly confined to suitable habitat in central and southern Western Australia, including Depuch, Salisbury and Barrow Islands. Current populations remain restricted to suitable habitat in the Little Sandy Desert, Cape Range, Wheatbelt, and Barrow and Salisbury Islands.

P. l. hacketti.

Restricted to three islands in southern Western Australia: Mondrain, Wilson, Westall Islands (Recherche Archipelago).

P. lateralis (western Kimberley race).

Known only from the Edgar Range, Erskine Range and possibly the Grant Range and nearby areas of the west Kimberley of Western Australia.

P. lateralis (MacDonnell Ranges race).

Formerly widespread in central desert regions of the Northern Territory, South Australia, and Western Australia. Distribution and abundance has declined to fragmented populations over most of the former range.

Habitat

Granite outcrops, sandstone cliffs and scree slopes in ranges with hummock grassland and occasional fig trees and low shrubs, caves, and coastal limestone cliffs.

Behaviour

The black-flanked rock-wallaby is a shy and wary animal, feeding at night in open areas of grass.

Diet

Grasses, herbs, leaves and fruits. Rock-wallabies do not need to drink, and conserve water by sheltering from the hot day-time temperatures in caves.

Breeding

Sexual maturity is reached between one and two years. Breeding can be continuous after this time, but varies in response to seasonal rainfall. A feature of their reproduction is embryonic diapause, where the developing embryo becomes dormant until conditions are right for it to continue to develop.

Threatening processes

P. l. lateralis.

Subspecies with largest range decline. Predation by foxes is known to have reduced populations in the wheatbelt and on Depuch Island, and is presumed to be the main cause of local extinction of most other populations. Other reasons for decline may include predation by feral cats and degradation of habitat resulting from grazing by sheep, goats and rabbits.

P. l. hacketti.

No decline recorded, but remains vulnerable to fire, feral predators or competitors due to its small population size and restricted distribution.

P. lateralis (western Kimberley race).

No evidence of decline recorded, but foxes have been responsible for the decline of other subspecies.

P. lateralis (MacDonnell Ranges race).

Predation by foxes. Habitat modification by, and competition for food with, rabbits, predation by feral cats, and changed fire regimes, are also believed to have contributed to their decline.

Conservation status

For all subspecies/races:

2000 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species

Vulnerable

Western Australian Wildlife Conservation Act

Threatened

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act

Threatened (Vulnerable)

Management

- Fire management around some colonies.
- Ongoing fox control around existing and future populations.
- Monitor existing populations.

Other interesting facts

- Although these rock-wallabies pair for life, the females will mate with different males.
- The long tail is important for balancing the animal when hopping among rocks.
- Rock-wallabies can also climb trees with sloping trunks.

Selected references

Eldridge, M.D.B. and Close, R.L. (1995). Black-footed Rock-wallaby. In R. Strahan (Ed.) *The Mammals of Australia*. Australian Museum and Reed Books. Chatswood, NSW.

Kinnear, J. (1995-96). Rock Wallabies of Yardie Creek. *LANDSCOPE* 11: 36.

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

Anon (1999). Threatened Animal Eats Threatened Plant. *LANDSCOPE* 14(3): 5.

Website links

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

http://www.naturebase.net/plants_animals/mammals_rock_wallabies.html

<http://www.ea.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/action/marsupials/20.html>