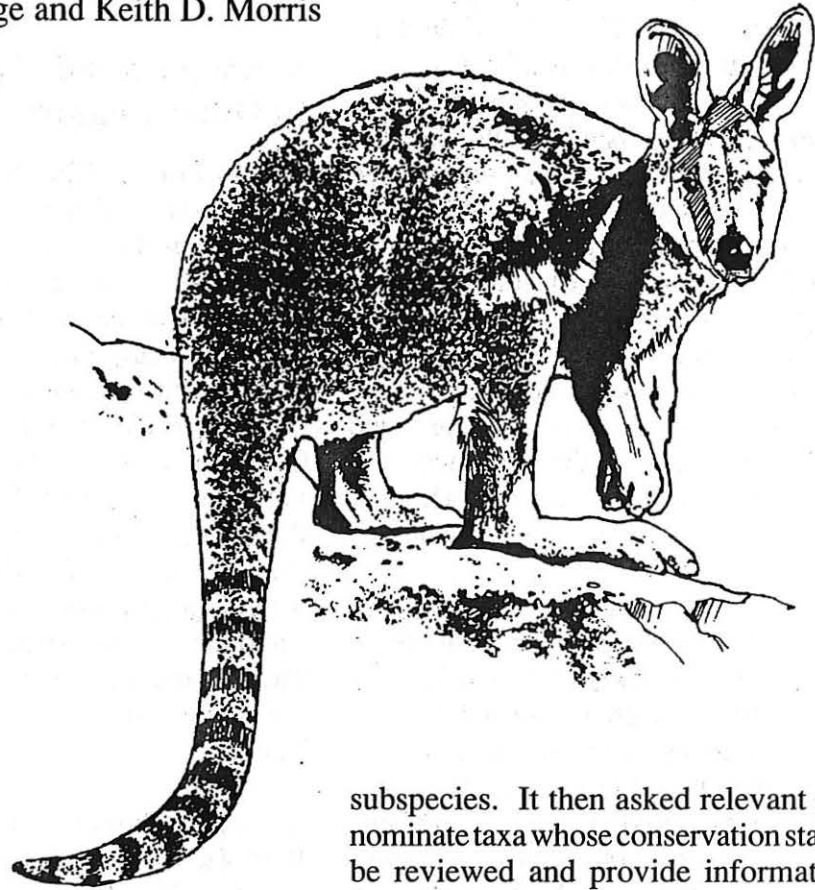


Australasian Marsupial and Monotreme Specialist Group

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The major activities of the AMMSG over the past three years have been to prepare a revised Action Plan for Australian Marsupials and Monotremes and to evaluate the status of all Australasian marsupial and monotreme taxa for the 1996 Red List.

Action Plan Summary

This Action Plan, which was prepared by the IUCN Species Survival Commission's Australasian Marsupial and Monotreme Specialist Group (AMMSG) for the Australian Nature Conservation Agency, reviews the conservation status of 209 taxa of Australian monotremes and marsupials: one species and three subspecies of monotremes and 112 species and 93 subspecies of marsupials.

AMMSG first developed a list of all Australian marsupial and monotreme species and

subspecies. It then asked relevant experts to nominate taxa whose conservation status should be reviewed and provide information about them. Initially, we provided a draft list based on taxa included in the current Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council (ANZECC) List of Threatened Australian Vertebrates. All taxa of conservation concern were then scored against a modified ranking scheme based on that of Millsap *et al.* (1990) and against the 1994 IUCN Red List categories.

A workshop of specialists was held in December 1995 to review progress and finalize the allocation of taxa to IUCN categories. This workshop also developed criteria for allocating taxa to the IUCN category Lower Risk (near threatened).

The Action Plan lists 16 taxa as Extinct (EX), one as Extinct in the Wild (EW), five as Critically Endangered (CR), 17 as Endangered (EN), 31 as Vulnerable (VU), one as Lower

Risk (conservation dependent) (LR(cd)), 41 as Lower Risk (near threatened) (LR(nt)), and three as Data Deficient (DD).

The proportion of the total number of taxa in each category is EX - 7.7%, EW - 0.5%, CR - 2.4%, EN - 8.1%, VU - 14.8%, LR(cd) - 0.5%, LR(nt) - 19.6%, DD - 1.4%. The proportion of threatened taxa (CR + EN + VU) of the total number of extant taxa (193) is 27.5%.

Recovery Outlines are presented in the Action Plan for all taxa listed as EW, CR, EN, and VU. Briefer Taxon Summaries are presented for taxa listed as LR(cd), LR(nt) and DD.

The Action Plan highlights the extraordinarily high proportion of Australian marsupials that are threatened with extinction. The main causes of extinction and decline in marsupials are fairly well understood and include the introduction to Australia of predators such as the red fox and feral cat, the introduction of feral herbivores such as the rabbit, and habitat destruction through land clearing and changed fire regimes.

However, the Action Plan also shows that there have been significant improvements in the status of some species over the past decade through scientific research, and habitat and feral predator management. In the 1992 Action Plan, the woylie (or brush-tailed bettong) was listed as Endangered; in this Action Plan it is listed as Lower Risk (conservation dependent) because its numbers and extent of occurrence have increased markedly through fox control and translocations. As well, knowledge about the ecology and conservation requirements of many taxa have greatly improved in recent years and there is an increased level of conservation management.

The Action Plan, through the Recovery Outlines and Taxon Summaries, shows what needs to be done to conserve Australia's marsupials and monotremes. In most cases, what needs to be done is clear; what is required is the commitment and resources to carry out the necessary work.

Marsupials and Monotremes In Other Countries

In ascribing IUCN Red List categories to monotremes and marsupials from Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, and the Pacific Islands, the AMMSG was again made only too aware of the lack of information on the conservation status of many taxa. The publication of a revised and updated edition of *Mammals of New Guinea* by Tim Flannery (Reed Books, Chatswood, NSW, Australia, 1995) and of Flannery's new book *Mammals of the South-West Pacific and Moluccan Islands* (Reed Books, Chatswood, NSW, Australia, 1995) was of great assistance, but the distribution and status of many species is still poorly known. There is an urgent need for more field work on the marsupials of New Guinea and nearby islands.

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