

BLACK-FOOTED ROCK WALLABY FACTSHEET

Black-footed rock wallabies are highly agile macropods able to move bound expertly through very rugged and steep areas. They are found in the arid zone of Central Australia. Once widespread in the central desert regions of the Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia, the black-footed rock wallaby is now found in only a few scattered locations.

What do they look like?

Black-footed rock wallabies grow to just half a metre tall. They are smaller and much more finely built than euros (common wallaroo), which are found in similar areas.

There are five subspecies of the black-footed rock wallaby, which are distinguished by their geographic range and differences in their size and fur colouration. Their fur ranges from dark to pale and helps the wallabies to blend in with the rocks. Generally they are grey-brown above the chest, paler on the chest itself, dark brown on the belly and have a dark bushy tail. Their faces are dark brown with a white or sandy brown dorsal stripe from between the ears to below the shoulders. The soles of its feet are heavily textured, which stop it from slipping on the rocks.



Brush-tailed rock wallabies are closely related to the Rothschild's rock wallaby and like them, are very timid, never venturing far from their rock shelters. The two species can be distinguished by the dorsal stripe, which is not present on the Rothschild's rock wallaby.

Where do they live?

Black-footed rock wallabies live in rocky escarpment country, gorges, granite outcrops, sandstone cliffs and scree slopes in ranges with hummock grassland, occasional fig trees and low shrubs, caves and coastal limestone cliffs. They rely on narrow crevices and small caves for shelter and protection from predators.

The stronghold of black-footed rock wallabies is in the MacDonnell Range near Alice Springs in the Northern Territory. Historically ranging throughout the central desert region from the Tanami Desert in the north, south to the Musgrave and Petermann Ranges, and westward to the Gibson and Great Sandy Desert, this species has now disappeared from much of the southern and western parts of its range. Outside of the MacDonnell Ranges the black-footed rock wallaby is reduced to small, fragmented populations surviving in isolated range systems.

The Threatened Species Network is a community-based program of the Australian Government's Natural Heritage Trust and WWF Australia.

Did you know...?

- Different indigenous communities have a number of names for this species:
 - the Pitjantjatjara people call it the Waru;
 - the Arrernte call it the Arrwe;
 - the Kwelharre call it the Kavtetve.
- Rock wallabies lived in the Uluru area up until the late 1970s.
- The rock wallaby's long tail is very important for providing the balance needed to hop from one rock to another.

Wallaby Facts

The scientific name of the black-footed rock wallaby is *Petrogale lateralis*.

Conservation status:

International -
Vulnerable

Australia-wide -
Vulnerable

South Australia -
Vulnerable

Northern Territory -
Vulnerable

Western Australia -
Threatened

What do they eat?

Black-footed rock wallabies feed at dawn and dusk on a range of native grasses, herbs, low shrubs and fruits. They are most active during early evening when they leave their shelter to feed, but they usually stay within the protection of the rocky hills.

Black-footed rock wallabies do not need to drink much water to survive. Depending on the season, the majority of the water that rock-wallabies need comes from their food, so they are able to live in places where there is no permanent water supply. In order to minimise water loss, these wallabies seek shelter in caves during the hottest hours of the day.

Other Characteristics

The black-footed rock wallaby is a very shy and wary animal. They tend to live in groups of between ten and one hundred members. Very little is known about the social system of these groups.

Sexual maturity is reached between one and two years. After this time breeding can occur at any time of the year but varies in response to seasonal rainfall. The gestation period and oestrus cycle are both about 30 days. As with other marsupials, new born rock wallabies are very undeveloped and suckle inside their mother's pouch. Unlike other kangaroos and wallabies, young rock wallabies that have left the pouch but are not yet weaned do not stay with their mothers continuously. While their mother goes off to feed they are often left in a sheltered area. This may be because of the treacherous terrain in which the rock wallabies live.

What is threatening them?

The main threatening process for black-footed rock wallabies is predation by introduced foxes. Predation by dogs and cats is also a significant problem for the rock wallabies, especially around the fringes of Alice Springs. Cats are particularly known for killing joeys. Competition for food with rabbits is another pressure rock wallabies face. In the Alice Springs region there is some concern that the recent invasion of buffel grass (*Cenchrus ciliaris*) into the rocky ranges. Buffel grass is replacing some of the key food plants of the rock-wallabies.

For further information

WWF Australia website - www.wwf.org.au

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References

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How You Can Help

- Leave your pets at home when you go into the bush, or if you choose to take your dog, keep it on a lead so that it does not chase wildlife.
- De-sex your pets and keep them inside at night so they do not hunt native wildlife.
- Report any rock-wallaby sightings to park rangers, Parks and Wildlife staff or TSN.
- Avoid trying to tame rock-wallabies (or other wildlife) by feeding them. Tame wallabies are more susceptible to predators. Also, unnatural foods can lead to serious health problems.