

## Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby (*Petrogale penicillata*)

### Conservation Status

**NATIONAL: Vulnerable**

(Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999)

### Description

The Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby is small to medium in size, standing 60-65 cm tall and adults weighing 6-8 kg. Upper body fur is generally brown, with a rufous (reddish brown) patch surrounding the hind-quarters. The face has a pale cheek-stripe. Ears are black outside and yellowish on the inside and the tail is long, 500-600 mm, and characteristically brushy at the end.

### Habitat

Found in a wide variety of habitats including rainforest, wet and dry sclerophyll forest, open woodland and semi-arid country, where there is suitably rocky terrain with caves or rock crevices and overhangs for shelter. Slopes with a northerly aspect, where the wallabies can bask in the sun, are preferred.

### Distribution

Once widespread in areas of eastern Australia, this rock-wallaby is now only found in fragmented populations in southern Qld, NSW, and Victoria.

The Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby was successfully introduced to Hawaii and New Zealand. On some of the New Zealand Islands it has reached pest proportions and is regularly culled. Efforts by several Australian conservation organisations (including FAME) resulted in the rescue and return of some 30 animals from New Zealand's Kawau Island. These were established at several sites in NSW and Victoria, including Mt Rothwell.

### Food

These herbivores are active and forage for food in the evening and early morning. Their diet consists of grasses, herbs, shrubs as well as flowers and some fruits. They have been found to forage over a home range of estimated between 6-30ha.

### Breeding

The Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby lives about 5 to 10 years in family groups consisting of 2 to 5 adults with 1 to 2 juveniles. Sexual maturity is reached at 1 to 2 years of age. Dominant males associate and breed with up to four females. Breeding may occur at any time of the year. A single joey is born after a gestation of 30 days. Young stay in the pouch for 6 months and are weaned at 9 months.

### Threats

Hunting was major contributor to the early decline in numbers of the rock wallaby. Between 1884 and 1914 bounties were paid on over half a million rock-wallabies in New South Wales.

Current threats to survival include predation by foxes, cats and wild dogs, and competition for food and shelter by goats and rabbits. Habitat degradation, fragmentation and loss, changes in fire regimes, small population size, bioclimatic factors and diseases passed from feral cats also pose threats to the ongoing viability of wild populations of Brush-tailed Rock-wallabies.

### Recovery Plan

Recovery actions include maintaining a captive breeding programme, monitoring existing populations, maintaining predator control, carrying out research, and providing community education. FAME is working closely with Mt Rothwell Biodiversity Interpretation Centre as a key pillar in the state-wide recovery program.

### References & More Information

Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts 2010. *Petrogale penicillata* in *Species Profile and Threats Database*. [www.environment.gov.au/sprat](http://www.environment.gov.au/sprat).

Strahan R (Ed) 1995. *Mammals of Australia*. The Australian Museum Trust. Reed New Holland, Australia.

Wildlife Queensland 2010. *Brush-tailed Rock-wallabies*. [www.wildlife.org.au/wildlife/speciesprofile/mammals/brush\\_tailed\\_rock\\_wallaby.html](http://www.wildlife.org.au/wildlife/speciesprofile/mammals/brush_tailed_rock_wallaby.html)



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