

Threatened Fauna of the Hunter & Mid Coast



Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby {*Petrogale penicillata*}

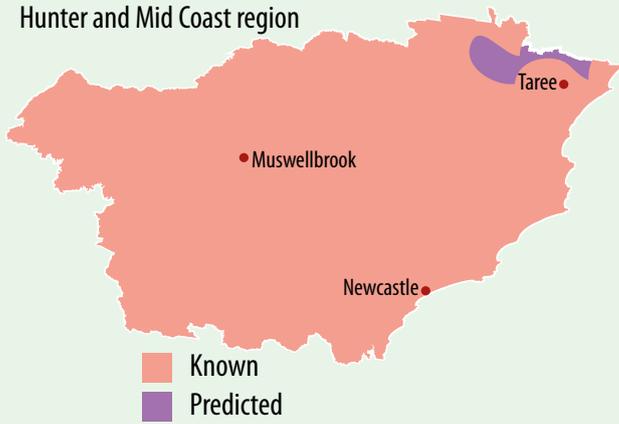
Before European settlement of Australia, the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby was abundant and widespread, inhabiting a wide variety of rocky habitats within rainforest, eucalypt forest and open woodland. However over the past few decades, its population has declined significantly.

This species prefers rocky habitats, such as cliffs, boulder piles and rocky outcrops. Brush-tailed Rock-wallabies prefer sites with a northerly aspect, where they can sun themselves in the morning and evening. They are highly agile animals that can move swiftly by means of careful bounds through rugged and precipitous areas. This agility is attributed to their long flexible tail used for balance and their short, flexible, well-padded, rough-textured feet which provide grip.

The main threats facing the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby today include loss of habitat, population isolation, predation from foxes, wild dogs and feral cats, as well as competition with feral goats and pigs.

The Hunter-Manning region is home to some of the most extensive areas of habitat for the Brush-tailed Rock-wallabies.

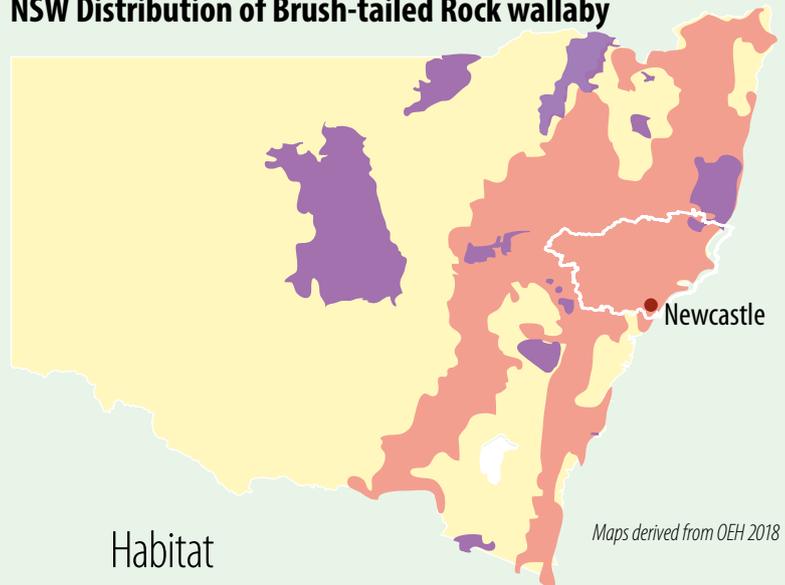
Hunter and Mid Coast region



The areas shown in pink and purple are the sub-regions where the species or community is, or known to occur. They may not occur throughout the sub-region but may be restricted to certain areas. The information presented in this map is only indicative and may contain errors and omissions.

The known distribution represents historical sightings, however distribution has considerably reduced, as discussed below.

NSW Distribution of Brush-tailed Rock wallaby



Maps derived from OEH 2018

Are Brush-tailed Rock-wallabies found near you?

Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby range extends from south-east Queensland to the Grampians in western Victoria, roughly following the line of the Great Dividing Range. However, the distribution of the species across its original range has declined significantly in the west and south and has become more fragmented.

Eighty per cent of today's population is found in northern NSW. The gorges of the western Manning valley are home to one of the state's most significant populations at Woko and Curracabundi National Parks and Mernot Nature Reserve. These parks provide extensive core habitat for the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby in a region where it is otherwise fragmented. The rocky Mernot Ridge west from Monkeycot Bluff is known as a key site for a significant population of this species, with the north-facing slopes of the ridge providing some of the best areas of Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby habitat in the Barnard River valley which, in turn, provides the most extensive area of habitat for this species in the Hunter – Mid Coast regions.



Why is this species important?

The Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby is an iconic species in NSW that the community is particularly keen to protect. Management efforts for Brush-tailed Rock-wallabies in this area will also assist general flora and fauna conservation by protecting and enhancing habitat.

The Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby's conservation status is currently listed as endangered in NSW and vulnerable nationally, being found only in small pockets of its former range.

Habitat

Brush-tailed Rock-wallabies occupy rocky escarpments, outcrops and cliffs with a preference for complex structures with fissures, caves and ledges, often facing north. These wallabies browse on plants in and adjacent to these rocky areas eating grasses and herbs as well as the foliage and fruits of shrubs and trees. They shelter or bask during the day in rock crevices, caves and overhangs and are most active at night. Habitat critical to survival of the species includes rocky refuge habitat, foraging habitat and the routes between them.

The Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby is highly territorial and stays within its own home range, an average of about 15 hectares. They live in family groups of two to five adults and usually one or two juvenile and young adults. Dominant males associate and breed with up to four females, and breeding is continual and not influenced by seasons.

Brush-tailed Rock-wallabies habitat usually includes steep rocky areas. Courtesy, David Illiff



Courtesy, P Thomas

Identification

The Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby has a characteristic, long and bushy, dark rufous (reddish brown) tail that is bushier towards its tip. It has long, thick, brown body-fur that tends to be rufous on the rump and grey on the shoulders. The fur on its chest and belly are paler. It also has a characteristic white cheek-stripe and a black stripe from its forehead to the back of its head. It is relatively small and muscular, which enables it to be fast and agile in its rocky habitat. The average weight of this species is about 8 kg for males and 6 kg for females.

Brush-tailed Rock-wallabies can often be confused with the larger and more common Swamp Wallaby.

Threats

The decline of the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby can be attributed to the following:

- Predation by feral foxes, cats and wild dogs
- Competition with feral goats, rabbits and stock
- Historical hunting for bounty and fur
- Habitat modification by changed fire patterns
- Genetic inbreeding due to isolation of small populations
- Invasion by exotic weeds and land clearing
- A decrease in dingo numbers over time may also be associated with the decline of the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby, as dingoes kept goats and foxes in check.



You can help Brush-tailed Rock-wallabies.



1. **Protect the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby and its habitat.** If you think you might have Brush-tailed Rock-wallabies on your property, or suitable habitat for this species, contact Hunter Local Land Services to see what assistance they can provide to help you to manage this land.



2. **Protect native vegetation** from clearing, invasion of weeds and ensure it is grazed appropriately.



3. **Undertake coordinated control of feral animals** such as wild dogs, cats, foxes and goats.



4. **Don't allow dogs to roam** or attack native wildlife.



5. **Follow all directions** from fire authorities to ensure that wildfires do not occur.



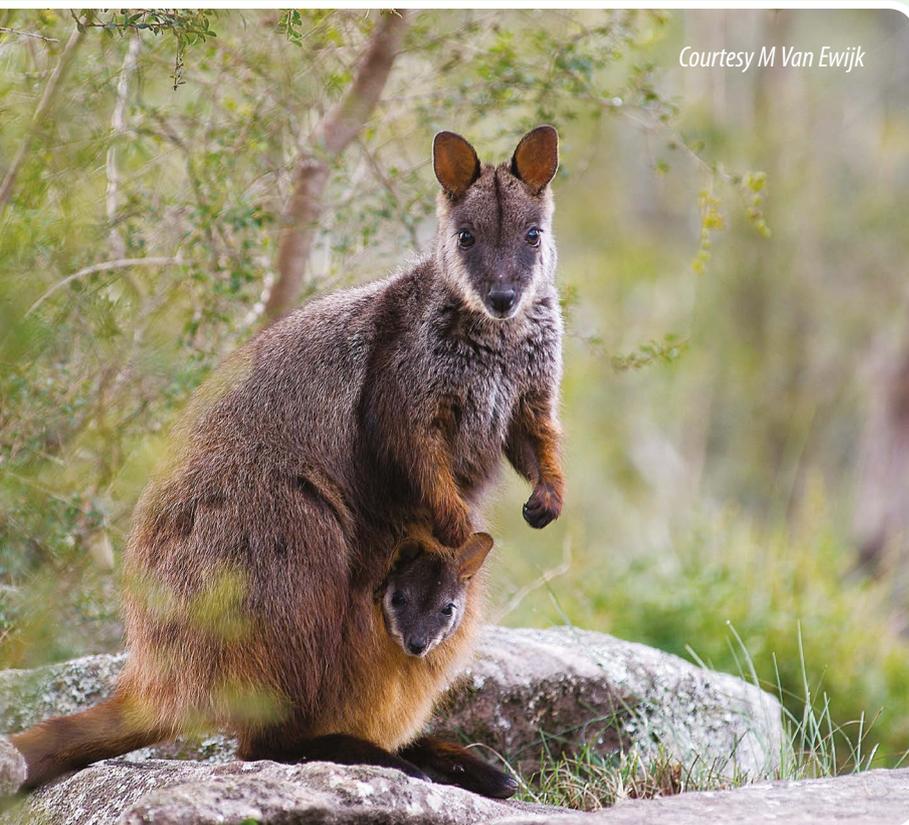
6. **Drive carefully** to avoid colliding with wildlife.



7. **Report sightings** to Atlas of Living Australia



8. **Spread the word** about this very special animal found in our region.



Courtesy M Van Ewijk

For more information contact

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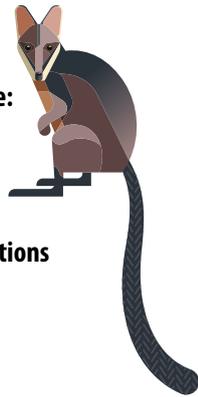
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Atlas of Living Australia

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