



FACT SHEET

YELLOW-FOOTED ROCK-WALLABY

Petrogale xanthopus xanthopus

Text By Nicki de Preu and Megan Harper.

The Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby was historically widespread in rocky habitat across inland areas of South Australia, New South Wales and Queensland. They are found in groups of up to several dozen individuals and a number of such groups that occur on separate rocky outcrops in a particular area form a 'colony'. Colonies are often separated by large expanses of unsuitable habitat.

DETECTION AND IDENTIFICATION

The Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby is fawn-grey above with white fur below and is distinguished from other rock-wallabies by its distinctive tail that is usually orange-brown in colour with irregular dark brown stripes. There can be considerable variation in the pattern and colours on the tail, with the tail tip differing from dark brown to white. They also have characteristic white cheek-stripes and their ears, forearms, hindlegs and feet vary from rich orange to bright yellow. Adult animals grow to an average head and body length of 600 mm (range 480–650 mm) and weigh between 6 and 11 kg. The distinctive striped tail can be up to 700 mm long.

HABITAT

Suitable habitat for the Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby consists of rocky outcrops, cliffs and ridges in arid and semi-arid country. These rocky outcrops provide shelter sites that enable the wallabies to escape extreme

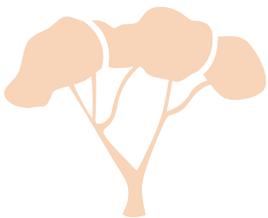
climatic conditions and refuge from predators. The steep slopes and narrow gullies provide shade for much of the day and lead to a milder micro-climate compared to surrounding areas.

The importance of permanent fresh water to Rock-wallabies is not clear. Some colonies can persist with access to small soaks at the edges of rock faces while others rely on permanent springs. Permanent water can be a disadvantage if it attracts high numbers of introduced and native grazers that lead to fouling of the water source and grazing impacts on the surrounding vegetation.

HISTORIC DISTRIBUTION

In South Australia, historical evidence suggests that the Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby was more abundant and widely distributed than they are today, occurring in suitable habitat throughout the Flinders, Gawler and Olary Ranges and the Eyre Peninsula. European settlers arriving in the Flinders Ranges in the 1860s reported seeing 'small droves of forty or fifty' animals. Since European settlement the Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby has declined dramatically in distribution and abundance, with several colonies becoming extinct as recently as 1981.

Ground-based surveys in the early 1980s and 2000–2002 recorded approximately 200 colonies throughout the Flinders Ranges from Telowie Gorge in the south to Brindana Gorge in the north. These surveys showed that, although the species has maintained its



Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby habitat.
Photograph by Keith Bellchambers.

Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby. Photograph by Lynn Pedler.



CONTACT US

South Australian Arid
Lands Natural Resources
Management Board

www.saalnrm.sa.gov.au

P. (08) 8648 5977

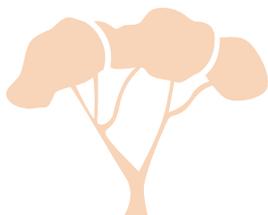
E. [aridlands@saalnrm.
sa.gov.au](mailto:aridlands@saalnrm.sa.gov.au)



Australian Government



Printed on 100%
Australian recycled paper

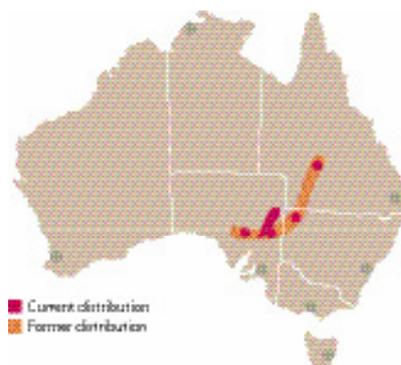


historic range, a number of local colony extinctions have occurred since the 1970s. In other parts of South Australia their decline has been even more dramatic with less than five colonies currently known from the western Gawler Ranges and seven in the Olary Ranges.

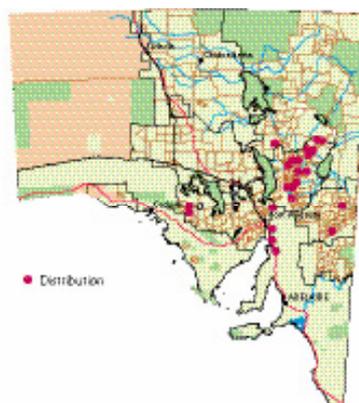
POTENTIAL THREATS

The decline of the Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby can be attributed to a number of factors including historic hunting for the fur trade. Currently, the most significant threat is predation by foxes, particularly juveniles. Habitat modification and competition for food resources from grazing by goats, and also rabbits, sheep and kangaroos can be detrimental in dry years. Competition from goats for shelter sites is also considered to be a threat. In some parts of their range, small population size means that colonies are at extreme risk of localised catastrophic events such as wildfire and may also experience problems associated with low genetic variability.

YELLOW-FOOTED ROCK-WALLABY DISTRIBUTION ACROSS AUSTRALIA



KNOWN DISTRIBUTION IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA



M:

CURRENT RESEARCH

Ongoing surveys are underway to further investigate population dynamics of Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby colonies in key areas across the species range in South Australia and to clarify how populations respond to the unpredictable 'boom and bust' conditions that characterise inland Australia. The impact of introduced predators and competitors is also of interest.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

If you have seen a Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby within or beyond the locations shown on the distribution maps please let us know. Please note the location (a GPS or map reference would be most helpful) to assist the relocation of the site. We will follow up all possible sightings as part of this study.

There are a number of ways in which landholders can assist with management activities aimed at improving Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby habitat including introduced animal control programs within known or potential habitat areas, specifically targeting herbivores (e.g. goats and rabbits) and predators (e.g. foxes and cats).

To report your observation or for further information about the Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby or this study please contact the South Australian Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board 8648 5977, or the Department for Environment and Natural Resources, 9 Mackay Street, Port Augusta 8648 5300.

RESOURCES

Ehmann, H. 2006. South Australian Rangelands and Aboriginal Lands Wildlife Management Manual: a resource handbook. Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation, South Australia.

Sharman G.B., Maynes G.M., Eldridge M.D.B. and Close R.L. 1995. Yellow-footed Rock-Wallaby, in R. Strahan (Ed.) The Mammals of Australia. pp 391–393. Angus and Robertson, Sydney.