

Zoos Victoria's Fighting Extinction Species

BRUSH-TAILED ROCK-WALLABY

Petrogale penicillata

Vulnerable



Photo: Gemma Ortlipp

Once widespread, the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby declined in Victoria until it was considered extinct by early last century. In the late 1930's it was rediscovered in East Gippsland and Grampians.

Today, the last remaining wild population is found in the Snowy River National Park, East Gippsland and a small reintroduced population is found in the Grampians National Park.

ZOOS
VICTORIA
Fighting Extinction

Zoos Victoria is committed to Fighting Extinction

We are focused on working with partners to secure the survival of our priority species before it is too late.



Using a long tail for balance, granulated foot pads to assist gripping to rocks, and rufous-coloured fur for camouflage, the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby (*Petrogale penicillata*) is expertly adapted to life on the rocky escarpments and granite outcrops of south-eastern Australia. In Victoria, the wild population is thought to contain around 40 individuals.

KEY PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

- Establish a captive breeding program of at least 200 adults.
- Enhance genetic diversity through a gene-pool mixing program.
- Prevent extinction of the Gippsland population by increasing population size to at least 50 mature individuals.
- Establish at least one new reintroduced population.
- Maintain or increase institutional and community support and awareness.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- Establishment of a second free-ranging breeding population within a predator exclusion compound at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve.
- Restored levels of genetic diversity arising from gene-pool mixing.
- Development and implementation of a strategy to reintroduce Brush-tailed Rock-wallabies to the wild.

THE SPECIES

The Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby is a medium-sized wallaby that shelters during the day within caves and crevices associated with complex rocky cliffs and emerge at night to feed on vegetation such as grasses and forbs. During the day throughout the cooler months the species will bask in sunshine on cliff ledges.

The species' range extends from Victoria to south-eastern Queensland. Within this distribution, three genetically-distinct groups exist, the southern population in Victoria, a central population in NSW and a northern population in northern NSW and south-eastern Queensland. Of these, the southern population in Victoria is most threatened, and classified as Critically Endangered within that state.

In Victoria, the last known population of wild Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby is isolated to a single gorge in a remote part of East Gippsland. In 2008, this population was thought to contain fewer than 20 individuals.

Thanks to the dedicated efforts of several project partners, these wallabies have been protected from introduced predators and slowly their numbers have increased to about 40 individuals. There is also a small number of reintroduced animals at one site in the Grampians. A captive-breeding program has been in place for more than a decade, involving Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, Adelaide Zoo, Adelaide University and Mt Rothwell. Zoos Victoria is working with Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve in the ACT to create a second predator exclusion compound capable of supporting free-ranging rock-wallabies. This insurance population will support future reintroductions of the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby to rocky outcrops in Victoria.

Once abundant, historic hunting for pelts combined with predation by foxes has resulted in fewer than 50 Brush-tailed Rock-wallabies remaining in the wild in Victoria, making it our State's most Critically Endangered species of mammal. Changes in vegetation patterns and fire regimes will elevate the risk to this species under climate change.

THE PLAN

Over the coming five years, priority actions are to:

Design, implement and monitor a translocation strategy to support the wild population and establish at least one new wild population.	\$715,000
Assist partners to maintain and strengthen the free-ranging insurance population at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve & Mt Rothwell and produce young for release to the wild.	\$150,000
Search for remnant populations.	\$60,000
Integrate the plight of the wallaby through the annual 'hop fest' event to increase community care and knowledge of the species and generate support for the conservation projects.	\$10,000
Total cost over five years	\$935,000

How can I help?

You can support our Wildlife Conservation Master Plan 2019-2024 by donating at:
zoo.org.au/donate

PROGRAM PARTNERS

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
delwp.vic.gov.au

Mt Rothwell Biodiversity Interpretation Centre
mtrothwell.com.au

Parks Victoria
parkweb.vic.gov.au

Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve
tidbinbilla.act.gov.au