

## THREATENED SPECIES OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY



# RED-TAILED PHASCOGALE

## *Phascogale calura*

### Conservation status

Australia: Endangered.

Northern Territory: Extinct.

### Description

The red-tailed phascogale is a medium-sized carnivorous marsupial (body mass of males, 60 g; females, 43 g) that formerly occurred in central Australia and inland southern Australia. The species has a brown body and long tail (longer than the head-body length), that is black and bushy at the tip and has a red base.

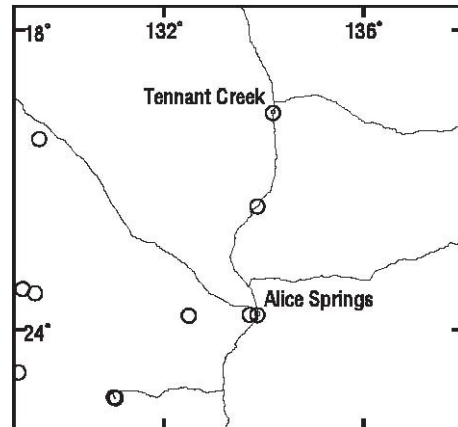
### Distribution

It is now restricted to pockets of woodland in southwest Western Australia.

In the NT, it occurred widely across arid and semi-arid areas, extending as far north as Tennant Creek (Parker 1973; Burbidge *et al.* 1988). A recent unconfirmed report has been obtained in the vicinity of the Wallace Rockhole community.

#### *Conservation reserves where reported:*

None (although it formerly occurred in areas that are now included within Uluru Kata-Tjuta National Park and West MacDonnell National Park.)



Known locations of the red-tailed phascogale.  
o = pre 1970

### Ecology

In central Australia, the red-tailed phascogale occupied sandhills and hilly country and sheltered in hollow limbs in eucalypts (especially bloodwoods) (Burbidge *et al.* 1988).

The species is strictly nocturnal and mostly arboreal, although it feeds extensively on the ground. The diet consists of insects and other invertebrates, small mammals and birds. The red-tailed phascogale had a reproductive strategy that is typical for a carnivorous marsupial in featuring a die-off of all males in spring following an intense three week mating period in July. Average male lifespan is 11.5 months and that of females is 2 or 3 years.

### Conservation assessment

The red-tailed phascogale is presumed to have become extinct in the NT in the 1950s, following a broad-scale decline extending over at least the previous 50 years (Burbidge *et al.* 1988). The limited historical evidence suggests that it was probably



## ***Threatened Species Information Sheet***

uncommon or localised even before the advent of European settlement (Finlayson 1961; Burbidge *et al.* 1988)

### **Threatening processes**

The decline of the red-tailed phascogale in central Australia is attributed to predation by cats and foxes and frequent burning of suitable habitat that prevented the establishment of climax vegetation communities.

### **Conservation objectives and management**

The species is on display in the nocturnal house of the Alice Springs Desert Park and a trial reintroduction within the Park is planned for 2007.

### **Compiled by**

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### **References**

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- Finlayson, H.H. (1961). On central Australian mammals, Part IV. The distribution and status of central Australian species. *Records of the South Australian Museum* **41**, 141-191.
- Parker, S.A. (1973). An annotated checklist of the native land mammals of the Northern Territory. *Records of the South Australian Museum* **16**, 1-57.

