

Study reveals Australia has worst mammal record

Roos face extinction

Daryl Passmore

THEY are among Australia's most distinctive animals, but wildlife experts warn that many of the smaller members of the kangaroo and wallaby family are in danger of extinction.

Six of the macropod species that existed before human settlement are already extinct and another 23 — nearly one-third of the total — are at risk, according to research conducted for World Wildlife Fund Australia to mark National Threatened Species Day next Sunday.

"Australia has the worst record of mammal extinction in the world," said Kat Miller, WWF's threatened species national manager.

"Incredibly, half the mammals that have become extinct globally in the last 200 years have been Australian species.

"We cannot afford to let more of our unique Australian animals disappear forever."

Two of the top five most-threatened macropods are in Queensland.

Leading the list is the bridled nail-tailed wallaby. Believed extinct until they were rediscovered near Dingo, 160km west of Rockhampton, the only known population is in the Taunton National

Park. And at No.3 is the northern bettong. Once spread from Rockhampton to Cairns, it is now only known to be in three isolated locations: the Lamb Range in the Atherton Tableland, Paluma near Townsville and Mt Zero, northwest of Townsville.

"These beautiful creatures are now threatened with extinction, facing dangers such as habitat loss, introduced cat and fox predators, altered fire regimes and now climate change," Ms Miller said.

Overall, 20 per cent of Australia's animal and plant species are threatened.

"Without urgent action, we risk losing more of the 346 animal and 1249 plant species that are listed as threatened under federal legislation," Ms Miller said.

WWF is urging people to get involved in nature conservation efforts by joining groups or assisting with activities such as tree-planting and revegetation schemes — as well as ensuring domestic animals do not escape and become feral.

Threatened Species Day is held on September 7 each year to mark the day in 1936 when the last Tasmanian tiger died in Hobart Zoo.

For more animal pictures, visit www.esundaymail.com.au/links

AUSSIES IN PERIL

Our five most threatened macropods:

1. Bridled nail-tailed wallaby (Qld)

Thought to be extinct until a small group was found near Dingo in central Queensland in 1973. Now estimated that a few hundred survive in Taunton National Park.

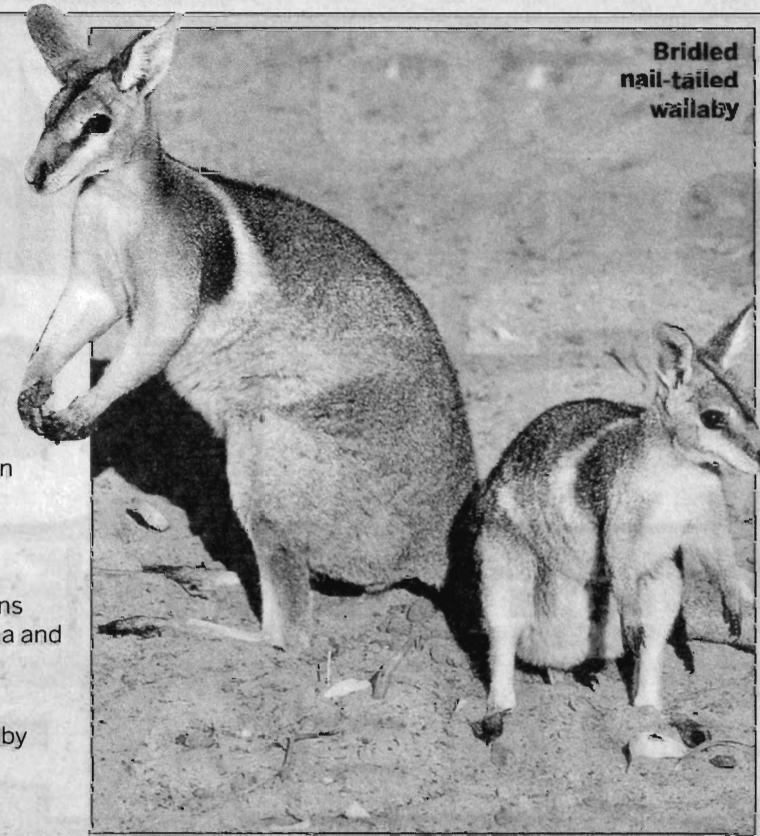
2. Gilbert's potoroo (WA)

3. Northern bettong (Qld)

Small and declining populations remain at Lamb Range, Paluma and Mt Zero in north Queensland.

4. Long-footed potoroo (Vic)

5. Nabankek, pygmy rock wallaby (WA/NT)



Bridled nail-tailed wallaby



Northern bettong

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— Kat Miller, WWF