

Wildlife Fact Sheet # 1

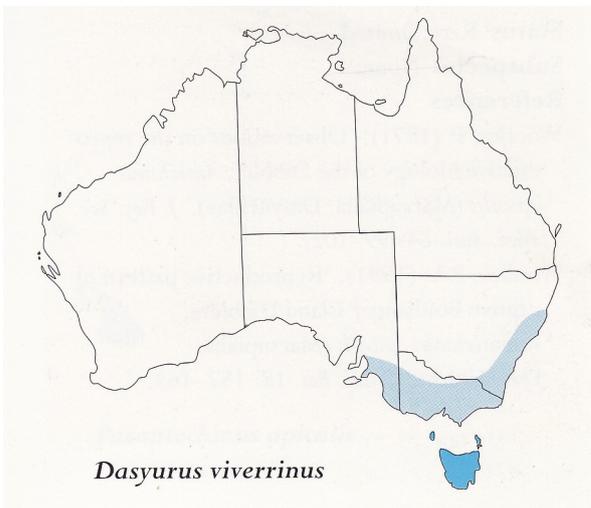
Eastern Quoll *Dasyurus viverrinus*

Known by the early settlers as a native cat, the Eastern Quoll has white-spotted black or fawn coloured fur. The most common variation is grey-fawn with only about 10% of the Tasmanian population found to be black. The lack of spots on the tail helps distinguish them from their slightly larger cousin, the Tiger Quoll (or Spotted-tail Quoll). Males normally weigh around 1.1kg, with females weighing about 700g. Large males may grow up to 2kg and 50cm in length from nose to tail.



Conservation Status:

Eastern Quolls have completely disappeared from their southeastern range on the mainland, classed as “Extinct” in Victoria and South Australia and today are only found in Tasmania. Quolls were once so numerous that they were considered vermin and a halfpenny bounty was paid for them. During the early 1900s a major epidemic struck that proved fatal for about 90% of the Eastern Quoll population, along with a host of other carnivorous marsupials. It is thought this disease may have been Toxoplasmosis, which was carried by domesticated cats when settlers brought them to Australia. The remaining quolls then suffered from a dramatic decline of their grassland and woodland habitat. Predation and competition from feral cats and foxes, along with changes in fire regimes, resulted in the final extinction of Eastern Quolls on the Australian mainland.



Habitat, Diet & Breeding:

In early settlement, Eastern Quolls were often seen sunning themselves on rock piles and fence posts. They also lived in open woodland and dry forest habitats, with males occupying home ranges of around 44ha and females 35ha. Population densities are dependent upon the availability of food as they are opportunistic carnivores. While their diet mainly consists of insects, they also take small vertebrates and kill their prey with a crushing bite to the back of the skull. Eggs from bird nests, grasses, seeds, fruits and carrion are also eaten.

Australian Ecosystems Foundation Inc.

Conserving and protecting Australian natural ecosystems



Mating occurs from mid-May until early June, and after a gestation period of 20-24 days, a female can give birth to up to 30 rice grain-sized babies. As she only has six nipples in her pouch, the first six young to attach are the ones to survive. They remain attached to the teat until mid August when they weigh about 200g and are too bulky for the pouch. Weaning is complete by about 112 days, timed so the young become independent when there is a flush of spring insects. They become sexually mature by the next breeding season and have an average lifespan of around 3 to 4 years.

Interesting Facts:

Eastern Quolls create dens in fallen logs, piles of rocks or dense tangled vegetation and they may consist of a number of grass-lined chambers. This small marsupial predator has a very important role to play in the Australian environment by controlling many species of animals that we consider pests such as locust, grubs, beetles, mice, rats and rabbits.

In Tasmania, where the species is still common, Eastern Quolls are most common in woodland and forest next to farmland. This farm environment provides Eastern Quolls with a variety of food items found in pastures and often use farm sheds and buildings for shelter.



The future:

The Australian Ecosystems Foundation Inc. is part of the Eastern Quoll Management Group, a collection of breeders across Australia who are ensuring the species will continue to survive. Improvements have been made in recent years in captive breeding with a focus now on research of wild Tasmanian animals and the possibility for future reintroductions into their natural habitats on the Australian mainland.

How you can help:

You can support the Eastern Quoll conservation programs by the Australian Ecosystems Foundation Inc through animal sponsorship, donations, or visiting our reserves. Visit our website for more details.