



CENTRAL ROCK-RAT *Zyzomys pedunculatus* RECOVERY PLAN

DESCRIPTION

The Central Rock-rat is a small native rodent weighing about 50-120g. It has harsh, long, yellow-brown fur above and cream or white fur below. Adults are strongly built and have a distinctive 'Roman nose' and a fat, carrot-shaped tail (Watts and Aslin 1981). Rock-rats are known to lose their tails, fur and skin very easily and are, therefore, difficult to handle.

DISTRIBUTION

The Central Rock-rat was first scientifically described in 1896 by Edgar Waite after the Horn Scientific Expedition to Central Australia. The specimens were found at Alice Springs and Illamurta in the James Range (Spencer 1896). H.H. Finlayson (1961) expanded the range of the species by including The Granites, Hugh Creek, Napperby Hills and Davenport Range although he described it as being rare. Cave deposits of bones show Central Rock-rats to have been present in the Cape Range (1993), Uluru/Kata-Tjuta National Park (Baynes & Baird 1992) and the West MacDonnell Ranges (Johnson & Baynes 1982). Anecdotal evidence also suggests that the species occurred at Mt Barkley and the Devil's Marbles.

Until the 1996 capture, the Central Rock-rat had not been seen since 1960 when a single specimen was caught raiding a stockman's tucker box near Mt Liebig. Since that time several species-specific searches in the former locations and general fauna surveys had been conducted in the West MacDonnell Ranges without success.

On September 3, 1996 Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers trapped an animal which was later identified from photographs as the Central Rock-rat. Since that time sub-populations have been found at 15 other sites over a small area of the West MacDonnell Ranges. The full range of the current distribution of the species is unknown.

STATUS

The Central Rock-rat meets IUCN Red List category 'Critically Endangered' under criteria B1+2a,b (IUCN 1994). Lee. (1995) listed it as Endangered & Critical using the earlier criteria of Mace & Lande (1991). The proposed ANZECC Threatened Fauna List 1999 lists *Zyzomys pedunculatus* as Critically Endangered using 1994 IUCN.

PARK COMPONENT

Investigate captive husbandry and breeding.

PROGRESS TO DATE

Some captive breeding occurred in the first few years following their rediscovery in 1996, but captive breeding has been sporadic and the underlying mechanisms are yet to be worked out. The Desert Park continues to investigate methods of captive breeding.

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

*Endangered Species Program
Parks & Wildlife Service (NT)
Alice Springs Desert Park
Dept of Conservation & Land Management
Threatened Species Network
Bushfires Council of the Northern Territory
Central Land Council*

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE(S)

1. Clarify the distribution, population size and trends and specific habitat requirements.
2. Develop and implement appropriate management strategies to secure the known sub-populations.
3. Maintain captive populations.
4. Investigate those aspects of the biology of the Central Rock-rat which can be carried out on captive animals.

Raise the profile of Central Rock-rats in the community.

