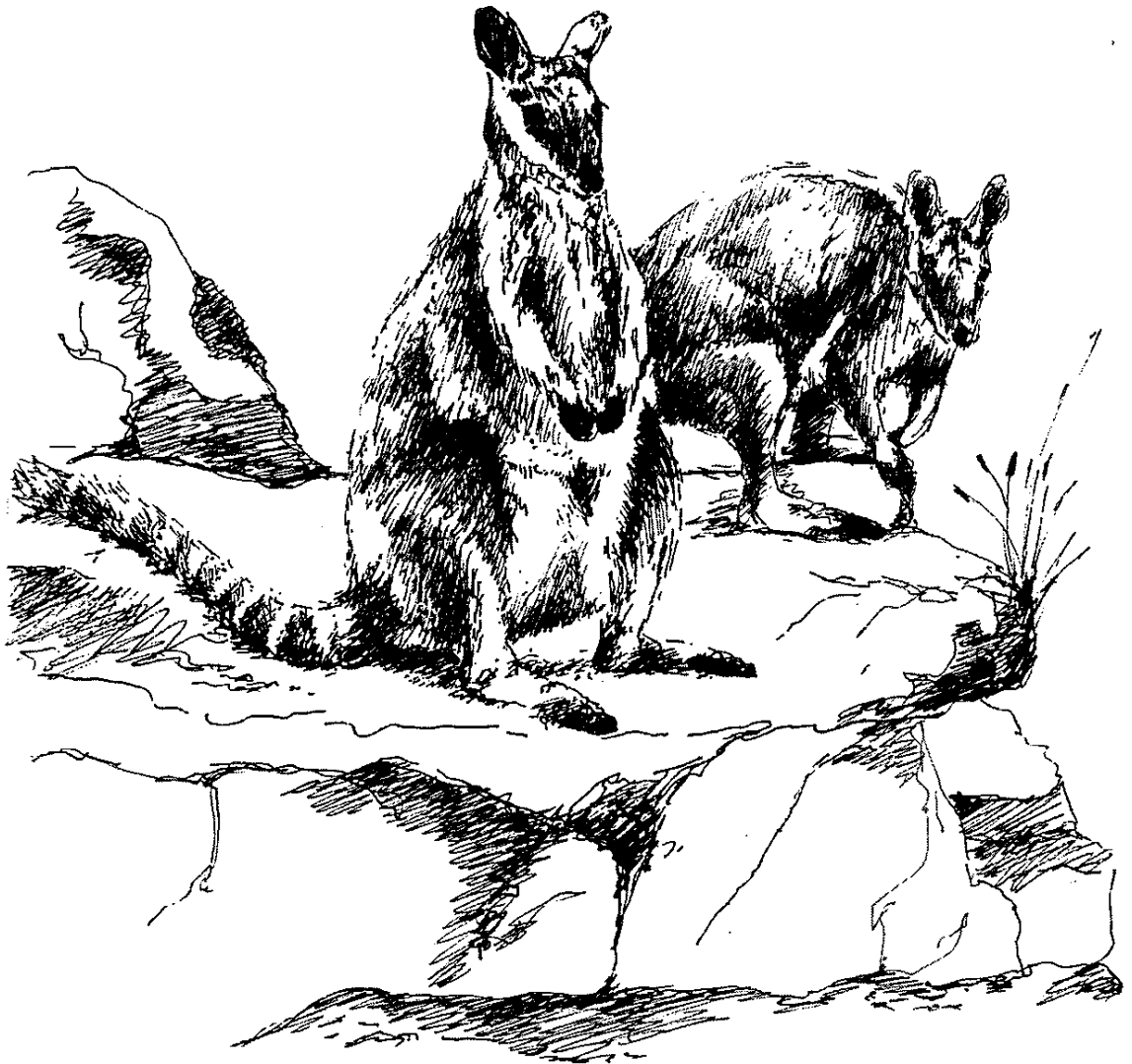


YELLOW-FOOTED ROCK-WALLABY



These colourful wallabies not only distinguished by their beauty and rarity, but they are also the faunal emblem of the Zoo. They are important exhibit animals at Adelaide and Monarto Zoos.

The Adelaide Zoo has successfully kept and bred these wallabies since it began in 1883. Until recently it was the only Zoo in the world to do so.

Yellow-footed Rock-wallabies are found mainly in the Flinders Ranges. They are also found in the Gawler and Barrier ranges in South Australia and the Grey Ranges in Queensland. The colonies of

wallabies are isolated and therefore vulnerable to extinction. Colonies are found only in about one quarter of their previous natural range. It is estimated that a population of approximately 13,000 individuals remains which means the Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby is a Threatened Species.

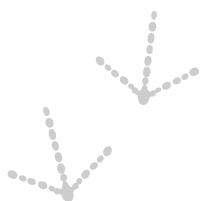
Observe the location of the animal in the Zoo. Their preference in the Zoo, as in the wild, is for rocky highland areas. These areas in central Australia are very dry and extremely hot during summer days. The Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby has certain physical features and behaviours to



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enable it to survive in such a harsh environment. To cope with the rocky landscape the Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby has powerful hind limbs for propulsion and a long tail for balance. Yellow-foots have granulated soles and stiff fringing hairs on their feet for extra grip on the rocks. Rocky areas provide shady and cool caves and ledges for sheltering from the summer heat. Another behavioural modification of the Yellow-foots is nocturnal activity. By feeding at night, especially in summer, not only is the wallaby able to avoid heat, but also it is able to reduce its need for water. This is because evaporation from the body is reduced. Yellow-footed Rock-wallabies will drink if water is available, but it appears that they can survive for much of the year without water by obtaining it from their food. Generally, grasses and herbs are eaten with browse from salt bushes and trees being important in summer.

To enable the population to recover quickly from a severe drought the Yellow-footed Rock-Wallaby has a most interesting means of reproduction. Females can 'store' an embryo until ready for the next baby. A female can then have a joey at foot, one in the pouch and one in the womb. She is able to reproduce two different milk compositions for her sucklings.

In the wild Yellow-footed Rock-wallabies are preyed upon by Dingoes, Wedge-tailed Eagles and Carpet Pythons. They were also hunted by Aboriginal people, but it was the hunting by Europeans for skins that brought about the initial decimation of colonies. Since then predators such as the introduced fox and cat and competitors such as the rabbit and goat have caused the Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby numbers to decline.

The colony of Yellow-footed Rock-wallabies at the Adelaide Zoo has provided valuable information about the captive husbandry of the species.

Improvements in breeding success has enabled further colonies to be established. Young Yellow-footed Rock-wallabies have been sent over seas and to other Australian zoos to create satellite colonies. The animals in these colonies may be mated at a later date to prevent in-breeding within a colony and reduce the risk of disease eliminating a colony. Presently Los Angeles Zoo and San Diego Zoo in the U.S.A., Perth Zoo and Pearl Coast Zoo in Western Australia, Western Plains Zoo in New South Wales and Cleland Wildlife Park in South Australia have colonies of the Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby. A large breeding group is also kept at the Monarto Zoo. Reintroduction into the wild of animals from Adelaide and Monarto Zoo began in late 1996.

The Yellow-footed Rock-wallabies at Adelaide Zoo also play another very important role. They are involved in the breeding program of another Rock-wallaby held at the Adelaide Zoo that is very close to extinction. Brush-tailed Rock-wallabies are found around the East coast of Australia and in recent years their numbers have declined dramatically. Adelaide Zoo has developed a cross-fostering breeding program that involves the Yellow-foots feeding and raising the Brush-tail Rock-wallaby joeys. This has boosted the numbers of Brush-tails in captivity and assured their survival. This breeding program has been copied successfully in zoos all over Australia and in 2005 received the Australasian Regional Association of Zoological Parks and Aquaria (ARAZPA) Award for Excellence in Research.

The survival of both the Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby and Brush-tailed Rock-Wallaby appears to be assured given the breeding successes at the Adelaide Zoo.

