

## Australian mammals at greatest risk from cats and foxes, new study

November 20 2018

---



The boodie or burrowing bettong is one of the top 12 Australian mammals vulnerable to cats and foxes. Credit: Hugh McGregor / Arid Recovery

New research led by the Threatened Species Recovery Hub has revealed which Australian mammals are most vulnerable to cats and foxes, and

many much-loved potoroos, bandicoots and bettongs, as well as native rodents, are at the top of the list.

Jim Radford from La Trobe University led a team of over 20 scientists and conservation managers on a study to categorise every Australian land [mammal](#) for their susceptibility to predation by [feral cats](#) and red [foxes](#). Dr. Radford said cats and foxes have already played a leading role in at least 25 mammal extinctions and this study would help prevent more.

"Knowing which species are most at risk will help us prioritise where cat and fox control is most needed," Dr. Radford said.

"It will also help conservation managers decide which species need the highest level of protection from introduced predators, which currently means being moved to islands or fenced conservation areas where they are out of reach of introduced predators.

"We found that 63 or about 1 in 3 surviving [mammal species](#) are highly susceptible to predation by cats and foxes.

The 12 surviving Australian mammal species most susceptible to foxes and feral cats (Australian conservation status in brackets):

- Gilbert's Potoroo *Potorous gilbertii* (Critically Endangered)
- Central Rock-rat *Zyzomys pedunculatus* (Critically Endangered)
- Eastern Quoll *Dasyurus viverrinus* (Endangered)
- Western Barred Bandicoot *Perameles bougainville* (Endangered)
- Eastern Barred Bandicoot *Perameles gunnii* (Endangered on mainland Australia)
- Rufous Hare-wallaby or Mala *Lagorchestes hirsutus* (Endangered on mainland Australia)
- Banded Hare-wallaby *Lagostrophus fasciatus* (Vulnerable)
- Djoongari or Shark Bay Mouse *Pseudomys fieldi* (Vulnerable)

- Boodie or Burrowing Bettong *Bettongia lesueur* (Vulnerable)
- Greater Stick-nest Rat *Leporillus conditor* (Vulnerable)
- Tasmanian Pademelon *Thylogale billardierii* (Extinct on mainland, surviving in Tasmania)
- Eastern Bettong *Bettongia gaimardi* (Extinct on mainland, surviving in Tasmania)



The greater stick-nest rat is one of the top 12 Australian mammals vulnerable to cats and foxes. Credit: Australian Wildlife Conservancy

The study was recently published in *Wildlife Research*.

Dr. Radford said that over the last 230 years, Australia has had the

highest rate of mammal extinction in the world, losing one to two [species](#) per decade since the 1850s.

"Foxes and cats have been a primary factor in the majority of these extinctions. Our study shows that introduced predators remain a significant threat to numerous mammals, many of which are clinging to survival by a thread," Dr. Radford said.

The Australian Government's Threatened Species Commissioner, Dr. Sally Box, said the research would support improved conservation of our most vulnerable mammals.

"Under the Australian Government's Threatened Species Strategy, there are ambitious targets to tackle the impact of feral [cats](#) and we are working with partners from across the country to address this threat. This research will help us to better target our efforts for improved conservation outcomes."



A feral cat in arid South Australia. Credit: Hugh McGregor / Arid Recovery

**More information:** *Wildlife Research*, [DOI: 10.1071/WR18008](https://doi.org/10.1071/WR18008)

Provided by La Trobe University

Citation: Australian mammals at greatest risk from cats and foxes, new study (2018, November 20) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-11-australian-mammals-greatest-cats-foxes.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private

study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.