

# Threatened species of the Northern Territory

## Lesser bilby

### *Macrotis leucura*

#### Conservation status

##### Australia: Extinct

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

##### Northern Territory: Extinct

Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1976

#### Description

The Lesser Bilby is a medium-sized marsupial with a body mass of 310–435 g. It is grey-brown above and paler below, with a white tail that is about 70% as long as the combined head and body length. The snout is long and delicate and the ears are large and rabbit-like. As its name suggests, the species was notably smaller than the Greater Bilby *Macrotis lagotis*.

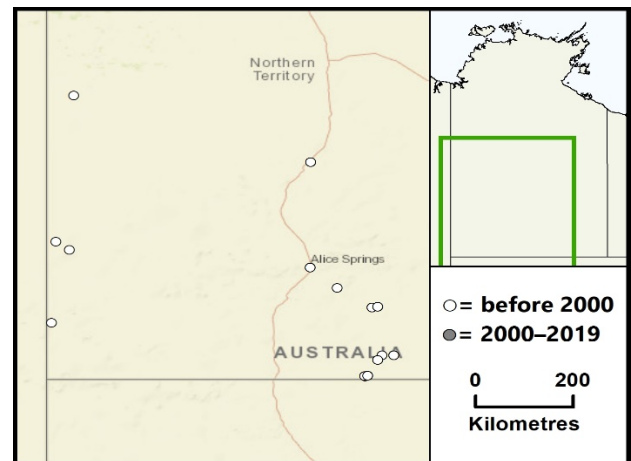
#### Distribution

The Lesser Bilby was formerly widely distributed in two evidently disjunct regions of inland Australia: northeastern South Australia and southeastern Northern Territory (NT), and the Gibson and Great Sandy Deserts of Western Australia and adjoining regions of the NT. Its occurrence in the western region is known only from Traditional Indigenous Ecological Knowledge<sup>1-2</sup>.

NT conservation reserves where reported: None.



Credit: MAGNT



Credit: Known localities of the Lesser Bilby in the NT ([nrmmaps.nt.gov.au](http://nrmmaps.nt.gov.au))

#### Ecology and life-history

The biology of the Lesser Bilby is poorly known. The species occurred in dunes and sandplains with spinifex, sometimes with mulga and/or tussock grasses<sup>1</sup>. Lesser Bilbies were nocturnal and sheltered during the day in a deep burrow dug amongst sand dunes. Its diet consisted of termites, ants and roots.

#### Threatening processes

The decline and extinction of the Lesser Bilby is attributed to a range of factors including predation by feral Cats *Felis catus* and Red Foxes *Vulpes vulpes*, habitat degradation by introduced

herbivores and livestock, and habitat modification resulting from altered fire regimes.

## Conservation objectives and management

As the Lesser Bilby is presumed to be extinct, there are no conservation objectives for the species.

## References

<sup>1</sup> Burbidge, A.A., Johnson, K.A., Fuller, P.F., Southgate, R.I. 1988. Aboriginal knowledge of animals of the central deserts of Australia. *Aust. Wildl. Res.* 15, 9–39.

<sup>2</sup> Johnson, K.A., Southgate, R.I. 1990. Present and former status of bandicoots in the Northern Territory, in: Seebeck, J.H., Brown, P.R., Wallis, R.L., Kemper, C.M. (Eds.) *Bandicoots and bilbies*, Surrey Beatty & Sons, Sydney, pp. 85–92.