

# Selected fauna of the Onslow region



Prepared by Ray Turnbull, Scott Thompson and Graham Thompson



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Terrestrial Ecosystems

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Published by:

Terrestrial Ecosystems  
10 Houston Place  
Mt Claremont, Western Australia, 6010.  
First published in 2013

ISBN – 978-0-9875497-0-9

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Images:

Upper left – *Gehyra pilbara*

Upper right – Rainbow Bee-eater (*Merops ornatus*)

Lower left – Euro (*Macropus robustus*)

Lower right – Sheep Frog (*Cyclorana maini*)

All images are taken by Terrestrial Ecosystems unless otherwise noted.

This document is formatted to print double sided.

## Table of Contents

Frogs of the Onslow region .....	1
<i>Cyclorana maini</i> – Sheep Frog.....	2
<i>Litoria caerulea</i> – Green Tree Frog .....	3
<i>Neobatrachus aquilonius</i> – Northern Burrowing Frog.....	4
<i>Neobatrachus fulvus</i> – Tawny Trilling Frog .....	5
<i>Notaden nichollsi</i> – Desert Spadefoot Toad.....	6
Geckos of the Onslow region .....	7
<i>Diplodactylus conspicillatus</i> – Fat-tailed Gecko .....	8
<i>Gehyra pilbara</i> .....	9
<i>Gehyra variegata</i> .....	10
<i>Heteronotia binoei</i> – Bynoe’s Gecko.....	11
<i>Lucasium stenodactylum</i> .....	12
<i>Nephrurus levis</i> .....	13
<i>Strophurus jeanae</i> .....	14
<i>Strophurus strophurus</i> .....	15
Legless lizards of the Onslow region .....	17
<i>Delma tincta</i> .....	19
<i>Lialis burtonis</i> – Burton’s Legless Lizard.....	20
<i>Pygopus nigriceps</i> .....	21
Dragons of the Onslow region .....	23
<i>Amphibolurus longirostris</i> – Long-nosed Dragon.....	24
<i>Ctenophorus isolepis</i> – Military Dragon .....	25
<i>Ctenophorus nuchalis</i> – Central Netted Dragon .....	26
<i>Ctenophorus rubens</i> .....	27
<i>Diporiphora adductus</i> .....	28
<i>Pogona minor</i> – Bearded Dragon.....	29
Skinks of the Onslow region.....	31
<i>Ctenotus grandis</i> .....	32
<i>Ctenotus hanloni</i> .....	33
<i>Ctenotus iapetus</i> .....	34
<i>Ctenotus maryani</i> .....	35
<i>Ctenotus pantherinus</i> – Leopard Skink .....	36
<i>Ctenotus quattuordecimlineatus</i> .....	37
<i>Ctenotus rufescens</i> .....	38
<i>Ctenotus saxatilis</i> – Rock Skink .....	39
<i>Eremiascincus fasciolatus</i> – Narrow-banded Sand Swimmer .....	40

<i>Lerista bipes</i> .....	41
<i>Lerista clara</i> .....	42
<i>Lerista onslowiana</i> .....	43
<i>Menetia greyii</i> .....	44
<i>Tiliqua multifasciata</i> – Centralian Blue Tongue .....	45
Goannas of the Onslow region .....	47
<i>Varanus brevicauda</i> – Short-tailed Pygmy Monitor.....	48
<i>Varanus eremius</i> – Pygmy Desert Monitor .....	49
<i>Varanus gouldii</i> – Sand Goanna .....	50
<i>Varanus panoptes</i> – Yellow-spotted Monitor.....	51
Blind snakes of the Onslow region.....	53
Ramphotyphlops species .....	54
Pythons of the Onslow region.....	55
<i>Antaresia stimsoni</i> – Stimson’s Python.....	56
<i>Aspidites melanocephalus</i> – Black-headed Python.....	57
<i>Liasis olivaceus barroni</i> – Pilbara Olive Python.....	58
Venomous snakes of the Onslow region .....	59
<i>Acanthophis pyrrhus</i> – Desert Death Adder .....	60
<i>Demansia psammophis</i> – Yellow-faced Whipsnake .....	61
<i>Fordiana leucobalia</i> – White-bellied Mangrove Snake.....	62
<i>Furina ornata</i> – Moon Snake .....	63
<i>Pseudechis australis</i> – Mulga Snake.....	64
<i>Pseudonaja mengdeni</i> – Gwardar .....	65
<i>Simoselaps anomalus</i> – Desert Banded Snake .....	66
<i>Suta punctata</i> – Spotted Snake.....	67
Mammals of the Onslow region .....	69
<i>Dasyurus hallucatus</i> – Northern Quoll.....	70
<i>Dasykaluta rosamondae</i> – Kaluta .....	71
<i>Macropus robustus</i> – Euro .....	72
<i>Pseudomys desertor</i> – Desert Mouse .....	73
<i>Pseudomys hermannsburgensis</i> – Sandy Inland Mouse .....	74
<i>Notomys alexis</i> – Spinifex Hopping Mouse.....	75
<i>Planigale</i> sp. ....	76
<i>Sminthopsis macroura</i> – Stripe-faced Dunnart.....	77
<i>Tachyglossus aculeatus</i> – Short-beaked Echidna.....	78
Birds of the Onslow region .....	79

# Frogs of the Onslow region





## *Cyclorana maini* – Sheep Frog



Image © Ray Turnbull



Grey-brown, olive-brown or green on its back with dark patches. Pale stripe down midline. Up to 45mm in length.

Call sounds like a bleating sheep.

Burrows into sandy clay soil and cocoons during dry season. It emerges after rain.



## *Litoria caerulea* – Green Tree Frog



Image © Ray Turnbull



Large, dark olive to bright green frog.

Often found in shower blocks, water tanks, toilets.

Call is a deep barking sound repeated regularly.

Has been introduced to Onslow and is prevalent around the town. It is often found around wet areas such as toilets and fish ponds in Onslow.

## *Neobatrachus aquilonius* – Northern Burrowing Frog



Large frog, up to 60mm, with a bright yellow or green back with dark brown/black mottling. Underside of legs plum coloured. May or may not have a midline stripe.

Burrows and cocoons during the dry season, emerging after rain. Call is a short trill. Mostly found in the sandy clay soils.

Very similar to *Neobatrachus fulvus*.



## *Neobatrachus fulvus* – Tawny Trilling Frog



Moderately large frog (up to 48mm), with a chocolate back covered in yellow spots and variegations. No longitudinal stripe is present.

Skin on flanks extends to knee so groin is indistinct.

Burrows and cocoons during the dry season, emerging after rain. Call is a short trill. Mostly found in the sandy clay soils.

Very similar to *Neobatrachus aquilonius*.

## *Notaden nichollsi* – Desert Spadefoot Toad



Image © Ray Turnbull

Large frog (up to 65mm) with very short legs. Colour ranges from dull orange, olive grey or brown. Groups of raised black tubercles present on the back.

Fingers and toes long and pointed and there is very little webbing between the fingers or toes.

A non-cocooning but burrowing species that is active during the night. It is found in the sandy areas, particularly on sandy dunes.

The call is a frequently repeated loud whoop, whoop, whoop.

# Geckos of the Onslow region





## *Diplodactylus conspicillatus* – Fat-tailed Gecko



Small terrestrial gecko (up to 9cm).

Body usually dark brown flecked with small whitish spots. Brownish white streak from the nostril to above the eye.

Short, wide depressed tail is diagnostic. Mostly lives in spider burrows in the ground and uses its tail to block the burrow from predators. Is wide spread in the arid region of Western Australia.



*Gehyra pilbara*



Small spotted terrestrial gecko (up to 11.5cm).

Body reddish-brown covered in well-separated black, brown and white spots.

Usually found in termite mounds. It occurs throughout the Pilbara and north into the southern Kimberley.

## *Gehyra variegata*



Small well-patterned arboreal or rock-inhabiting gecko (up to 11.5cm).

Can be grey or brown in colour, but is mostly brownish around Onslow. White markings on back are usually in contact with dark markings.

Frequently found in termite mounds and under the bark of trees.



## *Heteronotia binoei* – Bynoe's Gecko



Image © Ray Turnbull



Medium-sized terrestrial gecko (up to 12.5cm).

Highly variable colour pattern but generally reddish-brown in the Onslow area. Bands on back, if present, are narrow.

Dorsal tubercles are in rows and are large and noticeable.

It is also known as the 'rubbish tip' gecko as it is frequently found under rubbish left by humans.

## *Lucasium stenodactylum*



Image © Ray Turnbull

Long-tailed terrestrial gecko (up to 10cm).

Upper lateral surface is reddish-brown and usually marked with pale stripes. Large and small spots on back and flanks. Pale vertebral stripe divides at the base of the neck to form a V-shape on the head.

Blotches on top of tail, small spots on limbs and side of tail, streaks on upper lips.



## *Nephrurus levis*



Large terrestrial gecko (up to 15cm) with extremely wide and depressed tail and distinctive large head with big protruding eyes.

It has three white lines across neck and shoulders separated by dark wider lines with tubercles present on neck and back.

Upper surfaces dark purplish brown in juveniles, paler in adults.

## *Strophurus jeanae*



Image © Ray Turnbull

Small, extremely slender, long-tailed gecko (up to 9cm)

Obvious striped pattern on body with back greyish-white or yellowish white. It has a narrow brown vertebral stripe and a wide brown mid-ventral stripe.

Most often found in spinifex and has the capacity to change its colour quickly to reduce the chance of being seen.



## *Strophurus strophurus*



Large semi-arboreal gecko that's grows to 12.5cm with spines above eyes and on its tail.

Distinguishable from all other *Strophurus* geckos by yellow, orange or white rings on tail. These are most noticeable when the tail is gently flexed downwards.





# Legless lizards of the Onslow region



## *Delma haroldi*



Small, thin legless lizard with a brown to tan body. Narrow pale head banding present but often faded in adults. Pale bars mostly on side of fore body. Belly usually yellow.

Distinguished from other *Delma* species by having the fourth upper labial scale beneath the eye and two pairs of supranasal scales.



## *Delma tincta*



Small, thin legless lizard with a brown to tan body. Four dark head bands that are separated by narrower lighter bands though these are often faded or absent in adults.

Distinguished from other *Delma* species by having the third upper labial scale beneath the eye and one pair of supranasal scales.

## *Lialis burtonis* – Burton's Legless Lizard



Large legless lizard (up to 59cm).

Distinctive pointed snout.

Extreme variations in body colour which range from dark grey to pale brown to almost off-white, often with longitudinal stripes.

Exclusively a lizard eater that hunts its prey in the ground level vegetation.



## *Pygopus nigriceps*



Image © Ray Turnbull

Large legless lizard with a dark head. Body is brown and flecked with orange and black.

Differs from snakes in having a large fleshy tongue and an ear opening.

Most snake-like of the legless lizards. Often mistaken for juvenile brown snake.

Will readily drop its tail.

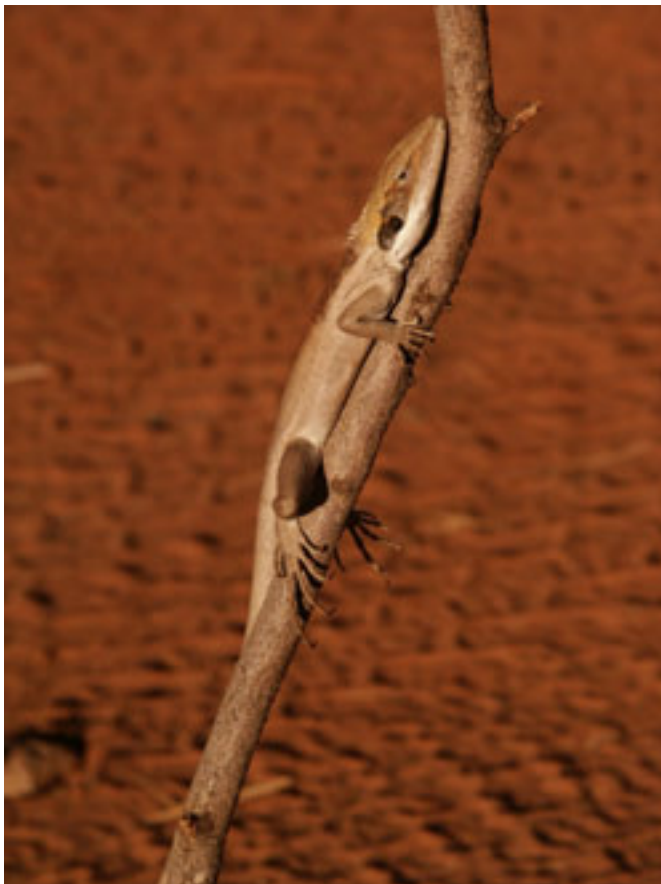


# Dragons of the Onslow region





## *Amphibolurus longirostris* – Long-nosed Dragon



Upper surfaces pale grey or fawn to reddish-brown and almost black. A broad white dorsolateral stripe is present.

Slender, long-tailed, long-snouted dragon (up to 47cm).

Breeding male has distinctive contrasting colour pattern.

Mostly commonly found along treed creek lines, but will live in urban areas.



## *Ctenophorus isolepis* – Military Dragon



Image © Ray Turnbull



Image © Ray Turnbull

Small to medium dragon (up to 23cm).

Upper surfaces reddish-brown with dark-edged yellow-brown spots. Series of dark spots above and below pale dark-edged dorsolateral stripe.

Throat of males is marked with black spots or bars.

Males are often seen displaying a head bobbing action in the presence of other males.



## *Ctenophorus nuchalis* – Central Netted Dragon



Medium-sized dragon (up to 28cm). Head is short and blunt. Body pale reddish-brown to bright orange-brown.

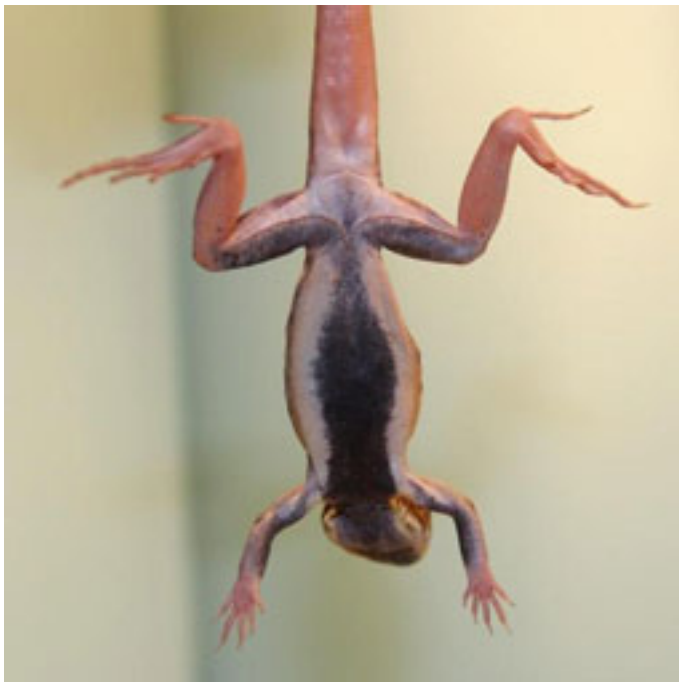
Reticulated pattern overlays head and body.

Claws are pale.

Will readily climb to the top of shrubs or up fence posts to bask in the sun and get a better view of its surrounds.



## *Ctenophorus rubens*



Medium-sized dragon (up to 29cm). Body is reddish brown with occasional pale stripes and spots. Pattern fades greatly in adults.

Male has extensive black areas on the underside.

Restricted to the Exmouth Gulf region in sandy areas with spinifex and shrubs. Often found in the sapphire areas around Onslow.

## *Diporiphora adductus*



Small slender dragon (up to 24cm).

Grey vertebral stripe is very wide and a whitish dorsolateral stripe extends to eye. A white stripe runs from the lips back to the neck.

Lower surfaces often broadly striped in grey and tail is often reddish.



## *Pogona minor* – Bearded Dragon



Small to moderately large bearded dragon (up to 41cm).

Single series of small erect spines along the side of the body.

Poorly developed beard consists of a transverse series of spines across back of head.

Back pattern is variable, and is able to lighten or darken its body colour to regulate its body temperature.





# Skinks of the Onslow region



## *Ctenotus grandis*



Large skink (up to 34.5 cm).  
Back reddish-brown with five  
dark brown dorsal stripes.  
Flecks on flanks mostly align  
vertically.

Irregular vertical whitish bars  
edged with brown on side of  
tail.

Similar to *Ctenotus hanloni* but  
adults much larger and nasal  
scales usually not in contact.

Commonly found in elevated  
areas such as sand dunes.



## *Ctenotus hanloni*



Medium-sized skink (up to 20cm). Back reddish-brown with five dark dorsal stripes. Flanks densely flecked with whitish spots.

Similar to *Ctenotus grandis* but adult *hanloni* are much smaller, and has its nasal scales in contact.

Very common in the Onslow region.

Inhabits low sand dune slopes and flats.

## *Ctenotus iapetus*



Medium-sized skink (up to 19cm). Back and sides usually black with 12 white or cream dorsal-lateral stripes.

Similar to *Ctenotus maryani*, however, the dorsal pattern extends over the nuchal scales onto the head.



## *Ctenotus maryani*



Medium-sized skink (up to 13cm).  
Back and sides usually blackish brown  
with white or cream stripes.

Unlike *Ctenotus iapetus*, the dorsal  
stripes do not extend beyond the  
nuchal (neck) scales.

Commonly found in spinifex tussocks  
on the top of dunes.

## *Ctenotus pantherinus* – Leopard Skink



Moderately large skink (up to 33cm).

Body is strongly patterned with obvious spots on back and sides. Spots are white bordered with black. Back and sides coppery brown.

Inhabits low ground cover areas, such as spinifex sand plains.

Widespread in Western Australia, with sub-species in the Kimberley, Pilbara and wheatbelt.

## *Ctenotus quattuordecimlineatus*



Medium-sized skink (up to 22cm).

Brown head with dark-brown or blackish back and sides with 14 (occasionally 16) pale stripes. Tail brown or reddish-brown.

Is wide spread throughout the semi-arid sandy regions of Western Australia

It inhabits dunes and sand plains covered in spinifex in the Onslow area.



## *Ctenotus rufescens*



Moderately small skink with 12 parallel stripes on body. Head is pale brown with dark brown markings.

Mostly found in the spinifex on sand ridges and the sandy-clayey interdune swales.

Reddish suffusion on fore body.

Dark upper lateral stripe splits between the ear and the eye. Very large upper ear lobule.

## *Ctenotus saxatilis* – Rock Skink



Moderately large skink (up to 32cm) with a well-developed colour pattern consisting of dorsal and lateral stripes and lateral spots.

Moderately wide blackish vertebral stripe with whitish margins.

Upper lateral zone is black enclosing a series of pale blotches.

Usually associated with rocky outcrop areas, but is widely distributed around Onslow.



## *Eremiascincus fasciolatus* – Narrow-banded Sand Swimmer



Moderately large thick-tailed skink.

Upper surface pale brown with 10-19 narrow brown bands across the back.

Bands often broken in the middle (sometimes only discernible on the sides of the body). Nasal scales are widely separated.

Forages on invertebrates in the upper surface of sand. Will readily burrow into loose surface sand.



## *Lerista bipes*



Small, slender, acutely snouted skink (up to 11cm).

No trace of forelimb. Hind limbs have two toes.

Upper surface is pale reddish-brown with a dark brown upper lateral stripe. Usually two paravertebral series of brown dots.

It is found in the upper layers of sand under vegetation. Can be abundant in the leaf litter under shrubs.

*Lerista clara*



Small skink (up to 9cm) with a brown to grey dorsal surface with a prominent dark upper lateral stripe. Undersides are pearly white.

Well developed fore- and hind limbs with three toes on each.

## *Lerista onsloviana*



Medium-sized skink (up to 12.5cm), with an acutely angled snout.

Upper surface is brownish white with a narrow sharply defined vertebral stripe consisting of two rows of dark brown dots.

No forelimb present (usually only a groove) and the hind limb has two toes.

A dark brown upper lateral stripe extends from the lores to the nostril.

This sand swimmer is only found on the coastal area around Onslow and south to Giralua and Barradale.



## *Menetia greyii*



Tiny skink (up to 8cm). Dorsal surface is pale to dark grey or brown usually with dark spots roughly aligned in two or four rows.

Widespread throughout Australia, commonly occurring in dry areas with open vegetation types.

Wide dark brown upper lateral stripe. Often a white mid-lateral stripe is present.

Fore limb has four toes. Hind limbs have five toes.

***Tiliqua multifasciata* – Centralian Blue Tongue**



Large, slow moving omnivorous skink (up to 30cm in length).

Tan-coloured body with 11 to 13 narrow fawn or orange bands across the body. Black streak across the temple.

Pairs mate for life.





# Goannas of the Onslow region



## *Varanus brevicauda* – Short-tailed Pygmy Monitor



Small ground monitor (up to 23cm). Red-brown in colour with dark spots but can be variable.

Tail length is approximately equal to or less than snout to vent length. Tail quite thick at the base.

Lives in a small burrow under the spinifex and feeds on insects and smaller lizards.



## *Varanus eremius* – Pygmy Desert Monitor



Image © Ray Turnbull



Moderately small ground monitor (up to 46cm). Reddish brown with a variable spotted pattern.

Tail is usually 1.5 to 2 times snout vent length and triangular in cross section with longitudinal stripes.

Widely foraging and exclusive predating on reptiles.



## *Varanus gouldii* – Sand Goanna



Large ground monitor (up to 1.6m) with a strongly laterally compressed tail that has a yellow end.

Lacks transverse rows of dark spots on back. Dark spots on abdomen not in transverse rows. Throat is often streaked with grey.

Widespread throughout Australia. Prefers sandy soils and predate on almost any vertebrate or insect it can swallow.

Shelters in deep burrows.

## *Varanus panoptes* – Yellow-spotted Monitor



Image © Ray Turnbull



Large ground monitor (up to 1.6) with a strongly compressed tail.

Transverse rows of large dark spots, alternating with rows of smaller pale or yellow spots. Dark spots on the abdomen are in line with those on the back.

Possibly confused with Gould's Monitor, but can be distinguished by the yellow spots on the back.

Forages in a range of habitats including grasslands, woodlands and riparian areas.





# Blind snakes of the Onslow region



## *Ramphotyphlops species*



Three species of blind snake have been recorded in the Onslow region and all look very similar. These include *Ramphotyphlops ammodytes*, *Ramphotyphlops grypus* and *Ramphotyphlops hamatus*.

Blind snakes are difficult to identify in the field without use of a hand lens and species are defined on the number of rows of body scales and structure of the nose.



Blind snakes live in the leaf litter or underground and feed primarily on the larvae and pupae of ants.

# Pythons of the Onslow region





## *Antaresia stimsoni* – Stimson's Python



Image © Ray Turnbull



Small python (up to 1.3m).

Brown to reddish-brown body, usually boldly patterned.

Commonly found in termite mounds.

Feeds on lizards, small mammals and birds.

## *Aspidites melanocephalus* – Black-headed Python



Large python (up to 3m) with a glossy black head and neck.

Numerous dark bands on a pale body.

Lacks heat-sensory pits. Feeds on other reptiles including venomous snakes.

Predominantly a ground dwelling python, sheltering in burrows, termite mounds and rock crevices.



## *Liasis olivaceus barroni* – Pilbara Olive Python



Large olive-brown python with lighter belly which can grow more than 3m.

They prefer escarpments, gorges and water holes in the Pilbara, but have been found in a wide variety of other habitats.

Listed as Vulnerable under the EPBC Act 1999 and Schedule 1 (i.e. Fauna that is rare or is likely to become extinct) under the WA Wildlife Conservation Act 1950.



# Venomous snakes of the Onslow region



## *Acanthophis pyrrhus* – Desert Death Adder



Small snake (up to 75cm) with a distinctive diamond shaped head, fat body and thin tail. The body is reddish to yellowish brown with numerous paler bands. Head scales and scales on flanks strongly keeled.

It is an ambush hunter, well camouflaged, and usually occurs on sandy ground. Very fast strike action. Mostly nocturnal.

**WILL BITE IF THREATENED**

**DANGEROUSLY VENOMOUS**

***Demansia psammophis* – Yellow-faced Whipsnake**



Slender snake (up to 1m) with a coppery brown head, large eyes and long brown-tipped tail.

Body is greenish and dark edging on dorsal scales gives a reticulated pattern.

Fast moving.

**TREAT WITH CAUTION**



## *Fordiana leucobalia* – White-bellied Mangrove Snake



Robust, rear-fanged water snake (up to 93cm). It has a broad head, short rounded snout and small eyes. Colour extremely variable with pattern prominent to absent.

Inhabits mangrove-lined tidal channels and mudflats.

Feeds exclusively on crabs.

## *Furina ornata* – Moon Snake



Medium-sized snake (up to 65cm) with a darkish head and paler body, with reticulated pattern. Often with a glossy sheen.

A conspicuous orange-red bar completely dividing black head and neck is usually present.

Males brighter in coloration than females.

Often found in termite mounds.

**TREAT WITH CAUTION**



## *Pseudechis australis* – Mulga Snake



Large, robust snake (up to 2m) with a broad head. Colour pattern is variable ranging from pale brown to reddish brown (mainly grey-brown around Onslow)

Reticulated pattern on body due to pale anterior section of dorsal scale.

Underbelly is cream to yellow often with reddish brown base.

**WILL BITE IF THREATENED**

**DANGEROUSLY VENOMOUS**



***Pseudonaja mengdeni* – Gwardar**



Large, moderately slender snake (up to 1.6m) with a narrow head.

Juveniles easily mistaken for legless lizards.

Extremely variable in dorsal colour and pattern (predominantly grey-brown around Onslow) with a V-shape in black scales on the back of the neck. Cream to yellow coloured bellied with spots.

**DANGEROUSLY VENOMOUS**

**WILL BITE IF THREATENED**

## *Simoselaps anomalus* – Desert Banded Snake



Image © Ray Turnbull



Image © Ray Turnbull

Small sand-swimming snake (up to 21cm). Yellowish orange to reddish orange with prominent black rings between the nape and tail tip. Black glossy head.

Inhabits sandy spinifex deserts.



## *Suta punctata* – Spotted Snake



Medium-sized snake (up to 52cm) with yellowish brown to reddish brown body. Often has a glossy sheen.

Head is pale brown to yellow with small dark spots on its snout and blotches on the back of the head.

**TREAT WITH CAUTION**





# Mammals of the Onslow region



Image © Ray Turnbull



## *Dasyurus hallucatus* – Northern Quoll



Grey-brown fur with distinctive white spots or blotches. Fast and agile.

Nocturnal and feeds on insects and small vertebrates such as skinks and geckos.

Found in spinifex grasslands and rocky areas. It is thought to hide in termite mounds, tree hollows or rock piles.

Listed as Endangered under the EPBC Act 1999 and Schedule 1 (i.e. Fauna that is rare or is likely to become extinct) under the WA Wildlife Conservation Act 1950.

*Dasykaluta rosamondae* – Kaluta



Russet brown dasyurid marsupial. Body length approximately 20cm. Has rough fur.

Feeds on insects and small vertebrates such as skinks and geckos.

Found in spinifex grasslands, hides in thick tussocks of grass or burrows.

Males die after mating.



## *Macropus robustus* – Euro



Image © Ray Turnbull



Image © Hannah Anderson

Large macropod, ranging in height from 1.2-2m and weighing between 10-50 kg depending on sex. Dark grey to reddish colouring above and paler on the underside, fur coarse.

Sexually dimorphic, males being much larger and darker in colour than females.

Found in various habitats, usually consists of rocky hills or stony rises and areas associated with caves or overhanging rocks. Grazes in the evening on grasses and small shrubs.



## *Pseudomys desertor* – Desert Mouse



Image © Ray Turnbull



Large mouse, approximately 80mm in length, excluding tail. Chestnut brown in colour with sparse long dark hairs. Large eyes with a distinctive yellow ring around the eye.

Population follows a boom and bust pattern generally following periods of high rainfall. Found in semi-arid and arid areas of Australia.

Probably retreats to a nest it creates in the spinifex.

## *Pseudomys hermannsburgensis* – Sandy Inland Mouse



Image © Ray Turnbull

Sandy brown to grey brown mouse with large ears and eyes and a long tail. Similar in appearance to the House Mouse but lacks the 'musty' smell and has no notch in the rear of the upper incisors.

Mainly nocturnal, it feeds on a range of seeds, tubers and invertebrates. Populations fluctuate markedly in response to rain that is followed by flowering and the abundance of seeds.

Wide distribution over central and western Australia.

## *Notomys alexis* – Spinifex Hopping Mouse



large eyes and ears. Long brush-tipped tail (can shed end of tail). Approximately 200-300mm long including tail length. Long hind feet for hopping. Light brown above to grey-white below.

Shelters in deep burrows during the heat of the day. Omnivorous, feeding on a variety of seeds, insects and roots.



*Planigale* sp.



Smallest of the dasyurids with a characteristic flattened head.

Mainly nocturnal, it is a ferocious hunter feeding on insects and even small lizards and mammals.

Taxonomy of the *Planigale* group is still unresolved.

## *Sminthopsis macroura* – Stripe-faced Dunnart



Small dasyurid with a prominent dark facial stripe. Grey-brown body with a long tail that is usually fat, particularly at the base.

Mainly nocturnal, it inhabits areas of tussock grassland, saltbush and spinifex.

Widespread in arid and semi-arid regions.



## *Tachyglossus aculeatus* – Short-beaked Echidna



Monotreme (lays soft-shelled eggs) that is widespread throughout Australia.

Covered in long brown and black spines, fur present in between spines and on its underside.

Feeds almost exclusively on ants and termites by digging into nests using its strong forefeet and long, sticky tongue.



# Birds of the Onslow region





Rainbow Bee-eater  
*Merops ornatus*

Common summer  
visitor

Image © Ray Turnbull

Great Egret  
*Ardea alba*



Image © Ray Turnbull



White-bellied Sea Eagle  
*Haliaeetus leucogaster*

Image © Ray Turnbull



Australian Pelican  
*Pelecanus conspicillatus*

Image © Ray Turnbull

Little Corella  
*Cacatua pastinator*



Image © Ray Turnbull



Galah  
*Eolophus roseicapillus*





Budgerigar  
*Melopsittacus undulatus*

Image © Ray Turnbull

White-plumed  
Honeyeater  
*Lichenostomus  
penicillatus*



Image © Ray Turnbull



Magpie-lark  
*Grallina cyanoleuca*

Image © Ray Turnbull



Zebra Finch  
*Taeniopygia guttata*

Image © Ray Turnbull

Grey-crowned Babbler  
*Pomatostomus temporalis*



Image © Ray Turnbull



Eastern Osprey  
*Pandion cristatus*

Image © Ray Turnbull

Australian Bustard  
*Ardeotis australis*

