**Trichosurus vulpecula**, Common Brushtail Possum

Assessment by: Morris, K., Woinarski, J., Friend, T., Foulkes, J., Kerle, A. & Ellis, M.

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Taxonomy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kingdom</th>
<th>Phylum</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Order</th>
<th>Family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Animalia</td>
<td>Chordata</td>
<td>Mammalia</td>
<td>Diprotodontia</td>
<td>Phalangeridae</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Taxon Name: *Trichosurus vulpecula* (Kerr, 1792)

Common Name(s):
- English: Common Brushtail Possum, Silver-gray Brushtail Possum
- French: Phalanger Blanchâtre

Taxonomic Notes:
Populations from Barrow Island, the edge of the Pilbara, Kimberley, and northern Northern Territory are sometimes considered a separate species (i.e., *Trichosurus arnhemensis*) (e.g., Groves 2005). Likewise, populations from the Atherton Tablelands are sometimes considered a species (*T. johnstonii*) (e.g., Flannery 1994, Groves 2005). Usually, however, these populations are considered subspecies of *T. vulpecula* (e.g., Kerle and How 2008).

Assessment Information

Red List Category & Criteria: Least Concern ver 3.1

Year Published: 2016

Date Assessed: June 15, 2015

Justification:
Listed as Least Concern in view of its wide distribution, presumed large population, occurrence in a number of protected areas, and because it is unlikely to be declining at nearly the rate required to qualify for listing in a threatened category.

Previously Published Red List Assessments

1996 – Lower Risk/least concern (LR/lc)

1996 – Lower Risk/least concern (LR/lc)

Geographic Range

Range Description:
The Common Brushtail Possum is endemic to Australia where it is widespread. It ranges over much of northern, eastern, and south-western Australia. It occurs as scattered populations in the arid central part of the country. It is also present on the island of Tasmania and a number of offshore islands (e.g., Barrow, Kangaroo, and the Bass Strait Islands) (Kerle and How 2008). There is a large, introduced population in New Zealand (not mapped) (Kerle and How 2008).
Country Occurrence:

Native: Australia

Introduced: New Zealand
Distribution Map

*Trichosurus vulpecula*

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**Range**

- Extant (resident)

**Compiled by:**

IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature)

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http://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2016-2.RLTS.T40585A21952080.en
Population
The species can be locally abundant, particularly in south-eastern Australia, Tasmania, and Kangaroo Island. In many other areas it has declined drastically, especially in arid and semi-arid Australia.

It is generally sparse and declining in monsoonal northern Australia. In South Australia it is only common on the offshore islands and in metropolitan areas. Populations on the western plains of New South Wales are restricted to riverine habitat. In the iron bark forest of the Brigalow belt bioregion of New South Wales, there has been 90% decline in the last 15 years.

Current Population Trend: Decreasing

Habitat and Ecology (see Appendix for additional information)
It is a largely arboreal, nocturnal species, that is generally found in dry eucalypt forests and woodlands. Large populations of this species can be found in pine plantations and suburban and urban areas (Kerle and How 2008). It breeds year round in some areas, in others it will breed in one or two seasons. Females begin breeding at about one year of age and a single young is born after a gestation period of 16 to 18 days; it has a pouch life of four to five months (Kerle and How 2008).

This species is commercially harvested in Tasmania. On Kangaroo Island, it is treated as a pest species (to humans and other threatened species) and there are removal permits. It is major a pest species in pine plantations in Australia where it can do considerable damage, and acts as a host of bovine tuberculosis in New Zealand (Kerle and How 2008).

Systems: Terrestrial

Threats
There are no major threats to this species. Predation by introduced dingoes, cats, and foxes, as well as by native pythons can impact populations where the species is rare. Changed fire regimes in South Australia and the Northern Territory adversely affect Common Brushtail Possums, especially with the decline of large trees.

Conservation Actions (see Appendix for additional information)
It is present in many protected areas. Fox control is crucial in semi-arid and arid areas.

Credits
Assessor(s): Morris, K., Woinarski, J., Friend, T., Foulkes, J., Kerle, A. & Ellis, M.
Reviewer(s): Johnson, C.N. & Hawkins, C.
Bibliography


Citation


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External Resources

For [Images and External Links to Additional Information, please see the Red List website](#).
Appendix

Habitats
(http://www.iucnredlist.org/technical-documents/classification-schemes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Habitat</th>
<th>Season</th>
<th>Suitability</th>
<th>Major Importance?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Forest -&gt; 1.4. Forest - Temperate</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Suitable</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Forest -&gt; 1.5. Forest - Subtropical/Tropical Dry</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Suitable</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Savanna -&gt; 2.1. Savanna - Dry</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Suitable</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Artificial/Terrestrial -&gt; 14.3. Artificial/Terrestrial - Plantations</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Suitable</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Artificial/Terrestrial -&gt; 14.4. Artificial/Terrestrial - Rural Gardens</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Suitable</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Artificial/Terrestrial -&gt; 14.5. Artificial/Terrestrial - Urban Areas</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Suitable</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conservation Actions in Place
(http://www.iucnredlist.org/technical-documents/classification-schemes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conservation Actions in Place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-Place Land/Water Protection and Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation sites identified: Yes, over entire range</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conservation Actions Needed
(http://www.iucnredlist.org/technical-documents/classification-schemes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conservation Actions Needed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Land/water management -&gt; 2.2. Invasive/problematic species control</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional Data Fields

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population severely fragmented: No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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