

# Bounceback for yellow-footed rock wallabies

## Project 6.4



Yellow-footed rock wallaby.  
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Remnant populations of the yellow-footed rock wallaby (*Petrogale xanthopus xanthopus*) were isolated and declining in South Australia's semi-arid ranges by the early 1990s. Feral animals, especially goats, rabbits, foxes, and cats, had caused widespread habitat degradation in the region.

### Recovery actions

Around this time, a small group of rangers and wildlife managers, mostly from the South Australian environment department, instigated the long-term conservation program Bounceback to tackle key threatening processes and recover populations of the yellow-footed rock wallaby.

Under Bounceback, musters reduced goat populations, and were followed with ground and aerial shooting at least annually. Large-scale rabbit warren ripping and blasting programs removed rabbits from target locations. This was followed by reductions through the spread of rabbit

haemorrhagic disease. The project effectively removed fox populations across large areas through broad-scale biennial aerial 1080 baiting for foxes, alternating with ground-baiting.

### Success markers

The populations of yellow-footed rock wallabies are now increasing across their range in South Australia, along with a number of other target species. Bounceback accurately identified the causes of their decline, and these threats are now being managed well enough for the populations to increase. Goat and fox control are likely to have made the greatest contribution to this remarkable recovery. The program has had collateral benefits for neighbouring pastoral lands.

The conservation status of the rock-wallaby has improved. An IUCN red list evaluation in 2015 rated the species as Near Threatened, and a regional review in South Australia rated it as Rare but with an increasing trend.

The success of Bounceback has been due to increasing community involvement and support, and the enthusiasm and long-term commitment of the South Australian Environment Department. Land managers and volunteers have also been a major driver of the success of the program.

### The future

Bounceback identified the main threats to the species at landscape scales and targeted them, demonstrating the success of this approach. The future of the yellow-footed rock wallaby now seems secure, with continuing management of goats and baiting of foxes.

With the recovery of the rock wallaby, the project has seen the reintroduction of two historically extinct mammal species into Bounceback-managed lands – the western quoll and the common brushtail possum. Core management activities can maintain rock wallaby populations – and, with cat management, potentially the other reintroduced species. Meanwhile, the program will also focus on reducing grazing pressure across the formerly degraded landscapes.

### More information

Robert Brandle, Trish Mooney and Nicki de Preu (2018) Broad-scale feral predator and herbivore control for yellow-footed rockwallabies improved resilience for plants and animals = Bounceback. In *Recovering Australian Threatened Species: A Book of Hope*. (Eds S Garnett, P Latch, D Lindenmayer, J Woinarski) pp 135-146. CSIRO Publishing, Melbourne.