

Arid Zone Monitoring Species Profile

Minkajurru (Golden bandicoot)

Isodooon auratus

Language names

Natari, Makurra, Minganypa, Mingatjurra, Nyurlu, Wintarru

National status: **Vulnerable**

IUCN Red List: **Vulnerable**

Golden bandicoots disappeared from the deserts by about 70 years ago. They have recently been reintroduced at Matuwa by the Wiluna Martu Rangers and the WA government. This profile therefore uses the Martu name Minkajurru.

Animal description

The Minkajurru is the smallest of all the bandicoots. It has golden-brown fur that is covered with stiff long black guard hairs, small black eyes, short rounded ears and long claws.

Key threats

- Being killed by cats and foxes
- Habitat change from too much grazing by feral herbivores (livestock, camels, rabbits and mice)
- Wrong-way fire (too often, too intense, too big)

Habitat

Minkajurru live in spinifex and tussock grasslands and sparse woodlands.

Minkajurru tracks

Minkajurru have five toes in their front feet, but their tracks show only three toes. They also have five toes on their hind feet, but only three leave a mark.

Minkajurru diggings and burrows

Minkajurru shelter in a grassy nest under tussocks or spinifex hummocks. When feeding at night they move between clumps of grasses and makes small cone shaped diggings looking for insects, small animals, roots and tubers.



Minkajurru.



Minkajurru twins.



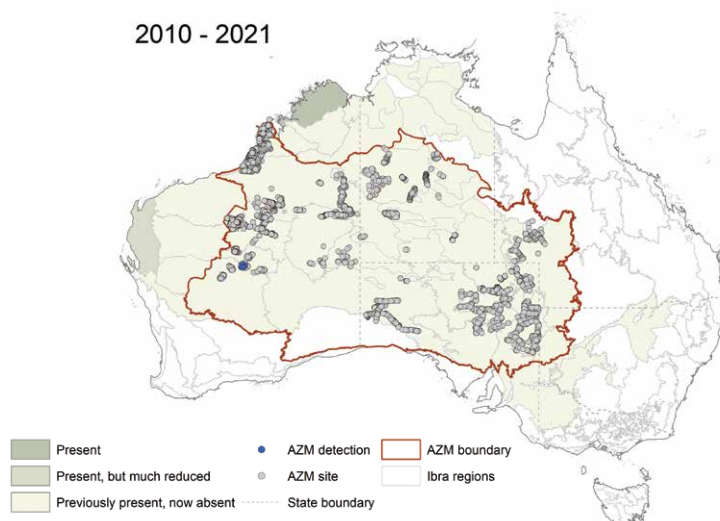
Minkajurru tracks (arrow shows which way it is going).

Arid Zone Monitoring project findings

Minkajurru distribution

Minkajurru used to be found right across the deserts and northwestern Australia. They disappeared from the desert areas by the middle of the 20th century, hanging on only in the north Kimberley and also on some islands off the west and north coasts. In 2010, the Minkajurru was reintroduced in the Matuwa Kurrara Kurarra IPA, by the West Australian government and the Wiluna Martu rangers.

The map summarises the detections of Minkajurru the AZM dataset, with blue dots. There is only a single place with records of the Minkajurru on the map – this is where the Minkajurru has been reintroduced. The grey dots show all the other sites that were surveyed, but where Minkajurru were not recorded. Minkajurru are also found in the north Kimberley, and on islands (Augustus, Barrow, Middle in WA; and Marchinbar Island in the NT). These records were made by Indigenous Ranger groups and government agencies. The information about the overall distribution in the map background is taken from the Mammal Action Plan¹.



The map above shows data shared by data providers with the AZM project. The data are from track and sign surveys. This method is great for detecting species that live in sandy deserts, but not as good for species that prefer rocky habitats, or species with distributions that are mostly outside the central deserts. The method also works best for larger-bodied animals with tracks that are easily identified.

It is possible that extra surveys have been carried out that have not yet been shared. If you see 'gaps' in the maps that you could fill by sharing your data, let us know.

Things to think about when surveying for minkajurru

- Survey during good conditions (in the early morning is best, not too windy or straight after rain).
- Organise to do surveys at regular times every year, for example before the wet or hot season (October) and in the early dry season or cool time (April).
- Follow advice of experienced trackers - know how to tell Minkajurru tracks apart from other species before you go to survey.
- If you want to see changes over time, you will need to go back to the same areas to sample over several years. If you want to see if management actions (feral animal culling or fire) are working, you need to sample many different sites, before and after the action. You might need help from a scientist to make the sampling design strong.

Further information

Arid Zone Monitoring project:

<https://www.nespthreatenedspecies.edu.au/projects/arid-zone-monitoring-surveys-for-vertebrates-across-arid-and-semi-arid-zones>

References

¹ Woinarski, J.C.Z & Burbidge, A.A. & Harrison, P.L. (2014). The Action Plan for Australian Mammals 2012. (CSIRO Publishing: Melbourne.)



National Environmental Science Programme

This project received support from the Australian Government's National Environmental Science Program.

The Arid Zone Monitoring project is a collaboration between the NESP TSR Hub and over 30 Indigenous ranger groups and Indigenous organisations, 8 NGOs and NRM groups, 5 government agencies institutions, and many individual researchers and consultants. The project has gathered track and sign data from across Australia's deserts, using it to map the distributions of desert species and their threats. The national database includes almost 50,000 species presence records from over 5300 unique sites and almost 15,000 site visits, over the period from 1982 to 2020. The project area was defined by using IBRA subregional boundaries - the project boundary captures Australia's desert subregions where track and sign-based surveys are commonly used. The project showcases the collective work carried out by all groups working across the arid zone, and lays the groundwork for creating ongoing, national-scale monitoring for desert wildlife.

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