

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Environment portfolio

Question No: 57
Hearing: Budget Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 1.1
Programme: Biodiversity Conservation Division
Topic: Threatened Species Commissioner – mammal extinctions by 2020
Hansard Page:
Question Date:
Question Type: Written

Senator Urquhart asked:

In your report you mention the Government's goal of ending mammal extinctions by 2020. While this is laudable, can you tell me – the Bramble Cay Melomys and the two Christmas Island species aside – when was the last mammalian extinction on the Australian mainland?

Answer:

Exact confirmation and dating of extinctions is complicated by the cryptic and inconspicuous nature of many of Australia's mammals, the size of the Australian continent, remoteness of many mammal habitats and reduced probability of records in small populations. Further, many of the last recorded sightings of extinct Australian mammals were made by Indigenous peoples. This makes exact dates difficult to assign.

Advice that I have received from the scientific community is that the Bramble Cay Melomy was probably the last Australian mammal to become extinct. Its last reported sighting was in 2009 and a search last year found none. The last remaining Christmas Island Pippistrelle died on 26 August 2009. On the mainland, the Toolache wallaby probably became extinct in the early 1970s. The last confirmed record was a captive animal dying in 1939, but reliable reports from local naturalists in South Australia persisted from the 1950s to early 1970s. Indigenous information indicates that the Lesser Bilby and Desert Bandicoot became extinct in the 1960s.

Due to this complexity, there have been no officially declared mainland mammal extinctions under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. The 26 of the 27 mammals listed as extinct under the EPBC Act 1999 were migrated from the previous *Endangered Species Protection Act 1992*. The mammal that wasn't migrated from the Endangered Species Protection Act 1992 was the Lord Howe Long-eared bat which was presumed extinct in the 1920s and was listed as extinct in 2001.