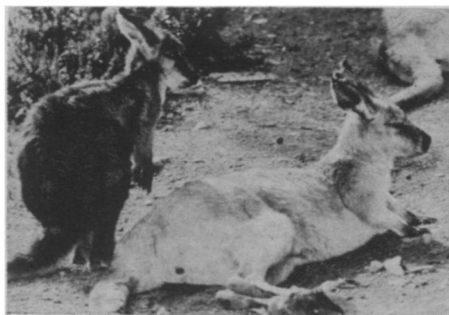


Nature Note



Wallaby

The wallabies are having a hard time in today's world. Normally a shy, primitive, not too intelligent kind of creature who enjoys basking in the sun, these kangaroo-looking animals are being pursued and driven out of their last remaining strongholds on earth.

Once having roamed in areas throughout the world, now wallabies are surviving only in Australia, New Guinea, Tasmania and neighboring islands. Even here civilization is threatening them with possible extinction; they are being killed in great numbers for their meat and fur, or because oil drillers, cattle and sheep ranchers need the land.

A wallaby is a member of the Marsupial order of animals which include

opossums, bandicoots, koala bears and wombats. These animals are often called the pouched animals, as they keep their tiny young in pouches on their abdomen until they are old enough to venture forth on their own.

These creatures were living on earth at the time of the dinosaurs, and may at one time have been some of the most common of early mammals. At the time the marsupials developed, Australia was joined to other land masses. Later, this country became separated and formed an island left to itself in relative peace and quiet. In other areas, as more life evolved, the slow-witted marsupials were killed and hunted by predators, including man, until many were wiped out completely. Only recently, in an area being kept secret, Australian scientists have found evidence of a yellow-footed wallaby, for the past 20 years thought to be extinct.

Wallabies possess extremely large and long hind limbs and feet. Their tails are unusually long, stout and powerful and are used for props and balancing as the animals leap and hop. Many wallabies are dainty, attractive animals, some weighing two or three pounds, often gray or brown in color.

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