

## Species die out at a rapid rate



### Spotted-tailed quoll

WITH its bright eyes, moist pink nose and sharp teeth, the spotted-tailed quoll isn't Australia's most attractive animal.

While they used to roam freely, the quoll is now found only in isolated pockets of forest along both sides of the Great Dividing Range, from the Victorian to the Queensland borders, that may be too small to support viable long-term populations.

"The male quoll needs habitat between 1000 and 3000 hectares in size and females anywhere from 200 to 800 or 900 hectares," says Andrew Claridge, a senior research scientist with the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service.

"But the primary threat was the introduction of the European red fox, without a shadow of a doubt. Foxes compete with the quoll for many of the same food sources and have been far more successful."

It's only been in the past 15 years, when the federal government declared it endangered, that conservation efforts have focused on the plight of the quoll.

But now scientists are taking it very seriously.

"If you look anywhere from Queensland all the way down the east coast into Victoria and in Tasmania you'll find very passionate researchers working for quolls," Claridge says.

So it's not all doom and gloom.

"In some areas, certainly in New South Wales, we can speak with confidence about the future of quolls," Claridge says.

"In the north and south of the state where there are large, relatively intact landscapes of forest, we've got sites where we routinely monitor the species and at those sites they seem to be robust.

"So there are examples of places where they're doing OK."

Despite this, there are also places where the quolls are struggling and determining the reasons for this decline can be difficult, Claridge says.