

Rare rock wallabies 'thriving'

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A SURVEY of endangered Proserpine rock wallabies on Gloucester Island National Park in the Whitsundays has found their numbers are strong but limited by the amount of rainforest on the rugged island.

Rock wallabies are thought to be a remnant species from an ancient time when much of Australia was covered in rainforest.

The north Queensland island colony was found in 1988 and the species is known in just a handful of other sites, including an introduced population on nearby Hayman Island and on the mainland. It's thought fewer than 1000 survive.

The survey led by Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service senior ranger Barry Nolan trapped 60 wallabies and found they are thriving.

National Parks Minister Steve Dickson said the survey

conducted with resource management group Reef Catchments and Wild Mob conservationists included taking blood and DNA samples.

These would be compared with the mainland population and as a baseline for other studies.

"Of the 39 males and 21 females captured, 17 were of breeding size with pouch-young ranging from newly born to fully furred joeys," Mr Dickson said.

Gloucester has rocky outcrops and rock piles covered with dry vine scrub which appears critical to the survival of the species which is the only rock wallaby that lives exclusively in rainforests.

"The isolated nature of Gloucester ... means there is none of the threats that the mainland populations faced, such as land clearing, habitat fragmentation, feral dogs and cats and vehicles," Mr Dickson said.



FURRY FIGHTBACK: Survey finds healthy Proserpine rock wallabies on Gloucester Island.