

Tenkile Tree Kangaroo – information sheet

Family: Macropodidae

Genus: *Dendrolagus*

Species: *scottae*

Characteristics: Black fur, hair whorl on shoulders.

Males: 11.5 kg (Average weight)

Females: 9.5 kg (Average weight)

Distribution: Endemic to the Torricelli Mountain Range, Sandaun Province P

Elevation: 900 -1,700 meters above sea level.

Diet: Vines, ferns and leaves. Work still required for diet of Tenkile

Distribution: Approximately 125 square kilometres within mid-montane rainforest.

Reproduction: Possibly breeds year round with perhaps a young born each year. Young become independent after 2 years. A lot more work required in this area.

Conservation Status: Critically endangered (IUCN)

Local Names: Tenkile (Olo), Rengile (One), Teklel (Elke) and Tikisir (Yel).

Tim Flannery was the first scientist to describe the Tenkile in 1989. He has been a very important scientist for discovering and naming many species of fauna within PNG, West Papua and the surrounding islands.

Habitat

Tenkile is found between 900 - 1,700 meters above sea level in the Torricelli Mountain Range. The total habitat area probably does not exceed 125 square kilometers. The vegetation is mid-montane rainforest containing Podocarpous, Libocedrus, Araucaria, Rapanea and Syzygium species. Tenkile is thought to feed on vines including the Scaveola and Tetracera species, epiphytic ferns and leaves from various forest plants. However, no studies have been done on the diet of the Tenkile. At present a Tenkile's diet is being compiled via the knowledge of the local people and a herbarium of these plant species is being prepared.

Cause of Decline

It is thought the population of Tenkile could have been as low as 100 individuals when TCA was established in 2001. Results from Distance Sampling Research estimate the population to be now over 300 (October 2008). This makes the Tenkile one of the most endangered mammals in the world. The cause of their decline is predominantly due to an increase of human population in the vicinity of the Torricelli mountains and consequently an increase of hunting pressure on the animal. In the past hunters recall seeing Tenkile in groups of four (possibly a pair with two young) and historically found them closer to their villages. Now Tenkile is rarely seen by the villagers. When people are lucky enough to see a Tenkile there is usually only one animal or very occasionally a pair. Hunters believe it has drastically reduced in number and in range compared to 50 years ago. Even some hunters remember killing as many as six Tenkile in a day less than 30 years ago.

Since the introduction of catholic missions 50 years ago, the local people have access to better medical supplies and improved hygiene. Consequently the human population has trebled since World War 2. Missionaries have also been responsible for altering traditional beliefs and customs, which have affected or increased the hunting pressure on certain species within the Torricelli mountains. For example the



traditional conservation areas known as "ples masalai" were strictly off-limits for fear of evil spirits. The traditional land boundaries are no longer heavily fought over and people feel free to hunt on other people's land. The introduction of guns and torches has made hunting much easier than the traditional bow and arrow. Unfortunately the combination of all these factors have taken its toll on the population of the Tenkile.

There are presently thought to be two subspecies of *Dendrolagus scottae* - Tenkile and Fiwo. Fiwo is yet to receive a Latin name. Tenkile is restricted to the Torricelli Mountain Range whilst Fiwo is located in the adjacent Bewani Mountain Range. Little data has been collected on Fiwo, however it is thought that it could reside in much of the Bewani Mountains with a range greater than 250 square kilometres. Fiwo appears to be smaller than Tenkile, an adult male weighed 9.5kg (compared to adult male Tenkile=11.5kg) and an adult female weighed 6.8kg (compared to adult female Tenkile=9.5kg). A lot more work is required on Fiwo. Presently, Fiwo is not under threat due to hunting because, unlike Tenkile, it is not surrounded by a large human population. Fiwo has a small distribution and has therefore been classified as vulnerable. TCA aims to conduct surveys for Fiwo when funding becomes available.

Whilst conducting Distance Sampling at Bibane, villagers from Tolgete and Sarbute came across three Tenkile in the same tree. The team were able to successfully capture one of these animals. The other two were too fast for the team. The captured Tenkile was a female weighing 7.7kg and has been named "Suna" by the landowners.

Suna was released at Bibane on the 12th November, 2007.



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