

Endangered marsupials in the Otways... *Kaye Traynor*

The Otway Ranges are home to many species of wildlife including some very special mammals, some of whom are vulnerable and face real threats to their survival. Their plight is a cause for concern and extensive surveys throughout sections of the Otways are now being conducted. Increased knowledge of these elusive animals, their habitat, range, food availability, predators etc. will assist in their long-term prospects.

Spot-tailed Quoll *Dasyuris maculatus*

(also called Spotted-tailed Quoll, Tiger Quoll, Tiger Cat)



Spot-tailed Quoll

The Spot-tailed Quoll is our largest marsupial carnivore on the Australian mainland. It has a long body, short legs and very long tail, with thick, coarse fur, which is a rufous colour or can be very dark brown. The body, legs and tail are covered with bold white spots. It used to be widespread but over time their numbers have declined, in part due to trapping, loss of habitat from clearing of land for agriculture and logging, and accidental baiting intended for wild dogs.

The Otway population has suffered in the same way and now there are efforts to locate individuals and groups using various means including remote cameras and specially trained dogs that can recognise quoll scats.

Spot-tailed Quolls are mainly nocturnal and solitary. They are opportunistic carnivores and scavengers. They will eat birds, small to medium-sized mammals, arthropods and carrion. They are adept at climbing and will take birds from nests.

Southern Brown Bandicoot *Isodon obesulus*

The Southern Brown Bandicoot is smaller than the Long-nosed Bandicoot, which is also found in these parts. It is brown and buff on the back, with creamy white front and tail. It has small rounded ears, 280-355mm body length, and tail 80-130mm. Males are slightly larger than females.

These little bandicoots can be found in heathy forest, woodland and coastal heath areas. They have also been found in grassy settings such as Coogoorah Park. On a few occasions they have turned up in mammal surveys carried out by Friends of Eastern Otways, an indication that a reasonable population of Southern Brown Bandicoots is present in our area. They are largely solitary and usually forage alone. They are omnivorous and dig in the topsoil for arthropods, fungi and roots, seeds and invertebrates. After foraging they leave characteristic cone-shaped pits in the ground.

They shelter in nests made from leaf litter, lined with twigs and leaves.



Southern Brown Bandicoot

Long-nosed Potoroo *Potorous tridactylus*

(also called Long-nosed Rat-kangaroo, Wallaby Rat).

The Long-nosed Potoroo is about the size of a rabbit, with brown-grey fur tinged with rufous on the flanks, with pale grey underparts and a sparsely furred, tapering tail.

Long-nosed Potoroos generally inhabit coastal heath and dry and wet sclerophyll forests in areas of higher rainfall. They prefer thick ground cover and make runways through the dense vegetation. They forage in the soil for roots, tubers, fungi, insects and insect larvae and digs small holes, similar to bandicoots. They feed at dusk and never far from cover although they do venture out in daytime, but usually in thick undergrowth or fern cover.



Long-nosed potoroo

The Long-nosed Potoroo is not uncommon in many parts of the east coast of Australia, southern Victoria, (there is also a population in the Grampians) and Tasmania. They survive quite well in undisturbed private property and natural bushland but are still considered vulnerable because of threats such as clearing of habitat for grazing, introduced predators, and severe and frequent fires which

can devastate a local population.

The Conservation Ecology Centre at Cape Otway is trialling scat-detection dogs to locate Long-nosed Potoroos.

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