



WOMBAT STATE FOREST



A guide to
the mammals
'Caught on Camera'



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Acknowledgements

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Victorian National Parks Association is an independent, non-profit, membership-based group, which exists to protect Victoria's unique natural environment and biodiversity through the establishment and effective management of national parks, conservation reserves and other measures. We will achieve our vision by facilitating strategic campaigns and education programs, developing policies, through hands-on conservation work, and by running bushwalking and outdoor activity programs that promote the care and enjoyment of Victoria's natural heritage.

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NatureWatch is the VNPA's community-based biodiversity monitoring program that informs, educates and engages the community in conservation management and practices. The NatureWatch program actively builds links between community members, scientists and land managers, and develops scientifically based, practical projects that contribute to a better understanding of species and ecosystems, and the management of natural areas.

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WOMBAT STATE FOREST

Introduction

The VNPA Caught on Camera project trial in Wombat State Forest involves working with local community groups and scientists to establish community based monitoring of fauna using motion sensing cameras.

The project addresses the question: 'What mammal species are located at 'Recently Burnt', 'Intermittently Burnt' and 'Long Unburnt' sites in Foothills Forest and Forby Forest (forbs are herbaceous flowering plants apart from grasses) in Wombat State Forest?'

This has been established to contribute to the larger question, 'what is the impact of fire on mammals?'

Monitoring in 2012 was carried out in two different forest types in Wombat State Forest, Forby Forest and Foothills Forest at sites categorised as 'Recently

Burnt', 'Intermittently Burnt' and 'Long Unburnt'. A total of ten native mammals and three exotic species were recorded and all have been included in this guide.

This guide has been prepared for volunteers involved in the project, and the general public, so they are aware of what mammals are likely to be 'Caught on Camera' during monitoring.

Wombat State Forest is about 90km north-west of Melbourne, near the towns of Daylesford and Blackwood.

Right: Volunteers learn the ropes of setting up motion sensing cameras.



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Eastern Grey Kangaroo

Macropus giganteus (giant long-foot)

Appearance

A large macropod with grey-brown upperparts, pale underparts and a thick black-tipped tail. Males are larger than females and have a more muscular chest and forearms. This species is of a stockier build than the Western Grey Kangaroo and has shorter ears and paler fur.

Distribution and habitat

Widespread throughout eastern Australia. Common throughout Victoria, except the northwest. Prefers open forest, woodland and farmland adjacent to native vegetation. Feeds in open grassy areas and seeks cover amongst trees and shrubs.

Behaviour and diet

Gathers in mobs to feed in the early morning and at dusk. Diet consists of mostly grasses and herbs but will also browse on shrubs. Breeding most commonly occurs during summer or when conditions are good.

Interesting facts

Eastern Greys are capable of embryonic diapause, or delayed implantation of the embryo. This allows a joey to be born soon after its sibling leaves the pouch, meaning that populations can rapidly increase during favourable conditions.



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Black Wallaby

Wallabia bicolor (two-coloured wallaby)

Other names

Swamp Wallaby, Black-tailed Wallaby.

Appearance

A stocky wallaby that stands up to 85cm tall. It has dark grey to black upperparts with rufous patches around the crown and ears, and often a pale cheek stripe. Underparts are rufous and yellow and its thick tail is sometimes white-tipped. Males are larger than females.

Distribution and habitat

Occupies forests, woodlands, scrubs and heaths along Australia's east and south-east coasts. Occurs throughout much

of Victoria, particularly the southeast.

Behaviour and diet

Mostly solitary, but may be seen feeding alongside other individuals. Prefers areas with lots of cover provided by shrubs and undergrowth during the daylight hours. Browses on shrubs, ferns, sedges, some grasses, and will also consume fungi scratched from the soil.

Interesting facts

The Black Wallaby's range continues to expand through western Victoria and South Australia.



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Common Wombat

Vombatus ursinus (bear-like wombat)

Other names

Bare-nosed Wombat, Naked-nosed Wombat.

Appearance

Stocky body with short limbs, broad head and short rounded ears. Its thick fur may be black or different shades of grey, brown, or occasionally cream.

Distribution and habitat

Present in forests, woodlands, heaths and scrubs in south-eastern mainland Australia and Tasmania. Burrows are often located on slopes above creeks and gullies. Declining in some areas including western Victoria and South Australia.

Behaviour and diet

Mostly solitary but can have overlapping home ranges and share burrows. Most active from dusk until dawn, but during cooler weather may also be seen grazing during the day. Feeds on tussock grasses, rushes and sedges. Diet may also include fungi, mosses, roots and tubers.

Interesting facts

Wombats can defend themselves by crushing the heads of pursuing predators into the roof of their burrow using their rump.



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Koala

Phascolarctos cinereus (ash-coloured pouch-bear)

Appearance

Stocky body with round face, small round eyes, large ears and large black nose. Upperparts are grey-brown in colour while underparts can be whitish or yellow-grey.

Distribution and habitat

The Koala is arboreal and occurs in lowland eucalypt woodlands and forest from central Queensland to eastern South Australia. Populations are present in southern and central Victoria but are discontinuous due to fragmentation of habitat.

Behaviour and diet

Koalas sleep for 20 hours a

day and activity is usually nocturnal. They are mostly solitary, but females can often be seen carrying a joey, who remains with its mother until 12 months of age. Diet consists of predominantly eucalyptus leaves, although foliage of other species may also be consumed.

Interesting facts

Infections of the *Chlamydia* bacterium can render females infertile and are widespread in Victoria.



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Mountain Brushtail Possum

Trichosurus cunninghami (Cunningham's hairy-tail)

Other names

Bobuck.

Appearance

A large possum with a thick tapering bushy tail. Can be dark grey with cream underparts, or completely black. Larger than the Common Brushtail Possum, it has a bushier tail, blunter muzzle and shorter ears.

Distribution and habitat

Common in coastal ranges and plains, from central NSW to mid-western Victoria. Prefers cool temperate wet forests and subtropical rainforests.

Behaviour and diet

Forages in both the shrub and ground layer for leaves, buds, fruit, fungi and lichen. Mostly nocturnal and dens in trees or hollow logs during the day. Tends to form monogamous pairs, but males with several female mates have also been recorded.

Interesting facts

Despite its name, this species is not restricted to mountainous areas.



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Common Ringtail Possum

Pseudocheirus peregrinus ('roving' or 'wandering' false-hand)

Other names

Ringtail.

Appearance

Medium sized possum with a rounded head, short ears and a prehensile tail that is often coiled. Colour can vary, but is often grey-brown with reddish flanks and limbs. It has white underparts and patches behind the ears.

Distribution and habitat

Distributed from Cape York to south eastern South Australia. Inhabits scrubs, forests and

gardens and prefers a thick understorey layer. Nests in a leaf-lined tree hollow or spherical drey constructed from shredded bark, leaves and twigs.

Behaviour and diet

Nocturnal and lives in family groups. The female usually rears two young at a time. Diet consists of leaves, fruits and flowers.

Interesting facts

The Common Ringtail will re-ingest its own faeces in order to properly digest fibrous leaves.



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Short-beaked Echidna

Tachyglossus aculeatus (spiny fast-tongue)

Other names

Spiny Anteater.

Appearance

Small body with a narrow snout, short legs and long claws. Yellow spines tipped with black cover the top of its head, back and tail.

Distribution and habitat

Occurs throughout most of Australia in a wide variety of habitats including forests, heathlands, grasslands and arid areas. Found in dryland habitats in Victoria, but is more common at lower altitudes and in the southern part of the state. Highly adaptable and can survive in most areas where shelter and

food are available in all seasons.

Behaviour and diet

Solitary. Most active in temperatures between 16-20°C. Subsists predominantly on ants and termites, but also eats other invertebrates such as earthworms and larvae. Prey is obtained by digging up earth or tearing apart rotted timber using its strong forelimbs, and licking up the exposed invertebrates with its sticky tongue.

Interesting facts

Echidnas may cool off in streams or ponds in hot weather.



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Bush Rat

Rattus fuscipes (dusky-footed rat)

Appearance

This native rat has a head and body of 10-20cm with a tail of approximately equal length. Its upperparts can be grey-brown to reddish brown with rufous flanks, and the underparts cream or grey.

Distribution and habitat

Widespread and common in the coastal east and south of the mainland, also present in the south west of Western Australia. In Victoria occurs in the south and east. Inhabits a wide range of vegetation types, but requires relatively moist and dense ground cover. Subspecies can live in drier habitats.

Behaviour and diet

Territorial, but home ranges may overlap. Forages mostly along the ground for plants, seeds, arthropods and fungi. Active nocturnally and shelters in an underground burrow during the day.

Interesting facts

Although it only lives for around one year, the Bush Rat can produce up to three litters of five young.



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Agile Antechinus

Antechinus agilis (agile hedgehog-equivalent)

Appearance

Small, mouse-sized marsupial with a pointed snout, light brown-grey fur and a furred tail.

Distribution and habitat

Distributed along and adjacent to the Great Dividing Range in New South Wales and Victoria. Inhabits areas that contain leaf litter and fallen logs including moist forests, heaths and woodlands.

Behaviour and diet

Predominantly nocturnal and an adept climber. Hunts for insects and small vertebrates amongst leaf litter and from tree fissures. Occupies large communal nests

of dry leaves built within tree hollows. Females produce litters of up to ten young.

Interesting facts

Male antechinus die after a two-week synchronised mating period where males compete aggressively for females.



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Brush-tailed Phascogale

Phascogale tapoatafa tapoatafa (pouched-weasel tapoatafa)

Other names

Tuan, Common Wambenger, Black-tailed Phascogale.

due to degradation, loss and fragmentation of habitat and predation by foxes and cats.

Appearance

Rat-sized marsupial with dark grey upperparts and cream underparts. It has a brush-like tail covered with long black hairs, a pointed muzzle, large hairless ears and long curved claws.

Distribution and habitat

Fragmented populations are present from Queensland to eastern South Australia and in Western Australia. Inhabits dry woodlands and forests with sparse groundcover and hollow-bearing trees that provide shelter and nesting sites. In Victoria this species is listed as 'Threatened'

Behaviour and diet

Active between dusk and dawn. Mostly arboreal and can jump up to 2 metres between trees. Predominantly insectivorous but will also eat nectar, small birds and mammals. Females have home ranges up to 60 hectares that do not overlap with other females' territories, while males can have overlapping home ranges of up to 100 hectares.

Interesting facts

The female does not have a true pouch, but develops a pouch-like fold of skin during pregnancy.



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Feral Goat

Capra hircus (goat goat)

Appearance

Weighs between 20-80kg. Both sexes have horns and the male has a beard from throat to chest. Colour is variable, usually black, white or brown or a combination of these colours.

Distribution and habitat

Introduced and widespread throughout Australia outside of the monsoonal tropics, but populations are patchy. Present throughout much of Victoria, abundant in the northwest. Prefers areas that are not too wet or dry, and where there is little threat of predation by dingoes.

Behaviour and diet

A social animal mostly active during daylight hours. May produce two litters of two kids each year in good conditions. Browses on a wide variety of plants including species that provide few nutrients.

Interesting facts

The home range of a feral goat can range from one to 600 square kilometres depending on the availability of resources such as food and water.



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Red Fox

Vulpes vulpes (fox fox)

Appearance

Body and limbs slender with a bushy tail. Muzzle pointed and ears held erect. Upperparts can be varying shades of red-brown or sandy. The underparts, chin and muzzle are white or grey.

Distribution and habitat

Introduced. Widespread throughout Australia, excluding the tropics. Inhabits a wide variety of habitat types including desert, alpine regions and wet forest. Most successful in urban areas and lightly wooded habitats such as agricultural landscapes.

Behaviour and diet

Solitary and mostly nocturnal, but may be seen during the day in areas where it is undisturbed by humans. Prefers live prey such as small mammals, birds and reptiles but will also eat carrion, fruit and insects. The Red Fox is responsible for the decline and extinction of many native Australian species.

Interesting facts

Foxes can produce 28 different kinds of vocalisations including barks, whines, moos, cackles and coughs.



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Black Rat

Rattus rattus (rat rat)

Other names

Ship Rat, Roof Rat.

Appearance

The Black Rat has a slender body, sleek fur, large ears and a tail that is longer than its body. Colour can be different shades of black or brown above, with white or pale yellow underparts.

Distribution and habitat

Introduced. Distributed throughout the moist regions of Australia particularly around areas of human habitation.

Behaviour and diet

Active at night, dusk and dawn. Lives with other individuals in a communal nest, often within a burrow or roof cavity. Omnivorous diet that may include plant material, insects, carrion and human food scraps.

Interesting facts

The Black Rat is an adept climber, unlike native rats.



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Further reading

Websites

Arkive

<http://www.arkive.org>

Australian Museum

<http://australianmuseum.net.au/animals>

Australian Wildlife Conservancy

<http://www.australianwildlife.org/Wildlife-and-Ecosystems/Wildlife-Profiles.aspx>

Department of Environment and Primary Industries

<http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/agriculture-and-food/pests-diseases-and-weeds-/pest-animals>

Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities

<http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity>

International Union for the Conservation of Nature

<http://www.iucnredlist.org>

Invasive Animals CRC

<http://www.feral.org.au>

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