

Brush-tailed Phascogale (*Phascogale tapoatafa tapatafa*) – Southern Mainland subspecies

Conservation Status

NSW: Vulnerable (*Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*)

South Australia: Presumed Extinct

Victoria: Threatened (*Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*)

Description

The Brush-tailed Phascogale is a small carnivorous marsupial that lives in trees. It has grey coloured fur above and pale cream below and a characteristic black, bushy tail with hairs up to 4 cm long. Adult's have a head and body approximately 20 cm long and tail a further 20 cm long. They weigh 110-235 g.

Distribution

The Brush-tailed Phascogale prefers open forests with sparse groundcover. The southern mainland subspecies is largely restricted to the eastern coast of Australia (QLD, NSW and Victoria) with a small pocket in south-western WA. Once located on the Eyre Peninsula in South Australia, it is now presumed extinct there. They are also noted as extinct on the Bellarine Peninsula.



Land clearance for agriculture is thought to have reduced the range of the Brush-tailed Phascogale by 50%. This has also made the Brush-tailed Phascogale more vulnerable to predation by native and introduced animals (cats and dogs), reduced its nesting places, and exposed it to more road hazards.

Diet

They mainly eat cockroaches, beetles, centipedes, spiders and ants but also eat nectar and small vertebrates and even take domestic poultry. These agile climbers prefer to forage for food in rough barked trees.

Breeding

They lead solitary lifestyles with large ranges of 20 - 70 hectares for females or double that for males. The breeding season is restricted to a three week time period between mid-May to early July. Thirty days after mating, three to eight young are born. The female raises her young alone, first within her pouch and then in a nest, which is usually made in the hollow of a eucalypt tree.

After mating, males often die. It is thought that this is a strategy that allows sufficient room and resources to be available for the next generation. Females rarely live long enough to raise more than litter, but there are records of females living as long as three years in the wild.

Threats:

- ✱ Loss and fragmentation of habitat.
- ✱ Loss of hollow-bearing trees.
- ✱ Predation by foxes and cats.
- ✱ Competition for nesting hollows with the introduced honeybee.

Recovery strategy

Actions being undertaken include: fox and feral cat control, along with community education about the impacts of cats; habitat management including implementing a more appropriate schedule of prescribed burn offs; and further research and monitoring of existing Brush-tailed Phascogale populations.

References & More Information

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