

Long-footed Potoroo (*Potorous longipes*)

Conservation Status

NATIONAL: Endangered (*Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*)

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

Victoria: Threatened (*Wildlife Act 1975*)

INTERNATIONAL: Endangered (*IUCN Red List of Threatened Species*).

Description

The Long-footed Potoroo was only discovered in 1978. It is a medium-sized, hopping marsupial with grey-brown fur on the back and pale grey fur underneath. It grows to an average body length of 40 cm, with a tail length of 32 cm. Adults males can weigh up to 2.2 kg and females up to 1.7 kg. It is silent except for a low *kiss kiss* sound made between mothers and young, or when under stress.



[Photo courtesy of Max Herford]

Habitat

The Long-footed Potoroo is found in forest habitats that have constantly moist soil. It needs dense cover to provide shelter and protection from predators. During the day, the Long-footed Potoroo nests beneath ferns, grass or sedge tussocks, or fallen timber.

Distribution

Long-footed Potoroo populations are patchily distributed over a total area of just 1800 square kilometres in three geographically distinct regions in Victoria and NSW (East Gippsland, north-east Victoria and south-east NSW). Historically the Long-footed Potoroo occurred in a larger area of Gippsland and south-eastern NSW. Most of its habitat lies in forest subject to timber harvesting.

Diet

The Long-footed Potoroo's main source of food are fungi. It requires diverse and abundant supply of hypogean (underground-fruited) fungi, which it eats throughout the year. The abundance of such fungi depends on soil moisture. Pairs of long-footed Potoroos may forage together as a unit. They excavate truffles by digging many small conical pits. Potoroos are believed to be important in the dispersal of spores from the fungi it eats. The spores pass through the potoroo's gut and are deposited in the forest in its droppings.

Breeding

Long-footed Potoroo's form monogamous relationships. They can breed throughout the year. Young remain in the pouch for 140 to 150 days. After they leave the pouch, they remain with their mothers until they become independent at around 20 weeks old. Young remain in their mother's territory for at least 12 months before dispersing.

Threats

The main threats are:

- ★ Feral predators – dingos, wild dogs and foxes are major predators, limiting population size and range. They become more susceptible to predation when understorey shelter is reduced. Roads may also increase access to the Potoroo's habitat.
- ★ Habitat clearance mainly through timber harvesting
- ★ Competition for food from feral pigs
- ★ The Potoroo's restricted distribution makes it susceptible to chance events such as natural disasters.

Recovery Plan

A National Recovery Plan for the Long-footed Potoroo is focussing on continued habitat and population protection; predator control programs; further research into its habitat and populations; maintaining a captive colony; and on enhancing community awareness of, and involvement in, management of the species.

FAME has supported the *Southern Ark Project* in Victoria, which aims to create a fox-free area in Far East Gippsland.

References & More Information

Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts 2010. *Potorous longipes* in *Species Profile and Threats Database*. <http://www.environment.gov.au/sprat>.

Strahan R (Ed) 1995. *Mammals of Australia*. The Australian Museum Trust. Reed New Holland, Australia.