

Long-nosed Potoroo (*Potorous tridactylus tridactylus*)

Conservation Status

NATIONAL: Vulnerable (Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999)

Description

Potoroos are part of an ancient branch in the evolution of kangaroos and represent a living fossil, having remained relatively unchanged for around 10 million years.

Long-nosed Potoroos are named for their long nose that tapers with a small patch of skin extending from the snout to the nose. They are brown to grey in colour with a paler underbody and feet that are shorter than the head length. Long-nosed Potoroos have a 4-legged pottering motion, but when startled, will hop like all other kangaroos.



Distribution

The distribution of Long-nosed Potoroos has been well documented through trapping surveys and observations. In Victoria the Long-nosed Potoroo occurs in six discrete regions in the South-western region, Grampians, Otways, Western Port, Wilsons Promontory and east Gippsland. There are also scattered populations extending from south-eastern Queensland through to NSW.

Food

Being an omnivorous forager, potoroos eat many types of roots, tubers, fruits, seeds, insects and larvae, all depending on seasonal availability. Studies have shown that fungi form a major part of their diet, eating over 50 different kinds of sporocarps - the fruits of underground fungi like truffles. These fungi live in association with the roots of various Eucalypts and Acacias, helping the trees to absorb more water and nutrients, and are sometimes essential for seedling survival. Potoroos therefore improve the health of the forest by helping to disperse a host of beneficial fungi spores as they move about. As part of a contingent of herbivorous marsupials, they also act as nature's fire fighters by keeping the undergrowth down via grazing and turning the leaf litter over.

Breeding

Potoroos are normally solitary, but not territorial, with males occupying a fairly stable home range of 2ha and females around 1.5ha. There is usually a high degree of overlap in ranges, with regular sightings of males following females or females with a joey at foot. Breeding occurs all year round, with peaks in late winter to early spring and again in summer. Potoroos are remarkably long-lived for their size, living on average 5-7 years in the wild and up to 12 years in captivity.

Threats

The main threat is geographical separation and isolation. Predation by foxes and cats, human development and natural disasters have all contributed to the isolation of populations.

Recovery Plan

Fox control programs in Victoria and NSW have reduced the predation pressure on Long-nosed Potoroos. For instance, the Southern Ark project in Far East Gippsland, Victoria aims to develop and implement a baiting strategy to effectively reduce the abundance of foxes in one million hectares of native forests, and to assess changes in abundance (if any) of native mammals species at risk from fox predation. Trapping results indicate an increase in Potoroo numbers corresponding to a decrease in fox numbers (DSE 2003). FAME has supported populations of Long-nosed Potoroos in protected areas of South Australia and Victoria since 2000 and the *Southern Ark Project* in Victoria.

Victoria and NSW have entered into 20 year agreements on forestry management (regional forest agreements) which, in concert with the Commonwealth, aim to identify reserve systems within a region and provide conservation for those areas, provide ecologically sustainable management of forests within the RFA region and provide long term stability of the forests and forest industries. The Long-nosed Potoroo (SE Mainland) has been given consideration under these agreements and is benefiting from the establishment of conservation areas (Seebeck et al. 2007).

References & More Information

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