

## Western Barred Bandicoot (*Perameles bougainville*)

### Conservation Status

#### **NATIONAL: Extinct**

(Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999)

#### **South Australia: Endangered**

(National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972)

#### **Victoria: Threatened**

(Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988)



### Description

The Western Barred Bandicoot is the smallest member of the bandicoot family. This long-nosed bandicoot has long, soft mottled greyish, yellow coloured fur with two or three pale fawn-coloured bars across the hindquarters. An adult weighs just 300 grams with a body length of 171-236 mm and tail length of 60-102 mm.

### Habitat

The Western Barred Bandicoot formerly inhabited a variety of landscapes and vegetation types. These included the saltbush covered Nullarbor Plain, sand ridges with woodlands, bluebush plains, desert Acacia, shrublands and heath. It is reported that they preferred dense scrub such as *Allocasuarina* thickets with well camouflaged nests being constructed from grasses and other vegetation in a hollow dug under a low shrub.

### Distribution

Prior to European settlement it is likely that the Western Barred Bandicoot was widespread across Australia through the southern arid zone, from the Liverpool Plains in New South Wales to the north-west coast of Western Australia. The last specimen recorded from the Australian mainland was collected at Rawlinna in Western Australia in 1929. They now are only found in the Natures Reserve of Bernier and Dorre Islands in Shark Bay, Western Australia.

### Food

The Western Barred Bandicoot is nocturnal, nesting each day under low shrubs in a depression beneath dense litter. Their diet is predominantly insectivorous, although they will also eat spiders, earthworms, berries, seeds, roots and small herbaceous plants. They use their strong hind legs to dig below the ground for food and can detect food up to 30 cm underground.

### Breeding

The bandicoots have a high reproductive output, which makes them excellent prospects for reintroduction to the mainland. The gestation period of the Western Barred Bandicoot is a mere 12.5 days (one of the shortest gestation periods recorded in mammals). Their breeding is concentrated in the wetter winter and spring months, but they may also breed opportunistically throughout the year when unseasonal rainfall promotes good conditions.

### Threats

The reasons for the extinction of the Western Barred Bandicoot on the mainland are not entirely clear but it is likely that destruction of habitat and introduction of feral animals contributed to their disappearance from the mainland.

### Recovery Plan

In 1995 a population of Western Barred Bandicoots was established in the conservation reserve of Heirisson Prong at Shark Bay, WA. Careful monitoring of this project has shown that predator control is critical for the long-term survival of the western barred bandicoot. In 2001 a second population was set up on the mainland at the Arid Recovery Reserve in South Australia. There have been further reintroductions in recent years to WA (Dryandra Woodland, Faure Island and Barrow Island).

Captive breeding is also underway. In 2009 FAME provided funding to assist in the translocation of 5 Western Barred Bandicoots from Faure Island to the Arid Recovery Reserve to increase the genetic diversity of the Arid Recovery Reserve population. Post-release monitoring found that the three translocated females had all successfully reproduced.

### References & More Information

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