

Southern Brown Bandicoot

Isoodon obesulus obesulus

A nationally threatened species

The Southern Brown Bandicoot *Isoodon obesulus obesulus* is a medium sized ground-dwelling marsupial found on mainland Australia from the Mt Lofty Ranges in South Australia to Sydney, generally within 50km of the coast. Within Victoria, they are found from the Lower Glenelg National Park in the west to East Gippsland.

Conservation Status

The Southern Brown Bandicoot is listed as nationally endangered under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999*, endangered in New South Wales and vulnerable in South Australia based on contractions in the subspecies distribution, evidence of local extinctions, and anecdotal information indicating significant population declines since early settlement.

In Victoria, the Southern Brown Bandicoot is regarded as being 'near threatened'.

Description

Southern Brown Bandicoots are about the same size as small rabbits with a long, pointed snout, small eyes, rounded ears, a compact body, large rump and sparsely furred short, thin tail approximately half of the body length. Front and hind feet are strongly clawed. Fur is coarse, greyish or yellowish brown above with a whitish belly.



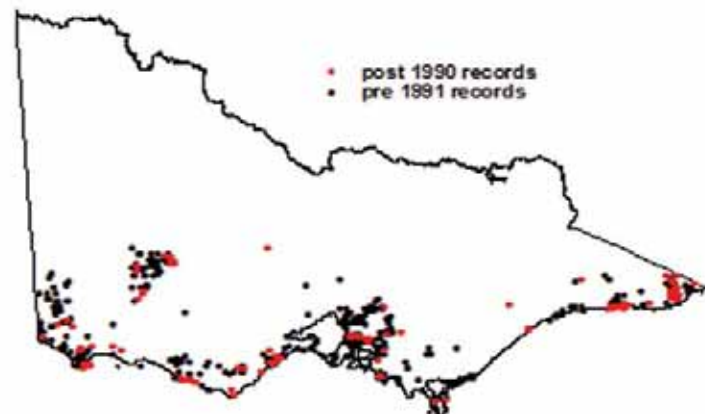
Bandicoot habitat - Cranbourne, Victoria

With their life span of two to three years, Southern Brown Bandicoots have a potentially high reproductive output however this appears to be more than offset by a high juvenile mortality. Breeding season is generally from early winter to summer. Females usually produce two or three litters per year each of two or three young.



They were initially thought to be nocturnal, however bandicoots may be seen in late afternoon or even during the day, particularly where cover is abundant. When foraging, they move in a 'bunny hop', generally under or within a few metres of dense cover, whilst the powerful hind-legs allow them to gallop at a fair speed and even leap when required.

Distribution of Southern Brown Bandicoot in Victoria
(Atlas of Victorian Wildlife, DSE 2007)



Southern Brown Bandicoot — *Isodon obesulus obesulus*



Bandicoot digging



Bandicoot scats



Bandicoot tracks

Habitat

Habitat is very variable ranging from intact native vegetation to highly disturbed patches in agricultural or semi-urban areas, where weeds dominate the vegetation. Southern Brown Bandicoots are usually associated with coastal or near-coastal heathlands and healthy woodlands over sandy soil however, they are also found in lowland forests with a healthy understorey or a dense cover of tussocky grasses or rushes and bracken. The critical habitat feature appears to be the dense cover of low growing vegetation.

Signs

Bandicoots make distinct conical diggings when digging for their food of invertebrates and underground fungi. Scats are cylindrical, 25 – 50 mm long and 8mm in diameter. Nests are oval shaped mounds of leaf-litter and soil made under dense undergrowth or other types of shelter.

Decline and Threats

In the 1800s bandicoots were once described as being one of the 'very commonest' mammals. Recent records, including survey work in East Gippsland, the south-west, Wonthaggi and Wilson's Promontory, suggest their numbers are very low across Victoria. Local extinctions have occurred in a number of areas.



The major current threats to bandicoots are predation, primarily by foxes but also by dogs and cats, and loss of habitat by clearing of vegetation which removes patches where they can live and limits their capacity to move between remaining patches.

Inappropriate burning, either too often or too infrequent, can have an adverse impact on bandicoots through the short-term loss of shelter and potential for increased predation and the long-term alteration of the vegetation with loss of cover species.

Whilst bandicoots can survive in degraded habitat, increased predation combined with further habitat loss will result in local extinctions.

Similar Species

Long-nosed Bandicoots are larger animals with larger, more pointed ears and longer snouts.

How can I help?

- Control foxes on your property
- Protect remnant patches of bushland on your property
- Create new habitat or improve remnant patches by planting appropriate indigenous understorey species
- Consider staged weed removal replacing weeds with appropriate native plants
- Link patches of habitat with corridors
- Keep cats and dogs under control at all times
- Contact DSE, Greening Australia, or Trust for Nature for further information
- If you have seen Southern Brown Bandicoots on your land or in the area, please contact your local DSE office

Why are threatened species important?

- Species diversity is an essential component of ecosystem health. Loss of species is a reduction in overall biodiversity
- Threatened species may perform important ecosystem functions, eg control pests, improve soil condition
- Protection of threatened species will also benefit flora and fauna communities they are part of
- The majority of our threatened species are endemic to Australia and without proactive management will most likely become extinct