

Eastern Barred Bandicoot

(*Perameles gunnii*)

Fun facts!

The Eastern Barred Bandicoot's scientific name (*Perameles gunnii*) means "Gunns Pouched badger". This demonstrates how early British explorers attempted to classify Australian fauna into species groups that they were familiar with back at home (i.e. badgers) even though the bandicoot is not related to badgers in any way.



Species Profile

Animalia - Mammalia

WEIGHT: 600 - 800g

LENGTH: 400mm (approximately)

LIFESPAN: 2-3 years.

STATUS: Endangered on mainland Australia.

Eastern Barred Bandicoots

Eastern Barred Bandicoots (*Perameles gunnii*) are a nocturnal insectivorous mammal that once flourished in south-western Victoria's native grasslands and woodlands. They are a small brown-grey mammal with distinctive white bars across their rump. At night, Eastern Barred Bandicoots emerge from nests built in dense tussock grasses and scrub to forage for insects by digging many conical holes into

the ground. They can turn over up to 13kg of soil each night! This behaviour makes them excellent 'ecosystem engineers' which means they play an important role in maintaining the soil structure of their habitats, helping to create healthy and functioning ecosystems.

Habitat

A mixture of grasslands and woodlands provides the highly complex habitat preferred by Eastern Barred Bandicoots. For nesting, the bandicoots use their clawed forepaws to scrape out a depression which they line with grass. These nests are tucked away under tussocks of grass to protect the bandicoots during the day while they sleep.

Diet

Eastern Barred Bandicoots are omnivorous though primarily insectivorous. At night, they use their strong claws and pointed nose to dig for insects and worms, leaving many small cone-shaped holes in the soil. They also may eat onion-grass bulbs and fallen fruits.

Breeding

These marsupials have a very rapid breeding cycle. Gestation is 12.5 days, with one to three young in each litter. Females can produce up to five litters a year! The young stay in their mother's pouch for 55 days before they wean. About 35 days later they disperse to start lives of their own.

Threatened Species

The Eastern Barred Bandicoot was originally found in southern Australia with a distinct sub-species occurring in Tasmania and on mainland Australia in Victoria and South Australia. The mainland sub-species is listed as endangered under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, and is Extinct in the Wild in Victoria meaning that they only occur in managed or fenced populations (Victorian Advisory List of Threatened Species 2013).

Threats

Key threats including predation by the European red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) and the loss of almost all of its native habitat from human activities has driven Eastern Barred Bandicoot decline.

Island Ark

Fox-free islands, such as Phillip Island, provide the best long-term opportunity to save this special species from extinction by allowing populations to thrive in the wild. Using islands as threatened species reintroduction sites helps to mitigate the issues of predation by introduced predators, such as foxes, by providing a safe, fox-free area that is protected by a large water barrier.

Securing a brighter future

In August 2015, 20 male and female bandicoots were released onto Churchill Island (off Phillip Island) which is fox, cat and rabbit free. In less than two years, the population reached around 120 individuals and has now stabilised. In 2017, 67 male and female bandicoots were translocated to the Summerland Peninsula on Phillip Island where they share their home with Little Penguins, Cape Barren Geese, Swamp Wallabies and other native wildlife, but also feral cats. Despite the presence of cats however, regular monitoring by Phillip Island Nature Parks scientists and volunteers has found this bandicoot population is healthy and going strong. These significant conservation efforts in partnership with several key organisations aim to recover the species and prevent extinction by establishing a Victorian population of 2500 individuals.

Bandicoot guardians contribute to securing a brighter future for these critically endangered marsupials by supporting these population recovery efforts on Phillip Island

Eastern Barred Bandicoot Conservation Partners

- Phillip Island Nature Parks
- Eastern Barred Bandicoot Recovery Team