

Bettong

Scientific Name: *Bettongia ogilbyi*

Class: Mammalia

Order: Diprotodontia

Family: Potoroidae



The Bettong, or Brush-tailed Rat Kangaroo, is an extremely rare small marsupial that belongs to the genus *Bettongia*. It is endemic to Australia and there are two subspecies, *B.p. ogilbyi* (and the now extinct *B.p. penicillata*). It is a small macropod, being only some 30-35 cm in body length, with a tail around 37 cm long, and weighing between 1.1 and 1.6 kg. The fur is yellowish-brown in color with a patch of paler fur on its belly, while the end of its furry tail is dark colored. It has little or no hair on the muzzle and tail. This species has a more slender build and larger ears than its relative the burrowing bettong. The Bettong once inhabited more than 60% of the Australian mainland, but now occurs on less than 1%. In the 19th century it ranged over all of the SW of Eastern Australia, most of South Australia, the northwest corner of Victoria and across the

central portion of New South Wales. By the 1920s, it was extinct over much of its range. As of 1992 it was reported only from four small areas in Western Australia. Through reintroduction of captive bred animals several populations were established. As of 1996, following reintroduction and the controlling of foxes, there were six sites in Western Australia and on three islands and two mainland sites in South Australia.

Range

Australia

Habitat

This versatile species is known to once have inhabited a wide range of habitats, including low arid scrub or desert spinifex grasslands. Today this species lives mostly in open sclerophyll (hard leaved) forest and Malee eucalyptus woodlands with a dense low understory of tussock grasses.

Gestation

19-21 days

Litter

Between 1 to 3, but typically only one.

Behavior

They are strictly nocturnal and are not gregarious.

Reproduction

They can breed all year round in favorable conditions. The female can breed at 6 months of age and give birth every 3-5 months.

Wild Diet

In addition to never drinking water, they also refrain from eating green plant material. The brush tailed Bettong primarily eats fungus, supplementing its diet with bulbs, seeds, insects and resin. They identify and find the fruiting bodies of underground fungi by smell and dig them up using their front claws. Its stomach has adapted to include increased bacteria, which allow for the breakdown of the fungi and the release of beneficial nutrients.