

# COMMON BRUSHTAIL POSSUM

*Trichosurus vulpecula*

## Description

Common Brushtail Possums are nocturnal marsupials. Sliver grey in colour, Common Brushtail Possums have pale undersides and dark brown/black brushy tails. They are about the size of a cat and males are often larger than females. These animals can live for 5-10 years in the wild. Usually solitary, they communicate with each other with hissing and growling/cough-like sounds, especially when mating or warning off intruders.

## Size (on average)

**Head and body:** 32–58 cm, plus a 24–40 cm tail

**Weight:** Between 1.5 and 4 kg

## Habitat Preference

Found in Eucalyptus or Sheoak woodlands and suburban areas. As arboreal animals, they make their nests (also known as dens) in tree hollows or other dark confined spaces i.e hollow logs, dense vegetation, cork crevices or sometimes roof spaces.

## Diet

**Primarily herbivorous.** A large part of their diet is comprised of leaves and native and local fruits. However, brushtails are also opportunists that have been documented eating abandoned bird eggs and insects.

## Behavior and Reproduction

Reproduction occurs all year round, with females giving birth to a single joey after 16-18 days gestation, with the rare occasion of twins. Joey are fully independent by 10 months.

## Threats

Habitat fragmentation and loss of tree hollows, changed fire patterns and predation by foxes, dogs and cats are problems they face as they are increasingly living in the same areas as these animals. Competition for food and relocation by humans are also problems they face.

## Conservation

Becoming less common, especially in arid areas. You can help the Common Brushtail Possum by:

- Conserving native vegetation on your property
- Not relocating possums without advice and approval as they are very territorial and many of them die when relocated
- Keeping trees with hollows in them even if they are dead
- Putting up nesting boxes on your property

Save Our Wildlife Foundation Inc. is a science-led, grass roots animal rescue and rehabilitation organisation. Images are from our volunteers.



## FUNFACTS

- A female possum is identified as a 'Jill' whereas the male is called a 'Jack'.
- The Brushtail Possum changes in colour and size depending on where they live.
- A Brushtail Possum uses secretions from glands located near the chin, chest and tail to mark their home ranges.
- A possum young is called a Joey.
- Possums only move approx. 1 km from their birth-site.
- A group of possums is called a 'Passel'.
- Possums help keep Mistletoe under control by breaking off parts of the plant when feeding on it.



Map courtesy of National Geographic | IUCN Source: US National Park Service. Powered by esri, geographic information system software, location intelligence, and mapping.

## References: Common Brushtail Possum

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