



Safeguarding northern Tasmania as a refuge for eastern barred bandicoot

About the Eastern Barred Bandicoot

The eastern barred bandicoot is a small (less than rabbit-sized) nocturnal Australian marsupial. They are a soft grey colour with several stripes across their rump. The southern brown bandicoot, which also occurs in Tasmania, is larger and does not have stripes.

Eastern barred bandicoots are now extinct in the wild on mainland Australia, surviving only behind predator-proof fencing and in insurance populations on islands.

Northern Tasmania remains a stronghold for the species, with areas of critical habitat occurring predominantly on private land across the region.

Habitat

Preferred habitat of the eastern barred bandicoot is grasslands and woodlands with open areas for foraging, and dense areas of undergrowth that provide refuge and nesting sites. They are omnivorous, coming out at night to dig for worms, grubs, and other invertebrates, although they will also eat roots, small bulbs and fruit.



Tussocks provide cover and nesting habitat, while nearby grassed areas with good soil moisture are ideal for foraging.



Photo Credit: JJ Harrison

While farmland with elements of native vegetation provides ideal habitat for bandicoots, they are also often found in urban and peri-urban areas, seeking refuge in small patches of native vegetation, dense grassy or weedy areas, and even backyards.

This environment, however, makes them even more vulnerable to predation, particularly by cats.

Life History

Eastern barred bandicoots generally survive only two-three years in the wild and have a 'boom-bust' lifecycle: in poor years where there are threats to their survival, populations may become locally extinct. However, with one of the shortest gestations (only 12–13 days) of any mammal and with litters of up to five young, they have the capacity to rebuild populations rapidly.

Young bandicoots remain in the pouch for 55 days. At three months old, they become independent, with females capable of breeding from four months of age. Reproduction can occur throughout the year, and in favourable conditions, a single female can produce up to five litters a year.

Key Threats to Eastern Barred Bandicoot

- **Loss of habitat**
Bandicoots require open grassy areas to dig for invertebrates and areas of dense tussocky undergrowth to provide nesting sites and refuge from predators.
- **Predation**
Domestic and feral introduced species such as dogs and cats are known to take a heavy toll on bandicoots. The bandicoots' defence against predation is to hide, so availability of dense undergrowth is essential for their survival.
- **Disease**
Cats can carry toxoplasmosis, a disease that can cause neurological effects, miscarriage, and blindness in many animals. Bandicoots appear to be particularly susceptible to toxoplasmosis and most are thought to die within a few weeks of contracting the disease.

How You Can Help

- Keep domestic dogs and cats contained, especially at night, and encourage your neighbours to do the same.
- Do not feed stray cats.
- Join a local Landcare group or the Land for Wildlife program to participate in habitat restoration and feral animal management projects.
- Include suitable native habitat species such as clumps of tussock grasses in your garden layout.
- When planning to control dense weeds, such as blackberry and gorse, consider a staged approach rather than removing all weeds at once, and replace with native species that will provide comparable refuge for bandicoots.
- Don't 'clean up' all the undergrowth in your yard or block – leave some clumps of vegetation for wildlife to hide in.
- Report eastern barred bandicoot sightings to NRM North, the Tasmanian Land Conservancy, or participate in citizen science projects to monitor wildlife near your place.



Revegetation of a low-lying area with shrubs and tussocks to improve habitat for eastern barred bandicoot in the West Tamar.



Photo Credit: Joanna Lyall

***To get involved or for
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