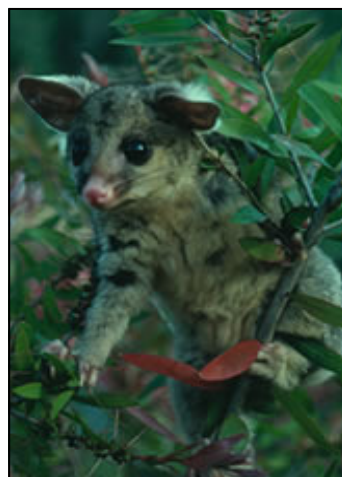


Brush-tailed Possum

Trichosurus vulpecula



What do brush-tailed possums look like?

Brush-tailed possums vary considerably in size and colour throughout their range. In Tasmania, they tend to be black or grey, and have adapted to the cold climate by becoming much larger and furrier than brush-tailed possums on the mainland. In Queensland, however, the animals are more copper-coloured and tend to be smaller than elsewhere.

They have a pointed snout, pink nose, long whiskers and sharp claws, which they use to climb trees and comb their fur.

Where do they live?

The brush-tailed possum is the most widely distributed possum in Australia. It can be found in forests and woodlands all along the East Coast, and also lives in inland areas along tree-lined rivers and creeks. A nocturnal animal, it is active at night and usually spends the day sleeping.

What do they eat?

In the bush, brush-tailed possums feed on leaves, buds, flowers and fruits. They have strong teeth and use their front paws to hold their food while eating.

Breeding and Lifecycle

Brush-tailed possums are marsupials, and their young are usually born in May and June after a gestation period of 17 days. The newborn possum finds its way to the mother's pouch and attaches itself to a teat.

After about five months of feeding and growing in the pouch, the young possum spends another two months clinging to its mother's back as she moves about. Usually only one young is born at a time, and males do not take part in looking after the young.

By the time they are seven months old, the young possums are independent of their mothers. They are fully grown by about 10 months, and the females will usually start to breed for the first time when they reach 12 months of age.



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Except when breeding, brush-tailed possums tend to lead a solitary life. They stick to their 'home range', which they mark out by coating tree branches with a scent released from glands on their chests.

How you can make friends with possums

Possums have adapted well to contact with people. However, at times this contact can be noisy and messy – particularly if the possum takes up residence in the roof of your house! If this happens, the possum can be trapped and removed from the cavity, provided you first obtain a special licence from the NPWS. Possums must be released back onto your property, as it will not survive if removed from the area.

Although you should not feed your resident possum, you could try building it a special shelter, somewhere safe (and away from your roof cavity) where it won't be disturbed by dogs or people.



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