

Bandicoots

Isoodon obesulus

What do they look like?

Often confused with rodents, bandicoots are small, omnivorous marsupials. Three species of bandicoot can be found in NSW: Long-nosed bandicoots, southern brown bandicoots, and northern brown bandicoots.

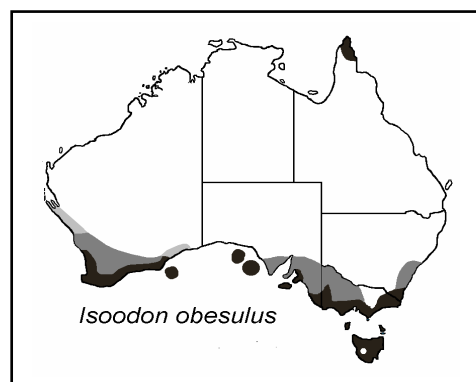


Where do they live?

Bandicoots are found throughout Australia.

The northern brown bandicoot is common to the north of the Hawkesbury River in coastal areas and on the eastern slopes of the Great Dividing Range.

The long-nosed bandicoot is common and widespread throughout NSW, particularly in coastal areas and either side of the Great Dividing Range. This species is also the most common in the Sydney area. The northern beaches from Manly to Palm Beach are one of the last strongholds for bandicoots in the Sydney region. There are two significant populations: on Pittwater, and on the coast near Newport.



The endangered southern brown bandicoot is patchily distributed and seems to occur south from the Hawkesbury River to the Victorian border and east of the Great Dividing Range. There are two main populations. One is in Garigal and Kur-ring-gai Chase National parks in northern Sydney and the other lives around Ben Boyd National Park and Nadgee Nature Reserve in the far south-eastern corner of the state.

Bandicoots can live in a wide variety of habitats, from rainforests to wet and dry woodlands to heathland.

What do they eat?

Bandicoots eat insects, earthworms, insect larvae and spiders, and also feed on plant tubers, roots and truffle-like fungi to supplement their diet. As a result, they can be useful in gardens through their appetite for grubs and garden pests. They are perhaps best known for the snout shaped holes they leave in suburban lawns, after a night of foraging.



Conservation threats

Housing, roads and other forms of urban development have displaced and severely fragmented Sydney's bandicoot populations. This has made them vulnerable to the threat of predators – and motor vehicles.

Very few native animals prey on bandicoots. Owls, quolls and dingos are their only significant natural predators. However, introduced animals such as feral cats, dogs and foxes pose a significant threat to the future of bandicoots.

Living with bandicoots

Bandicoots are protected in NSW, and it is illegal to trap or kill them without a licence. You can contribute to the conservation of bandicoots and other native species by keeping your pets locked up at night, and by not allowing your pets to enter National Parks at any time. The scent left by cats and dogs in bushland areas may discourage native animals from going about their natural activities.

Native animals such as bandicoots may treat your garden as a sanctuary from time to time, and you can live in harmony with them by accommodating them in purpose-designed areas. You can establish a separate area in the garden, away from the places that are used most by your family and pets, which provides native birds and animals with shelter and food.

Alternatively you can keep bandicoots out of your backyard by building bandicoot-proof fencing. Use fine galvanised wire mesh, or any other material with gaps no larger than 20 mm. The foot of the mesh should be buried to a depth of at least 150-mm, and the fence should rise at least 500 mm above the ground.

Bandicoots and ticks

A wide range of native and introduced animals are hosts for the paralysis tick which can also afflict humans. Bandicoots are particularly susceptible to picking up ticks and act as hosts for the paralysis tick. However, they tend to roam over a comparatively small range, often staying within half a hectare of their nests. As a result, they are less exposed to the risk of ticks.

