

Bandicoots in the Garden– FACT SHEET--- 9



Wildlife Volunteers Association Inc.
(WILVOs) www.wilvos.org.au

If you need assistance with native wildlife call our 24 hour hotline number

5441 6200 The content of this fact sheet was researched by Rhonda

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Bandicoots

Bandicoots are nocturnal, solitary animals occurring in a wide variety of habitats throughout Australia. They are protected by the *Fauna Protection Act* and are included on the National Parks & Wildlife Service's threatened species list.



Appearance

Bandicoot size varies between species, adult head-body length ranging from approx. 30-43cm, weight between 500-1900gms. The males are larger than the females. Bandicoots are generally light grayish brown in colour, and have a characteristic long slender nose used for foraging in soil, rotting wood or in rock crevices. The coat is generally sleek and coarse haired. The hind legs are longer than the front legs and carry most of the animals' weight. The hind foot resembles that of a kangaroo. The toes have long sharp claws suitable for digging in soil. Bandicoots have excellent hearing and eyesight. They emit a sharp, high-pitched squeak when foraging.

Breeding

Bandicoots are able to breed at any time of year. Nests are made of grasses which are pulled or woven together and often located under an overhang or dense thicket. They may also be found in long grass or low shrubbery in a protected spot. Reproduction in bandicoots is unique. They are the only marsupials with a placenta similar to that found in eutherian* mammals, and the gestation period is only about 12.5 days, the shortest time for any mammal. Bandicoots are typical marsupials in that the young are born in a rudimentary condition (similar to kangaroos) and continue development within a pouch. The pouch, unlike that of a kangaroo, slopes downwards and backwards, opening at the rear, protecting the young while the mother is digging in the soil. Bandicoots have eight teats, arranged in two curved rows of four within the pouch, although four is the average size of a litter. The young stay in pouch for approximately 50 days, weaning occurring at about 50-60 days. After this time, the animals have to fend for themselves.

Habitat, location and behaviour

Bandicoots are normally found in wet and dry sclerophyll forest and rainforest. The long-nosed bandicoot is also found in many suburbs, living in tussock-like grass and feeding in lawn-type areas. By day, a bandicoot will rest in a sheltered spot, lined with grasses and leaves, on the surface of the ground, foraging at night, sometimes in suburban areas. Conical holes in your lawn mean bandicoots have been looking for food. Solitary animals, with males being very territorial,

bandicoots only come together for mating and feeding. Even young ones do not associate with their mothers for long, once weaned. Sometimes a few individuals can be seen feeding in close proximity to one another.

Bandicoots in the Garden

Diet - Bandicoots are omnivorous, with a diet that includes some native fruits, berries and fungus, but basically are dependant on protein. They consume a wide variety of surface and soil dwelling invertebrates - earthworms, earwigs, cockroaches, crickets, grasshoppers, spiders, adult beetles, beetle larvae and pupae, moths, ants and termites. They usually dig for food but are opportunistic feeders and will also eat small mammals such as mice.

Benefits of Bandicoots in the Garden

Bandicoots are known as the gardeners best friend. They eat cockroaches and spiders and relish the black beetle and beetle larvae (known as curl grubs) which cause die-back in suburban lawns. Brown patches in the lawn may indicate an infection of these pests. Bandicoot activity, indicated by the appearance of small conical holes in the lawn, should be a welcome sign, it means that bandicoots are at work, eating these destructive insects before they ruin your lawn! If you use pesticides, you could also poison bandicoots, as they ingest some soil while they are feeding. By digging, the animals are also aerating your lawn for free, so in the Spring, your lawn will grow back with renewed vigour. Bandicoots cause no long term damage and are beneficial to lawns and gardens. They are protected and are currently under threat due to both habitat loss and predation. WILVOs does not trap bandicoots. If you live in a bandicoot territory and you have a suitable food source, you will have bandicoots in your yard. Once the food source has gone, they will move on.

If you wish to deter bandicoots from an area in your yard, you could floodlight that particular area, as they do not like bright lights. You could also try Dynamic Lifter or chicken poo, as these products have a strong ammonia smell which most animals dislike. A combination of both bright light and smell appear to have the greatest effect as bandicoot deterrents.

Ticks

All mammals can be hosts to ticks. While some people mistakenly think bandicoots spread Lymes Diseases, in truth the tick which carries the disease can also use dogs, cats, foxes and even reptiles as hosts. Furthermore, the bandicoot home range is very limited, whereas introduced and domestic animals are frequently known to range over large areas.

Predators

Cats, dogs, snakes and especially foxes are all serious threats to bandicoot survival. Keep your cat and dog inside at night, or restrained at night when bandicoots are active. If we are to co-exist with, and take pleasure in our wildlife, we must make an effort to maintain habitat and endeavour to make our gardens safe refuges for the native animals which live with us in suburbia.

* Eutherian mammals are those placental mammals whose young are nourished through an efficient placenta, and are born at a relatively young age.

WE THANK YOU



A sad little bandicoot Photo: Donna Anthony