

Brush-tail possum

Trichosurus vulpecula



WHITEMAN PARK
CONSERVATION • RECREATION • EDUCATION

Brush-tail

Brush-tail possums are a nocturnal semi-arboreal marsupial. The large, gripping tail gives the species its name due to its thick, bushy appearance. The underside of the tail is naked of fur, however, to assist in grip when climbing. Large, sharp claws also assist when climbing in the canopy.



Fur-real?

Brush-tails are native to Australia although can also be found in New Zealand where they have become pests. Appearance of the possums may vary with location – those in warmer regions in upper Queensland have much shorter hair than their fluffier southern relatives in Tasmania where the winters are snowy and cold.

Solitary lifestyle

Being typically solitary animals, brush-tails come together only to mate. They have a distinct scent gland on the chest which secretes an aromatic substance, which is rubbed onto surfaces to mark territorial boundaries. They may also produce vocalisations, including screeches and throaty growls to advertise their boundaries. They make dens in hollows in large mature trees, although may also use roof spaces in developed areas.

Baby possums

Brush-tail possums breed in autumn and spring. As per many Australian mammals, brush-tail possums are marsupials, carrying the young in a forward opening well-developed pouch. When the baby becomes too large to fit, it travels on its mothers back, holding tight while she climbs and forages.



Noisy tenants!

Given the decline in habitat in urban areas, brush-tail possums have adapted to life in house roofs, sheds and carports, much to the displeasure of their human residents! Brush-tail possums are protected by law, so trapping and moving of possums is illegal without permission from the Department of Parks and Wildlife. The best way to solve noisy possum issues is to ensure roof cavities are well sealed (make sure this is done when Mr or Ms Possum is out foraging at night time, so they do not get 'locked' in!) and offering a possum box or two as a suitable alternative, secured in a tree in the garden.

Possum diet

The brush-tail possum is primarily a folivore – eating young leaves, including those of eucalypts, acacia and grevillea. They also like to eat flowers, native fruits and nuts. Since human settlement, they have developed a taste for fruit and vegetables from farms and gardens.



Photos courtesy of Houndstooth Studio