



Wombats

Vombatidae Ursinus

is a short-legged, muscular, quadrupedal marsupial that is native to Australia.

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Common Wombat

Vombatidae Ursinus

DESCRIPTION

Common wombats are sturdy and built close to the ground. When fully grown, they can reach between 80 and 130 cm, and weigh between 17 and 40 kg. The wombats found on Tasmania and Flinders Island are often smaller than their mainland counterparts. It is distinguished from both hairy-nosed wombats by its bald nose.

BEHAVIOR

Common wombats are a solitary, territorial species, with each wombat having an established range in which it lives and feeds. In this area, they dig a tunnel system, with tunnels ranging from 2 to 20 m in length, along with many sidetunnels. Often nocturnal, the common wombat does come out during the day in cooler weather, such as in early morning or late afternoon.

HABITAT

Common wombats are widespread in the cooler and better-watered parts of southern and eastern Australia, including Tasmania, and in mountain districts as far north as the south of Queensland, but are declining in western Victoria and South Australia.



Northern Hairy-Nosed Wombat

Lasiorhinus krefftii

DESCRIPTION

Northern hairy-nosed wombats have bodies covered in soft, grey fur and even have fur on their noses, a trait that sets them apart from the common wombat. They have longer, more pointed ears and a much broader muzzle than the other two species. Individuals can be 35 cm high, up to 1 m long and weigh up to 40 kg.

BEHAVIOR

The northern hairy-nosed wombat is nocturnal, living underground in networks of burrows. They avoid coming above ground during harsh weather, as their burrows maintain a constant humidity and temperature. The fat reserves and low metabolic rate of this species permit northern hairy-nosed wombats to go without food for several days when food is scarce.

HABITAT

The northern hairy-nosed wombat (*Lasiorhinus krefftii*) is one of the rarest land mammals in the world and is critically endangered. Its historical range extended across New South Wales, Victoria, and Queensland as recently as 100 years ago, but it is now restricted to one place, a 3-km range within the 32-km Epping Forest National Park in Queensland.



Southern Hairy-Nosed Wombat

Lasiorhinus Latifrons

DESCRIPTION

The southern hairy-nosed wombat is adapted to digging; it has a stocky and robust build, flattened claws, and five digits. It is also plantigrade. The body length ranges from 77 to 934 mm (30.4 to 36.8 in) with a body mass ranging from 19 to 32 kg (42 to 71 lb). Its short tail is hidden by its fur. The pelage is silky and is typically greyish or tan in colour. The wombat grooms itself with its second and third toes, which are fused together, except at the tips.

BEHAVIOR

Southern hairy-nosed wombats, along with other wombat species, select native perennial grasses and sedges, but do consume introduced pasture species, forbs, and the leaves of woody shrubs if their favoured food is not available. Much of the southern hairy-nosed wombat's diet is *Stipa nitida*, which grows around its warren complex and is trimmed as it grazes.

HABITAT

Southern hairy-nosed wombats dig and live in burrows which they connect into warrens with many entrances. These warrens are their prime refuges and are shared by up to 10 individuals. A wombat digs with its fore claws while sitting up. It leaves its new burrow backwards and pushes out soil with all its paws. The central warren is surrounded by a circle of small, simple burrows 100–15 m from it.





Conservation



the wombat foundation

saving the northern hairy-nosed wombat

The northern hairy-nosed wombat is one of the world's most critically endangered species. The Wombat Foundation helps preserve wombat habitats throughout Australia and funds research projects to help secure the future of the northern hairy-nosed wombat.

All species of wombats are protected in every state except for Victoria. The northern hairy-nosed wombat is an endangered species. The biggest threats the species faces are its small population size, predation by wild dogs, competition for food because of overgrazing by cattle and sheep, and disease. The only known wild populations of this species exist in two locations in Queensland, the Epping Forest National Park, and a smaller colony being established by translocating wombats to the Richard Underwood Nature Refuge at Yarran Downs. This second colony is being created through the Xstrata reintroduction project, which is being funded by Xstrata, a Swiss global mining company.

The wombat population in the Epping Forest National Park has been increasing since a predator-proof fence was erected in the park. According to the latest census, taken in 2013, the park is home to 196 of these endangered wombats, with numbers at the two locations expected to have increased to 230 by late 2015.

Despite its name, the common wombat is no longer common, and it has been officially a protected animal in New South Wales since 1970. However, in eastern Victoria, they are not protected, and they are considered by some to be pests, especially due to the damage they cause to rabbit-proof fences.