



Southern Brown Bandicoot (*Isodon obesulus obesulus*)

The Southern Brown Bandicoot is listed as nationally endangered under the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 and endangered in Victoria under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988.

The species is a ground-dwelling marsupial found in mainland Australia from South Australia to Sydney, generally within 50km of the coast. Within Victoria, this species is found from the Lower Glenelg National Park to East Gippsland.



Until the 1970s, the species was common in the heathy woodlands of the Melbourne and Western Port region, including the Seaford-Frankston and Cranbourne-Langwarrin areas, and parts of the Koo Wee Rup, Cardinia and Bass Coast regions.

Today, the region's only secure population occurs at the Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne. This population has limited genetic diversity, making it vulnerable to fire and disease. It is also becoming isolated from other remnant bandicoot populations by rapid urban development.

Reconnecting this population with remnant groups scattered between Frankston, Koo Wee Rup and Bunyip will help to ensure the future of the bandicoot. The Biosphere Foundation is attempting to do this by coordinating a regional recovery program.

Habitat: Historically, Southern Brown Bandicoots preferred coastal heathland and heathy woodlands on sandy soils, and further inland, lowland forests with low-growing, dense cover. Today, habitat loss is forcing bandicoots to take refuge in dense cover provided by woody weed thickets, e.g. blackberry and gorse.

Threats: The two major threats to this species are predation by foxes, cats and dogs and continuing loss of habitat.

Biosphere bandicoot recovery program efforts to date:

November 2006: Southern Brown Bandicoot public forum

This was the first forum of its kind in Victoria.

- Brought together over 50 scientists, government departments and land managers.
- Resulted in ongoing coordination of bandicoot recovery efforts between DSE, Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water, Royal Botanic Gardens (Cranbourne), City of Casey, Cardinia Shire, Western Port Swamp Landcare, Cardinia Environment Coalition and private landholders.
- Proceedings published; available online at biosphere.org.au/projects/bandicoots/sbbandicoot_nov06.pdf

October 2006. Australian Government Envirofund Round 8: The Pines Flora and Fauna Reserve, Frankston

The Pines population is the only definitively known Southern Brown Bandicoot population remaining on the Mornington Peninsula. This project aimed to improve habitat and raise community awareness.

- Secured the perimeter gates to reduce predator entry.
- Surveyed the condition of 11km of perimeter fence.
- Surveyed for bandicoots, demonstrating their continued presence.
- Engaged the community through community days, workshops, guided tours, and school activities.
- Planted 3,000 plants to revegetate recently closed tracks.
- Surveyed the attitudes of 2,500 residents living near The Pines.



September 2007. WWF Threatened Species Network Community Grants Round 10: Securing Southern Brown Bandicoot populations around Western Port

This project aimed to expand surviving bandicoot populations in the region by better coordinating management efforts, reducing fox predation, and extending habitat. It also aimed to monitor the distribution and abundance of bandicoots and raise awareness among the northern Western Port community, from Cranbourne to Bayles. Project partners included Melbourne Water, Cardinia Shire Council, Western Port Swamp Land Care, Bayles Regional Primary School, City of Casey, and private landholders, L&T English, L Bonney, C&S Manning and G&J Dunkley.

- Estimated to have killed over 40 foxes with a 1080 fox control program across 250km² and 20 private properties.
- Planted thousands of indigenous plants on private properties at Bayles and Cardinia.

October 2007. Australian Government Envirofund Round 9: Restoring bandicoot habitat in the Westernport Swamp Landcare Koo Wee Rup region

This project aimed to develop and enhance wildlife corridors across the Koo Wee Rup region to connect small, remnant populations of the Southern Brown Bandicoot. Project partners included Western Port Swamp Landcare; private landholders, including G&J Dunkley and L&T English; Melbourne Water; V/Line; Bayles Regional Primary School; City of Casey and Cardinia Shire. Project outcomes are being measured through a bandicoot population monitoring program by the Biosphere Foundation and the Department of Sustainability and Environment.

- Controlled weeds and planted over 3,000 indigenous plants, consisting mainly of grasses and sedges.
- Fenced 1.9km to protect plantings.
- Constructed innovative, experimental shelters to provide bandicoots with refuge from predators, such as foxes.
- Raised community awareness of the need for improved habitat for bandicoots.
- Recent anecdotal evidence suggests an increase in bandicoot numbers where habitat has been improved.