

Fact Sheet

3

Common brushtail possums

Scientific name:

Trichosurus vulpecula

Size:

- The size of a large cat
- Body: 350-550 mm
- Tail: 250-400 mm

Weight:

1500 - 4500 grams

Description:

Light grey fur with white underparts and a black, bushy tail. Brushtails have large pointed ears like a cat's. Females have a pouch to carry their young. Adult males may have reddish fur on their chest which has been stained by their scent gland.

Habitat and Range:

Open forest and woodland, particularly along watercourses. Common resident in bushland, parks and backyards. Classified as rare in South Australia, particularly over the more arid parts of their range: central north, Flinders Ranges, Yorke and Eyre Peninsula. The strongholds for this species include Kangaroo Island, the Adelaide plains and the Mt Lofty Ranges.

Notes:

Nocturnal feeders, eating mostly leaves, flowers and fruits. Occasionally they eat small invertebrates and meat. Brushtails are predominantly arboreal (tree-living), although they also come to the ground to find food. They are a solitary species (living alone for most of their lives), and are territorial, using vocalization and scent marking in maintaining territories. Brushtails can be very noisy when moving across roofs at night and in territory defence, making grunt, cough and hiss noises. They shelter by day in tree hollows, but will also use roofs, cavity walls or sheds. Brushtails do not build nests. They can live for up to 14 years.

Threats:

- Loss of habitat, especially tree-hollows, through land clearing for agriculture and urbanisation
- Cats, dogs and foxes
- Power lines and electrical transformers
- Motor vehicles

Traces:

- Droppings are produced in abundance, thin jellybean shaped with one pointy end (22mm long by 7mm wide)
- Brushtails are the most common native animal found in roofs and can cause urine staining and other damage.

