

# Fact Sheet

# 5

## Pygmy possums

Pygmy possums are marsupials from the family Burramyidae. There are three species of pygmy possum found in South Australia:

1. Western Pygmy-possum (*Cercartetus concinnus*)
2. Little Pygmy-possum (*Cercartetus lepidus*)
3. Eastern Pygmy-possum (*Cercartetus nanus*)

These pygmy possums are quite similar in size, colouration, and shape. They are also very small and relatively fast-moving, so it can be difficult to identify them. Therefore, for Operation Possum, they need only be identified as pygmy possums. There is no need to distinguish between the western, eastern or little pygmy possums.

### Size:

- The size of a mouse
- Body: 50-110 mm
- Tail: 60-105 mm

### Weight:

6 - 43 grams

### Description:

Fawn to reddish-brown fur and white underparts. Pygmy possums have a short, pointed face. Their ears and eyes are both large, relative to the size of their head. They have a prehensile tail, naked over most of its length, however the base is furred.

### Habitat and Range:

Found in dry sclerophyll forests, particularly where a dense shrub layer is present. Resident of the Adelaide Hills, Murrumbidgee, South East, Kangaroo Island, Yorke and Eyre Peninsulas, plus the western coastal region. The eastern pygmy possum is considered Vulnerable in South Australia.

### Notes:

Nocturnal feeders, eating small invertebrates, nectar and pollen. Mainly arboreal and extremely agile in small branches; their prehensile tail can support their bodyweight. Pygmy possums are not often heard, although they do produce a high-pitched whistle. They sleep by day, typically in torpor (a state of dormancy similar to hibernation). Shelters in either a leaf-lined nest in a tree hollow, between wood and bark, in abandoned birds-nests or under shrubs.

### Threats:

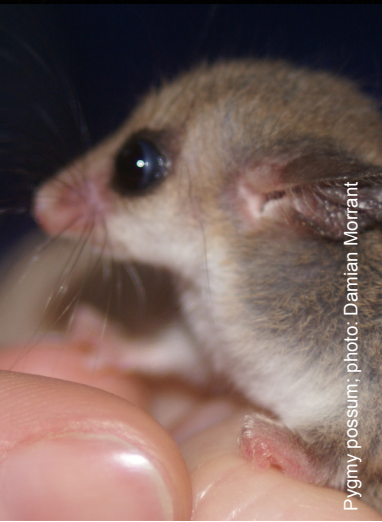
- Loss of habitat through land clearing for agriculture and urbanisation
- Cats

### Traces:

- Difficult to detect in the wild
- Occasionally a nest may be found



Pygmy possum; photo: Damian Marrant



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