

Have you seen a southern brown bandicoot?



What is a southern brown bandicoot?

Southern brown bandicoots are medium-sized, ground dwelling native marsupials. They have a long pointed snout, small round ears, a large rump and a short thick tail. Bandicoots have pouches to carry their young and are active during both the day and night time.

Why are they important?

They are the last bandicoot species naturally occurring in South Australia and are listed as Endangered at a national scale. Eight species of bandicoot once lived in this state. Bandicoots are ecosystem engineers – they are excellent diggers and this behaviour contributes to improvements in soil quality, and creates opportunities for native plants to germinate.

Where do they occur in the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges?

Southern brown bandicoots occur from the Williamstown area, down to the southern Fleurieu Peninsula. They live in native vegetation with a thick, often shrubby understorey; examples include dense patches of bracken fern (*Pteridium esculentum*) and yaccas (*Xanthorrhoea semiplana*) which are at least knee high and difficult to walk through. In the absence of native understorey they often rely on dense infestations of some weed species, particularly large patches of European blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus*).

Fast facts

Scientific name: *Isoodon obesulus obesulus*

Diet: Omnivorous – insects, spiders, fungi, plant roots, seeds, berries

Breeding season: Late winter to mid-summer

Length of pregnancy: 14 days (bandicoots have the shortest pregnancy of any mammal)

Litter size: 2 – 3 young

Pouch life: 2 months, then independent

Longevity: 2 – 3 years

Adult weight: Average 700 g (females) and 850 g (males)

Finding southern brown bandicoots

You might encounter a bandicoot on a bush walk or crossing a road. If you are lucky enough, you may even see one in your backyard!

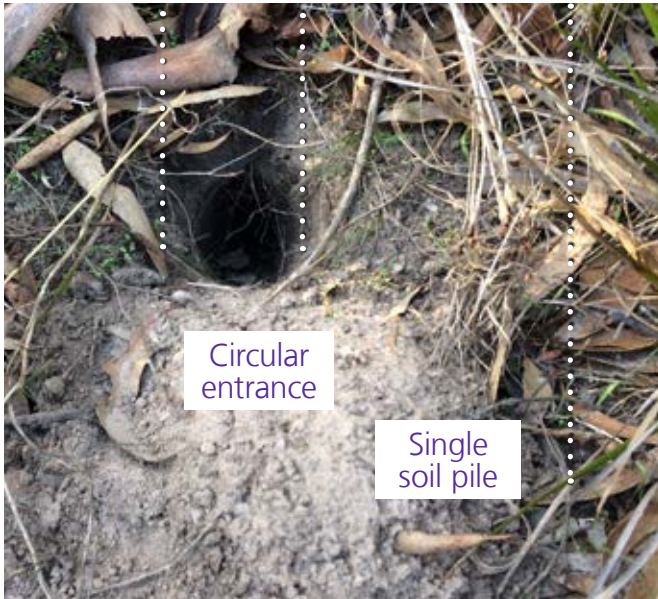
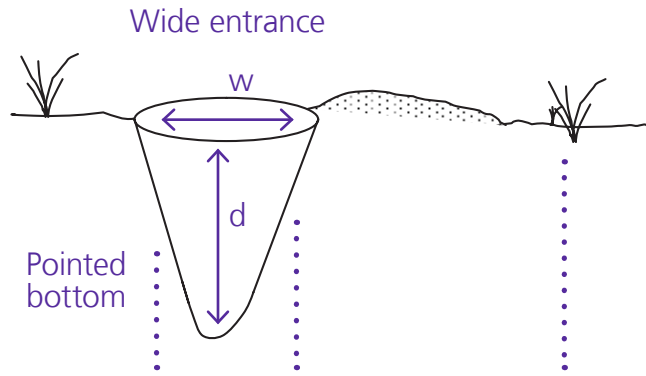
At first glance, bandicoots can look somewhat like a rat. However, they can be distinguished by their long pointed snout, small rounded ears, large rump and short thick tail. Most introduced rats have tails that are longer than their head and body length combined. Native water rats (*Hydromys chrysogaster*) also have long tails, but they are thick with a white tip and they have webbed feet. Bandicoot fur is brown with streaks of black, except on their belly which is creamy white.



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Bandicoots have a distinctive digging, conical in shape with a single soil (spoil) mound; a perfect fit for the bandicoot nose

Diggings

Diggings can help reveal if southern brown bandicoots live in an area because they often dig to find food. Their diggings are characteristically cone shaped – just like bandicoot noses – wide at the entrance, and narrow at the bottom. The digging entrance is circular with a surface diameter of between 3 cm and 16 cm, and a typical depth of around 10 cm. A single excavated soil pile will be next to the hole. Bandicoot diggings are generally found within 30 m of thick vegetation.

Nests

Nests are made into distinct mounds from the surrounding leaf litter and soil. Mature yaccas with leaf skirts reaching the ground provide protection from predators, and offer good shelter and nesting sites for southern brown bandicoots.

You can help southern brown bandicoots

- Be a responsible pet owner by keeping your pet cat indoors or in a cat enclosure. Cats are known predators of bandicoots and may be capable of causing small populations to become extinct.
- Seek advice from your local Natural Resources Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges District Officer or District Ecologist before undertaking weed control in areas where bandicoots may be present.
- Protect native vegetation and other bandicoot habitat in your local area.
- If you own a property with bandicoots, consider protecting your native vegetation for perpetuity by applying for a Heritage Agreement.

If you see a bandicoot

Please let us know. Report sightings of bandicoots, dead or alive, to your local Natural Resources Centre or email DEWNRThreatenedWildlife@sa.gov.au.

Photos would help enormously for confirming identification.



You can tell a bandicoot from a rat, by its long, pointed snout, large round rump and short stumpy tail. Credit: John O'Neill, Wiki Commons