

Brush-tailed Phascogale

Phascogale tapoatafa tapoatafa

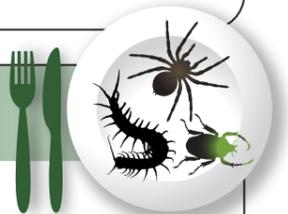


Habitat



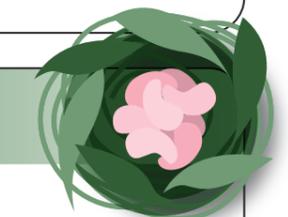
Brush-tailed Phascogales live in dry, open forests in Central Victoria. Their favourite trees are eucalypts with rough bark because they are easy to climb. These marsupials shelter inside tree hollows. They don't like to live too close to their neighbours, so need a lot of bushland to spread out. There aren't many connected patches of this precious habitat left.

Diet



Each night, Brush-tailed Phascogales race through leaf litter, up tree trunks and across branches looking for insects, spiders and centipedes. They are mostly carnivorous and catch their prey using sharp claws and teeth. When they're feeling very brave and hungry, phascogales even take on small lizards and birds! Sometimes, they sip nectar as a sweet treat.

Life stages



These marsupials live fast and die young. During winter, phascogales spend all their energy looking for mates. Males get so sick and tired from this that they die before their first birthday. Females carry up to eight babies in their pouch for seven weeks, then move them to the nest for five months. Females stay alive long enough to see their babies leave the hollow.

Threats

VULNERABLE

Brush-tailed Phascogales shelter inside hollows, which are holes that form in trees over 100 years old. Logging and bushfires destroy these old trees. Dry forests need to be connected so that phascogales can spread out, find mates, and escape bushfires and predators. These marsupials are also vulnerable to being eaten by foxes and feral cats.

Conservation



Protecting old trees and making sure patches of dry forests are connected is really important. While waiting for trees to form hollows, rangers and friends put up nest boxes to provide extra homes for the phascogales. Planting native trees gives these marsupials places to hide as they move about. Making sure cats stay inside also keeps phascogales safe from predators.

Features and adaptations

- 1 Black, bushy tail used to distract predators and to help balance
- 2 Big eyes and ears to find their way in the dark
- 3 Sharp claws and teeth for climbing trees and catching prey
- 4 Specialised toes with ridged paw pads for gripping trees
- 5 A shallow pouch where babies grow
- 6 Grey fur for camouflage in the bush

