



ARID RECOVERY  
Photo: Katherine Moseby

# Western Barred Bandicoot

## Western Barred Bandicoot (*Perameles bougainville*)

The first Western Barred Bandicoot sighting was recorded in 1817 on the Peron Peninsula W.A., where they were considered to be common. The last Western Barred Bandicoot was recorded on the mainland in 1929. Since then it has been confined to the Islands of Bernier and Dorre in Western Australia and a couple of reintroduction sites on the mainland. There are 11 different Bandicoots on record, however 3 of them are now extinct and are 4 listed as a threatened species.

### Physical Characteristics



Photo: Jude Carter

With a pointed snout and large erect ears, this little mammal is the smallest of the bandicoots. It weighs up to 250g. The short tapered tail accounts for about 1/3 of the bandicoot's length which is 280mm from head to tail. It has light grey to brownish grey fur on its back with two or three pale and dark bars along its large rump. Its belly is white as are its hind feet.

### Feeding

Although not as adept at digging as its cousin the Bilby, the Western Barred Bandicoot uses its strong hind legs to dig below the ground to forage mainly for insects, spiders and worms, although it also eats seeds, roots, herbs and other smaller animals. It can detect food up to 30cm underground.

In 1886 an early naturalist, Gerard Krefft described the Western Barred Bandicoot as being excellent at catching mice. "They would tumble the mice about with fore paws and break their hind legs" The bandicoot could kill up to 20 mice with astonishing speed.

### Breeding

Two or sometimes three joeys are born at a time. The Western Barred Bandicoot has one of the shortest gestation periods of all mammals of 12.5 days. When the babies are born they are carried in a backwards facing pouch. It opens backwards so that when digging, the dirt is not thrown into the pouch and onto the young. The pouch contains eight teats so that the next litter of young can use alternate teats as it takes a month for a teat to return to normal size after a joey has been weaned. In this way a bandicoot can have quick successive litters. Young stay in the pouch for 45 - 60 days. After two weeks outside of the pouch the young bandicoot is independent of its mother.

### Shelter

The Western Barred Bandicoot shelters during the daylight hours in a nest. It digs a shallow hollow in the ground under a low shrub and fills the hollow with sticks and leaves leaving a hole to get into and out of the nest. It cleverly

### Breeding

*Bandicoots will only breed after heavy falls of rain.*

### Tiny Babies

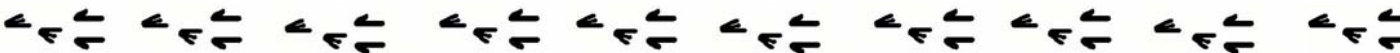
*When Western Barred Bandicoots are first born they are only 10mm long and weigh as little as a quarter of a gram. That's about as big as a tic tac.*



Photo: Jenny Stott

### Nicknames

*Arid Recovery staff found saying the name Western Barred Bandicoot too long and so shortened it to W(ee)BB*



disguises its one entrance / exit hole from predators using leaves. If it is disturbed by a predator it will leave the nest quickly any way it can sometimes destroying it's nest.

Some bandicoots will use the same nest repeatedly over the course of the week while others will move to a new nest each night. If caught out in the open a bandicoot will use another animal's burrows to shelter in until the threat has gone away.



A Western Barred Bandicoot caught in a cage trap.

Photo: Mimi D'aurvergne

### Activity

Western Barred Bandicoots prefer to live by themselves and only come out during the night. They defend their own home range which can extend up to 14.2 hectares for a male.

In an area where there are lots of Western Barred Bandicoots, the home range might be as small as 2.5 hectares.

A female's home range is typically half the size of the male's. At Arid Recovery females occupy separate home ranges but a male Western Barred Bandicoot's home range may overlap several females territories.

### Threats

Foxes and cats have been significant predators of the Western Barred Bandicoot. It has also had to deal with the reduction of its home range through the clearing of the land by fire and the grazing of stock and rabbits.

The Western Barred Bandicoot is now listed as endangered on the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation registry with less than 3000 left. Another threat to the Western Barred Bandicoot is a Papilloma wart virus found in some captive and wild animals. Discovered on a captive bred Western Barred Bandicoot in 1999, the earliest recording of any Western Barred Bandicoot having the disease was from a museum sample who died in 1982. All other museum specimens before this date have not shown any sign of the disease. The wart virus, in severe cases, can cause blindness and an inability to walk due to severe warts and lesions on the animal's feet.

### Arid Recovery

In September 2000, 11 Western Barred Bandicoots were transported from Bernier Island in W.A. and released into a pen in the Main Enclosure at Arid Recovery. Arid Recovery is the only place outside of Western Australia where WBB's are found.

There are now an estimated 70 individuals at the Reserve and there is a program to help stimulate breeding, using water. The program has so far been very successful with females bearing their second litter of young in the first season of the trial.

Since then, WBB's have been released to other areas of the reserve and in September 2009 a long awaited supplementary release of 5 individuals from Faure Island in W.A was conducted to expand the genetic stock and increase the viability of the population.



### Large Rumps

A Western Barred Bandicoot's large rear end may be used to store fat to help them survive lean times.

Photo: Jude Carter



### Sizes

Western Barred Bandicoots are the only bandicoot where the female is bigger than the male.

A specially designed transport box for a Western Barred Bandicoot

Photo: Katherine Moseby

## Find Out More

The Mammals of Australia 1995 edited by Ronald Strahan Reed Books Chatswood NSW

Western Barred Bandicoot 1997 Jacqui Richards Jeff Short Nature Australia

[http://www.calm.wa.gov.au/plants\\_animals/pdf\\_files/sp\\_western\\_barred\\_bandicoot.pdf](http://www.calm.wa.gov.au/plants_animals/pdf_files/sp_western_barred_bandicoot.pdf)