

Garden wildlife: Hornsby Shire's Bandicoots

Our local bandicoots

Two species of bandicoot are found in the bushy parts of the Hornsby Shire, the long-nosed bandicoot and the extremely rare southern brown bandicoot. Sometimes confused with rodents, bandicoots are actually small marsupials.



Long-nosed Bandicoot
Photo: Lyndel Wilson HSC

Declining populations

Housing and development have severely fragmented Sydney's bandicoots. This has made them vulnerable to the threat of predators and being hit by cars.

Only native owls, quolls and dingos prey on bandicoots. However, introduced animals such as feral and domestic cats, dogs and foxes are significant predators of bandicoots posing a threat to their future.

Once abundant in the backyards of some Sydney suburbs, long-nosed bandicoots have been declining in numbers. Long-nosed bandicoots have a grey-brown coat and a cream belly. They build their nests in shallow holes in the ground, lined with leaf litter. They often make nests under debris, which hides them from predators and protects them from rain and sun.

Where do they live?

The long-nosed bandicoot is common and widespread throughout the Hornsby Shire. The endangered southern brown bandicoot occurs south of the Hawkesbury River with one of the main populations being in Garigal and Ku-ring-gai Chase national parks. Bandicoots can live in a wide variety of habitats, from rainforests to wet and dry woodlands to heath.

What do they eat?

Bandicoots feed at night on insects, earthworms, insect larvae and spiders, and also eat plant tubers, roots and truffle-like fungi to supplement their diet. They can be useful in gardens by devouring grubs and garden pests. They are known for the conical holes they leave in suburban lawns.

Living with bandicoots

Bandicoots are protected and it is illegal to trap or kill them without a licence. You can help their conservation by keeping your pets inside at night, and by not allowing your pets to enter national parks at any time.

Bandicoots may treat your garden as a sanctuary, and you can live in harmony with them by designing your garden suitably. You can establish a separate area in the garden away from the places that are used most by your family and pets, which provides bandicoots an area for shelter and food. You can then use a more formal, manicured area for entertaining and relaxing.

Or you can keep bandicoots out of your garden by building a bandicoot-proof fence. Use fine galvanised wire mesh with gaps no bigger than 20 mm. The fence needs to be buried to a depth of at least 150 mm, and should be at least 500 mm tall.

Bandicoots and ticks

A wide range of native and domestic animals are hosts for the paralysis tick, which can also bite humans. Highly mobile animals such as foxes, dogs, and domestic and feral cats, can pick up ticks as they wander long distances through bushland areas and backyards. Bandicoots also act as hosts for the paralysis tick but tend to roam over a comparatively small range, usually within half a hectare of their nests. As a result they are less exposed to the risk of ticks. Although some people associate bandicoots with ticks, this may be because humans tend to pick up ticks most easily in long grass or thick scrub – which also happens to be the type of habitat favoured by bandicoots.

To reduce the spread of ticks in your area:

- Keep your garden free of weeds – particularly lantana.
- If your yard is infested, spray the parts of the yard that you use with a mix of chilli (cayenne pepper), garlic and vinegar. After being left to brew for a few days before spraying, the mixture will discourage ticks. But remember this treatment may also harm beneficial garden invertebrates.
- Regularly check your pets and family.
- If small ticks can drop onto washing, you can place it in the clothes drier for 10 minutes on a hot setting.



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