

pest animals

Pest animals and pest management

The term 'pest' is used to describe both introduced species and non-endemic native species that contribute to the degradation of the local environment. Pest species often impact on native flora and fauna by competing for food and shelter with, and predating upon, native species. Pest species also contribute to environmental degradation, can contribute to the spread of disease and give rise to safety issues through their impacts on the environment. Centennial Parklands manages pest species to minimise their impact on the environmental, cultural and heritage values of the Parklands.

European carp

European carp (*Cyprinus carpio*) is a freshwater fish native to Asia, originally introduced to NSW and Victoria as an ornamental and aquaculture fish. Carp occur in most freshwater systems in eastern Australia, including Centennial Park.

Carp are considered a pest species because they degrade the water quality of the ponds and limits the opportunity for native fish populations to become established. They are prolific breeders and reduce the survival chances for native fish. Their benthic feeding processes (feeding at the bottom of the pond) whereby they suck in substrate and water in search for aquatic organisms decreases water quality by increasing turbidity and contributing to erosion of the banks of the ponds.

Carp are managed with an electro-fishing program, a licensed procedure that stuns the fish which are then netted and removed from the ponds. The program has removed 10 tonnes of carp from the Parklands' ponds since 1998, the largest fish weighing a record 24 kilograms. The fish that are removed from the ponds are processed to make an organic liquid fertiliser. Australian bass (*Macquaria novemaculeata*) - a native fish species - has been introduced into the pond ecosystem to replace the carp.

European fox

Deliberately introduced into Australia in the 1860s, the European fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) is a widespread urban pest. It is one of the largest terrestrial predators in Australia and is a predominantly carnivorous, opportunistic feeder. Its diet includes small mammals and wild fruits though it will forage amongst human garbage. Within the Parklands, the fox threatens native species by preying on the brushtail possums and turtle eggs. It can contribute to resource degradation by enlarging rabbit burrows to create the dens in which it lives. Strategies have been put in place to reduce the impacts of foxes in the Parklands including den fumigation and the removal of derelict infrastructure that may harbour fox populations.

Pigeon

Pigeons (*Columba livia*) are recognised as a pest species in the Parklands. Sites, such as the Equestrian Centre, where there is ample food combined with suitable nesting and breeding sites enable the pigeon population to reach numbers at which they can negatively impact on infrastructure, animals and humans. Pigeons can spread bacterial and fungal diseases to humans, mites and fleas to humans and horses and their excrement can accelerate the deterioration and corrosion of buildings and infrastructure. They are territorial and can successfully compete for nesting sites and food, excluding native birds from the same resources. A range of techniques including trapping and egg and nest removal are used to manage pigeon populations, although these efforts can be hampered by people feeding pigeons.

Rabbits

The rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) is widespread through urban parks and much of rural Australia. Within Centennial Parklands rabbits contribute to localised erosion and bank instability through digging and burrowing. Their feeding degrades vegetation and ground cover and also poses a threat to formal floral displays. Rabbits also support fox populations by providing an additional food source and habitat.



Centennial Parklands is managed by the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust
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At present mitigation measures include burrow fumigation and modification. Formal floral displays are netted to protect young plants from rabbit destruction. Research into a long-term rabbit management strategy as part of an integrated pest management strategy is currently underway. Visitors are often caught dumping unwanted pet rabbits in Centennial Park. The dumping of animals is not permitted and can incur a fine. Pet rabbits can easily fall prey to predators such as foxes or cats and add to the problem of pest animals in Centennial Parklands.

Ibis

The sacred ibis (*Threskiornis molucca*) or Australian white ibis is easily identified by its bald head, long curved black beak and white plumage. It is often seen congregating in large numbers on the islands in Centennial Park or picking around bins and barbecue areas looking for food scraps. Ibis can cause a number of problems. Their nesting habit whereby they construct a platform of sticks can damage native vegetation and their dense concentration at nesting sites causes habitat destruction.

As scavengers they contribute to the spread of rubbish and are a frequent nuisance to visitors, especially picnickers. The high phosphate content in their excreta can also negatively affect the water quality of the ponds. To manage the impacts of ibis, the vegetation of known nesting sites has been modified to discourage ibis from breeding. This has included the removal of ibis eggs and nests. The installation of covered garbage bins throughout the Parklands has reduced the spread of rubbish by these birds.

Domestic ducks and geese

Many park visitors do not realise that the domestic mallard ducks, white ducks and greylag geese that inhabit the ponds are not native species. Visitors are not permitted to release domestic ducks or geese into Centennial Park as they interbreed with native birds, weakening the genetic strength of the native species. Domestic ducks and geese are unable to fend for themselves after being in captivity and can easily fall prey to foxes. Contact the RSPCA for advice on the relocation of unwanted domestic ducks and geese.

Sick or injured animals

If you find a sick or injured animal please do not handle it. Call the Rangers on 9339 6699 during business hours, or 0412 718 611 after hours.

Further information

For more information about fauna in Centennial Parklands, please see our fact sheet entitled 'Native Fauna' and 'Birds'. Regular Ranger-guided activities are available to educate visitors about our wildlife and the significance of Centennial Parklands as urban habitat.



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