

# native fauna

The diverse natural environment of Centennial Parklands is home to many different animals. The reed-fringed freshwater ponds, relatively wild areas with long grass and native trees, and Lachlan Swamp provide significant habitat for many native species including possums, birds, bats and turtles.

## Common brushtail possum

The common brushtail possum (*Trichosurus vulpecula*), aptly named for its black, brush-like tail, lives in the fig and palm trees throughout the Parklands. They are nocturnal marsupials, sleeping by day and becoming active at dusk to feed on leaves, buds, bark and food scraps. The brushtail possum is a solitary animal except during mating season. Its feet are equipped with sharp claws and rough pads which enable it to climb easily and move rapidly between tree limbs. Young possums are raised in the pouch, and when old enough ride around on their mothers back. The male is distinguishable by a red scent gland on his chest, which is used to mark territory. The brushtail possum is common to urban areas. Many live in the roofs of houses close to the Parklands. Centennial Parklands' Rangers have erected nest boxes in many trees as additional possum homes.

## Bats

Four species of Australian bats, both megabats and microbats, are found in the Parklands. Microbats are the small, commonly insectivorous bats that use echolocation — a sonar hearing system to detect and capture their prey. Megabats, including the grey-headed flying fox (*Pteropus poliocephalus*), use their good eyesight and keen sense of smell to locate their food. Large numbers of grey-headed flying foxes - also known as fruit bats - fly into the Parklands each night from a camp in Sydney's northern suburbs to feed on nectar, blossoms and the fruit of the fig, paperbark and gum trees.

Visitors are often apprehensive about fruit bats because of their large numbers and shrieking calls. Human contact with fruit bats has been linked with the transmission of lyssavirus to humans. This disease can only be transmitted through being scratched or bitten. It is for this reason it is advised that visitors to the Parklands should never handle fruit bats. If left alone, fruit bats are harmless animals as they perform essential ecological roles of pollination and dispersal of tree seeds along the eastern Australian coastline.

Three species of microbats, including Gould's wattled bat (*Chalinolobus gouldii*) and the eastern little mastiff bat (*Mormopterus norfolkensis*), also live in the Parkland's trees. The microbats are nocturnal, emerging after sunset to feed on insects. These bats are tiny, measuring between 35 - 50 mm.

## Short-finned eel

The short-finned eel (*Anguilla reinhardtii*) can be seen in a number of ponds in Centennial Park, including Lily and Duck Pond. This native eel species spawns in the ocean though lives its adult life in fresh water. It is thought to enter the ponds through pipes which drain from the park's ponds to the ocean. The eel is carnivorous and despite its appearance performs an important ecological function - it acts like a pond vacuum cleaner, eating dead and rotting fish. It is believed to live for 10 to 20 years and reaches lengths of up to 90cm.

## Frogs

Reed-fringed ponds and low-lying swampy areas such as Kensington Pond and Ash Paddock, are ideal frog habitats. Five frog species have been recorded, the most common of which is the striped grass frog (*Limnodynastes peronii*). Frogs prefer habitat that offer a clean water supply, shelter and food, though specific requirements vary between species. It is often easy to locate frogs by listening for their call. Other species recorded in Centennial Parklands are the common eastern froglet (*Crinia signifera*), dwarf tree frog (*Litoria fallax*), Peron's tree frog (*Litoria peronii*) and the Jervis Bay tree frog (*Littoria jervisensis*).



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## Turtles

The Sydney basin turtle (*Emydura macquarii*), and the snake-necked turtle (*Chelodina longicollis*) are the most commonly seen of the five native species recorded in Centennial Parklands. They can sometimes be seen basking on tree branches, drain covers and the banks of the ponds during warmer months. Turtles have been spotted in Randwick, Lily, Busby's and Kensington ponds where the vegetation offers shelter and sloping banks provide good access to the water.

Less commonly seen species are the northern snapping turtle (*Elseya Dentata*) and the broad-shelled turtle (*Chelodina Expansa*). There has also been one recorded sighting of the Mary River turtle (*Elusor macrurus*).

The female turtle comes ashore to nest, laying her eggs in sandy substrate with enough sun to aid incubation. Predators of turtle eggs include dogs and foxes, which are drawn to the nest by smell. The freshwater turtle's diet varies and includes insects, algae and weeds. In Centennial Park, turtles can often be seen crossing roads to travel between different ponds so drivers need to be careful, especially during warmer months.

## Blue-tongue lizard

With its distinctive bright blue tongue, the blue-tongue lizard (*Tiliqua scincoides*) is the largest member of the skink family. It has a thick, stumpy body and can grow up to half a metre long. The blue-tongue eats a variety of plants and animals, favouring beetles and snails. It prefers habitat with lots of ground cover but emerges to bask, flattening its body to maximise exposure to the sun. Blue-tongues have been seen in Lachlan Swamp. Dogs and cars are the main threats to these lizards in the Parklands.

## Invertebrates

Centennial Parklands is teeming with terrestrial and aquatic invertebrates. They have an essential ecological role in ensuring the healthy functioning of the Park ecosystem. Common aquatic invertebrates include backswimmers, dragonfly nymphs and aquatic worms. These tiny water dwelling creatures provide ample food for larger wildlife and are also important indicators of water quality. Throughout the Parklands there is an amazing variety of terrestrial insects and spiders, which are particularly abundant during the warmer months. Leaf curling spiders and golden orb weavers are common around Lachlan Swamp. Huntsman spiders can often be seen on the trunks of paperbark trees.

## Protecting native fauna

Animals in Centennial Parklands are wild and are not pets. Feeding the animals is not encouraged as it may cause the animals to become dependant on an artificial food source which is not healthy for them. Many visitors enjoy feeding the ducks. Rather than feeding them bread, try to feed them seeds or grass, which is more nutritious for them.

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 also unable to fend for themselves after being in captivity and can easily fall prey to foxes.

To protect our native fauna, dogs must be kept on leads within Grand Drive. Other ways to protect our native fauna include:

- ensuring pets are kept indoors after sunset so they do not inadvertently end up in Centennial Parklands
- driving at 30km/hr, taking extra care just before sunset when many animals are active
- collecting rubbish to ensure it does not become entangled in wings, legs or nests.

## Sick or injured animals

If you find a sick or injured animal 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 'Pest Animals' 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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