



Amazing Animals Fact sheets

Possums and Gliders

Australia has 13 species of large Australian Possums. Possums are an arboreal herbivorous marsupial. Put simply arboreal means that they live in trees, and herbivorous indicates they are plant eaters. All possums are marsupials so just like the koala and the kangaroo they have a pouch in which they carry their young. Gliders are a nocturnal marsupial that lives in trees. They have a membrane between their front and back limbs which enables them to glide through the air from tree to tree. This membrane is called a patagium. There are around six species of glider in Australia.



Common Brushtail Possum

Habitat

The Common Brushtail Possum is the most widely distributed large possum species. They mainly inhabit areas of woodlands and open forests. In the wild, Common Brushtail Possums usually make a home in the hollow limbs of trees. They are also known for making their homes in roofs of houses and sheds in suburban areas.

Diet

Eucalypt leaf and other leaf species are the main source of diet for Common Brushtail Possums. As you can imagine, these have quite a low nutritional value, so the possums supplement their diet with other things such as grasses, herbs, flowers, fruits and insects. The proportions of these foods vary between habitats, and the most

common food is not always the most preferred. Here at the Zoo, we try to maintain the possums' natural diet as much as possible, and the keepers are always on the lookout for suitable leaf and flowers.

Breeding

Common Brushtail Possums are not a social animal. They usually only come together for breeding. Mating usually occurs during the autumn months, but births have been recorded for every month of the year. The gestation period (the time from mating to birth) is 16 to 18 days. Usually only one young is born, although twins have been recorded. When the possum is born, it weighs no more than 0.2 grams and is covered in a thin pink skin. Apart from its forelimbs, it is quite undeveloped. It uses these well-developed front paws and claws to help grip onto the mother's fur and make its way to the pouch. Once safe inside, the jellybean-sized joey attaches itself to one of her mother's teats where she will grow and develop. They stay here in the pouch until they are around 120 days old and well furred.

Australia Zoo Common Brushtail Possum profiles



Georgia

Georgia was a wild-born possum who was donated to the Zoo in 2010 by Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service after she could not be released back into the

wild. They think she may have been born in 2008.

Georgia is a very sweet possum and she will always come out of her nest box to say hello to the keepers. She loves cuddles and licking the arms of her keepers. She gets to meet people through the Possum Encounter, though you might even see her around the Zoo on a walk (you can not miss her pink harness and blanket). Like a lot of our animals, she is harness-trained so she can get out and explore the Zoo. She loves her food, with pear and figs being her favourite! On a hot day she loves fruit ice blocks as a special treat.

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