Identification and Distribution

Quenda *Isoodon fusciventer,* also known as southwestern brown bandicoots, are small marsupials that live on the ground. Quenda are found in the southwest of Western Australia and are commonly seen in urban and suburban areas. Refer to www.naturemap.dpaw.wa.gov.au to find further information on the species distribution.

Quenda are about the size of a small rabbit and can weigh up to 2kg. They are 28-36cm in body length with a short, stiff tail 9-12cm long. Quenda have a long, pointed nose and short, rounded ears. Their fur is short and coarse and is a usually a dark grey-brown colour with a creamy white belly. Their tails also have dark brown fur.

They are sometimes mistaken for rats, but quenda cannot climb, they have a stouter shape, and they have shorter tails than rats.

If you think you have seen a quenda, which is a Priority species, fill out a fauna report form and email it with a photo and/or a description of the quenda to fauna@dbca.wa.gov.au.

Photos: J. Kuehs (left and middle); K. Page/DBCA (right)

Behaviour

Quenda are mostly nocturnal but are known to be active during the day, particularly during winter. They are most commonly seen at dawn or dusk. They usually stay close to shrubs and other cover while searching for food. They eat a variety of invertebrates, including earthworms, beetles and their larvae, and plant material, including fungi, tubers and bulbs, which they find while digging conical-shaped holes in the ground.

In their natural habitat, they live in dense understorey such as around swamps or in banksia and jarrah woodlands. A quenda will usually have several daytime nesting sites within their home range. The nest sites are indentations in the ground hidden beneath a shrub and lined with leaves, dry grasses and other soft materials. They have also been known to use old rabbit burrows.

Quenda can breed all year round when food is abundant, and females give birth to up to 6 young about 2 weeks after mating. Young are weaned after about 2 months, and they will live between 3-4 years.

Environmental Law

All fauna native to Australia, including fauna that naturally migrates to Australia, are afforded protection under both State and Commonwealth legislation.

Depending on the type of fauna-related activity, a licence issued by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions may be required. It is an offence to intentionally or recklessly kill, injure, trade, keep or move them unless authorised by a permit. Further information is available on the Department's website.

Quenda-Human Interactions

Quenda have adapted to urban and suburban habitats, and are known to seek shelter and food in gardens, parks and remnant bushland in urban areas. Unfortunately, this also leaves them at risk from predation by pet cats and dogs. They are similarly at risk from predation by feral cats, dogs and foxes in the more forested parts of the state. Other threats include the loss of suitable habitat and habitat fragmentation due to land clearing, competition for food resources with other animals such as rabbits, and death from vehicle strike.

Quenda in Gardens

If quenda are known to occur in your area, they may use your property, especially if there is suitable habitat for nesting and foraging. Low-lying shrubs provide daytime nesting sites and abundant flowers and greenery attract a variety of beetles, grubs, worms and other insects that make up part of the quendas natural diet.

In urban areas, quenda have been known to take small amounts of fruit, grain and pet food, but these artificial sources of food can have negative effects on their health and alter their natural behaviour. It is important that wild animals are not dependent on artificial food sources, as it can reduce reproductive success, promote disease, cause a loss of predator avoidance skills, and cause frequent gatherings of otherwise solitary animals, resulting in fights. A well-vegetated area will provide quenda with ample natural food sources, without the need for supplementary feeding.

Quenda will occasionally dig in lawns and gardens beds in the search for beetles, grubs, spiders and fungi. Rabbits will also dig in lawns for tubers and roots, but their diggings are generally larger and blunter (square-ended) than those of a quenda and are usually surrounded by tell-tale small, round rabbit droppings.

Quenda diggings will leave your lawn aerated and pest-free, but it can look messy. Replacing the pieces of grass and dirt that the quenda has removed will keep the lawn and garden looking tidy. Alternatively, quenda can be deterred by installing a low barrier around the garden or lawn. A galvanised mesh with holes no larger than 2 cm (i.e. aviary wire) buried in the ground to a depth of 15cm and standing 50cm above ground level can be used.

Relocation

The relocation of quenda to other sites is not an appropriate or recommended option. Quenda released into new areas may have to compete with other wildlife for resources and increase their chances of being killed by vehicles, cats, foxes and dogs in their new environment.

Sick or Injured quenda

Similar to other wildlife, quenda can carry viruses, and as they are wild animals, they may scratch when injured or afraid. Only trained and licenced personnel should handle quenda. Contact the Wildcare Helpline on (08) 9474 9055 for information on registered wildlife rehabilitators in your area.

Citation

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http://www.dbca.wa.gov.au/

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For more information see the department's website www.dbca.wa.gov.au

Department of **Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions**

GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA