

The Greater Bilby- Australia's Easter bunny



Macrotis Lagotis

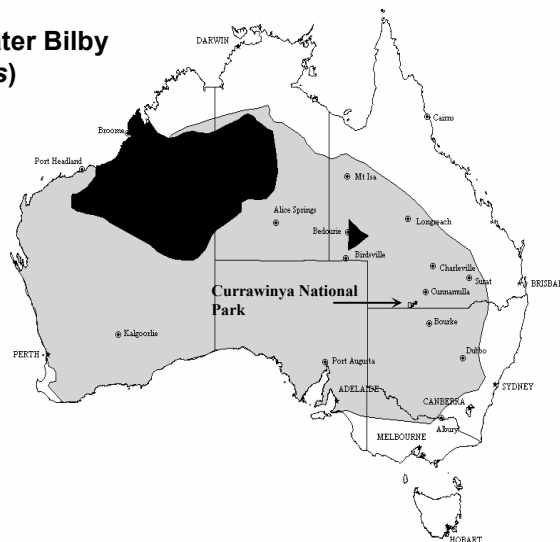
Bilby Facts

- The Greater Bilby (Macrotis Lagotis) is a member of the Bandicoot family, Bilbies are also known as Rabbit- Eared Bandicoots.
- The Lesser Bilby is known to be extinct
- The Greater Bilby is the largest of the Bandicoots, measuring up to 55cm in body length with a tail of up to 29cm long. Adult males weigh 1-2.5kg and the females are lighter weighing up to 800g- 1.1kg.
- They are marsupials; this means they have a pouch. The pouch opens backwards so it does not fill with dirt when burrowing.
- Bilbies breed all year round. Their gestation (pregnancy) period is only 12-14 days and the young called joeys remain in the pouch for 75-80 days, and then they are in the burrows with the mother for a further two weeks. After this they are independent.
- When conditions are good, a female Bilby is able to have four litters a year. She will usually have 1-2 young although it is rare she can have triplets. On average a female will have up to 8 young joeys in the year.
- Bilbies life span is 6-7 years in the wild and 11 years in captivity.
- The Bilbies fur is very soft and it is a blue-grey colour. The belly is white and the tail is black with a white crest at the end with a naked spur-like tip.
- Bilbies have long ears so that when they are digging, a portion of them remains above ground level so they can hear any predators approaching.
- Bilbies are omnivorous, this means they like all types of food, anything that will fit in their mouth. These include, seeds, spiders, worms, insects, bulbs, fruit, fungi, small lizards and other small animals.
- The long snout on the Bilbies, which is pink and hairless on the tip, gives the Bilbies an excellent sense of smell. They have a long, sticky tongue in which they use to lick up seeds and worms from the ground. Bilbies unfortunately have very poor eyesight and they are also sensitive to light.
- The Bilby like the Koala does not need to drink water as it acquires all its moisture from its food, however it will drink water if it is available. This means the Bilbies is well adapted for survival in the semi- arid and arid areas of Australia.
- They have strong forearms and hind legs; this helps to dig their homes and also to manipulate their food.
- Bilbies live in spiralling burrows in which they dig up to 2 metres deep. The reason they are so deep is to keep them safe from predators and also to keep them at a constant temperature of 23 degrees. These animals can become heat stressed. The Bilbies may have up to a dozen burrows, one for sleeping in and the others for escaping into.
- The Bilby is truly nocturnal. They don't emerge from their burrows until an hour after dusk and retreat at least an hour before dawn. A full moon, strong wind, and heavy rain can keep a Bilby in its burrow all night.

- Bilbies once inhabited 70% of Australia and now they are only found in tiny pockets in the Northern Territory, Western Australia and South- West Queensland. Estimated numbers tell us that there is less that 1000 animals left in Australia. (Refer to map of Bilby Distribution)
- It is believed that the Bilby population has been reduced dramatically by a number of contributing factors.
 - ✓ Farming animals such as sheep and cattle, which destroy the Bilbies habitat.
 - ✓ The introduced European rabbit has been competition for the Bilbies burrows and food.
 - ✓ The introduced European animals the Feral foxes and cats, are the Bilbies main predator.

**Distribution of the Greater Bilby
(*Macrotis lagotis*)**

 Present
 Past



Australian Bilby

