

WESTERN RINGTAIL POSSUMS

SELF GUIDED SPOTLIGHTING TIPS



Image: Steve Castan

Best trails and locations for spotlighting

MARGARET RIVER

A Class Nature Reserve, Margaret River - park at gravel car park on Carters Road (near corner Carters & Bussell Hwy)

PREVELLY CARAVAN PARK - for park patrons

COWARAMUP TO WITCHCLIFFE

Wardandi Track (Rails to Trails)

For a map visit - www.trails.wa.com.au/trails/margaret-river-rail-trail

EAST AUGUSTA

Try the foreshore walk from Davies Street to Curtis Ave or the bush track through the Timber Block, north of the townsite, that takes off from Jackson Street.

AUGUSTA

Turners & Flinders Bay Caravan Parks
- for park patrons

Be safe

FOR YOUR OWN SAFETY PLEASE ENSURE:

- you take a friend along
- tell someone where you are going
- wear closed footwear and long pants
- stick to the paths

TAKE CARE AND ENJOY!



Image: Steve Castan



Image: Abbey 2014



Image: Kevin Delahunty

Acknowledgments

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References

- Department of Parks and Wildlife (2017). Western Ringtail Possum (*Pseudocheirus occidentalis*) Recovery Plan. Wildlife Management Program No. 58. Department of Parks and Wildlife, Perth, WA.
- Jones, B.A.; How, R.A. and Kitchener, D.J. (1994). A Field Study of *Pseudocheirus occidentalis* (Marsupialia: Petauridae). II. Population studies. *Wildlife Research* 21: 189-201.
- Yokochi, K. (2015). A major road and artificial waterway are barriers to the rapidly declining Western Ringtail Possum. School of Animal Biology, University of Western Australia.





KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER WHEN SPOTLIGHTING:

- Use a head or hand held torch (LED 100-300 lumens or 30-50W halogen) with as wide a beam as possible.
- Be as quiet as possible to minimise disturbing the animals and also to listen for sound cues like animals calling or rustle of leaves as they jump between branches.
- Look for eye shine, movement of foliage or animals in the canopy, white chest patches, white-tipped tails and silhouettes.
- To maximise detection of eye shine, keep the torch as close to your line of sight as possible.
- Systematically sweep the vegetation with the spotlight from the ground to the upper canopy. Sweep the vegetation from several directions as you quietly pass (i.e. sweep ahead of you, then beside you, then behind you, then move forwards and sweep again).
- Minimise impact on the animal's eyes by reducing torch brightness once detected, particularly if animal is in close range.
- Avoid rainy, extremely windy or cold conditions.

THE SOUND A WRP MAKES IS VERY UNUSUAL AND SOUNDS LIKE A ZIP RAPIDLY LOSING



Image: K Yokochi

Shhhhh listen.....

Keep noise low while you walk and you may also hear the calls of different animals and their movements. Another reason to be whisper quiet is that animals are more likely to be detected by eye shine from your torch when they are facing you, not moving away from you if disturbed by noise.

Would you like to spot a critically endangered Western Ringtail Possum?

Here you will find all the information you need to head off on your very own nature night walk to spot some of our amazing wildlife when they are most active.

Western Ringtail Possums are nocturnal marsupials and so most likely to be encountered while spotlighting at night. They reside largely in Peppermint, Jarrah and Marri forests and woodlands as these trees comprise the largest part of their diet. Their population is in decline, which in coastal areas, is predominantly due to habitat loss. Research from the University of Western Australia has revealed there is a high risk that this species may be extinct within 20 years if current threats are not reduced.

Western Ringtail Possums are most easily distinguished by their slender, white-tipped tail and small round ears. They have dark brown-grey fur, with a cream underbelly. They can be up to 1.3kg in weight and approximately 40cm in body length. The tail can be an additional 40cm long and is strong enough to support its body weight when hanging from a branch.

Best time to head out

Anytime after sunset is a good time to start, as possums begin emerging from their slumber. For the Western Ringtail Possum, the best seasons for spotlighting are between October and April. Possums are less likely to be seen during heavy rain, strong winds or on very cold or moonlit nights.

What better excuse to head out on dark, mild evenings for a spotlight!



Image: David Bettini

You've seen a possum - what next?

Please report your sightings of Western Ringtail Possums at ala.org.au (Atlas of Living Australia). You will be asked to register and will then be able to place a marker on a map of your sighting location. Use the species name *Pseudocheirus occidentalis*. You may also like to download their sightings 'ALA App'. ALA share sighting data with Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions's (DBCA) NatureMap database.

Alternatively, report sightings to Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions using the form on their website: www.dbca.wa.gov.au/plants-and-animals/monitoring/standards-and-protocols/140-standard-report-forms

WHAT ELSE MIGHT I SEE?



Image: Cass Jury

Bandicoot (Quenda)

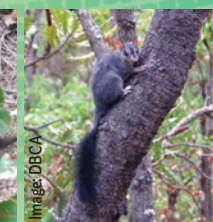


Image: DBCA

Brushed-Tailed Phascogale



Image: DBCA Blackwood

Common Brushtail Possum