



Greater Bilby



Introduction

The Greater bilby is affectionately known as Australia's Easter bunny – due to those large rabbit-like ears. There were once two species of bilby, the Greater bilby, and the Lesser bilby. Sadly, the lesser bilby became extinct sometime around the 1950s. Belonging to the bandicoot family, these ground-dwelling marsupials are now listed as endangered in Queensland and vulnerable throughout the rest of Australia. Where bilbies used to roam an area of approximately 70% of Australia, they now occupy less than 20% of their former habitat.

Greater bilbies are covered in silver-grey fur, have large, pointed ears that make up for poor eyesight, and thin black tail with a white tip. Their body is compact, and their limbs have sharp claws to enable the digging of burrows and foraging for food. Their face is narrow with a pointed snout for digging up an omnivorous diet of roots, fungi, seeds, fruit, and insects – especially termites.

They live in arid regions through to temperate coastal areas and can go without water for periods of time as they get moisture from their food source. To shelter from the heat of the day, bilbies build complex, spiral burrows up to 3 metres long and 2 metres deep, normally butted up against a termite mound or grass plant. Their burrow is always open, however, if a predator is to enter, they rarely find the bilby due to the burrow system. Add to this, the bilby will furiously dig out the closed end to extend the burrow and avoid. These burrows are shared by males, females and their young and will be used for many years.

Breeding and Life Cycle

Bilbies have a lifespan of seven years. Bilbies have two young at a time and can have up to 8 young a year. They are born after 14 days and are in the pouch for 3 months. They are fully weaned at around 15 weeks and can begin breeding soon after.

Did You Know

- Bilbies have a backward facing pouch (just like wombats) to avoid dirt filling up the pouch while digging.
- There are less than 10 000 bilbies left in the wild.

What Can You Do?

During Easter time, some retailers will sell Easter bilbies with proceeds going towards bilby conservation. Buy a bilby to help save our bilbies, these guys really need our help.

