



Brush-tailed Phascogale

Phascogales are unique animals that live in the drier forests of Victoria. These rat sized mammals have a large bushy tail which helps them keep balanced as they navigate in the trees where they search for insects and eucalypt flowers.

Sometimes they take up residence in the roof of houses and owners notice these unusual animals as they scamper around.

They are sometimes referred to by their colloquial name 'Tuan'. Once believed to be the indigenous name, it has recently been determined that this name belongs to Sugar Glider.

Are they a possum?

They are a marsupial and therefore are a distant relative to a possum. They more closely belong to an ancient family of predatory marsupials called Dasyurids from only Australia and New Guinea. This family consists of mammals with narrow pointed noses and long tails. Other relatives to the phascogale include the Agile Antechinus, Fat-tailed Dunnart, Spotted-tailed Quoll, Tasmanian Devil and Thylacine.

Where do they live?

Phascogales typically occupy dry forests in central Victoria. They require a landscape that has lots of tree hollows where they nest and take refuge from other larger predators such as the Powerful Owl.

What do they eat?

Phascogales feed almost exclusively on invertebrates such as moths, spiders, ants and beetles. They feed by stripping the bark from eucalypts and using their arms to reach into cracks to extract prey items. They will opportunistically feed on nectar. Phascogales will also occasionally take small birds and they have been recorded nest robbing.

How can I find phascogales?

Phascogales have a cryptic behaviour which makes them often difficult to find. They can be spotlighted if you are patient. They often run to the opposite side of the tree when spotlighted. The best way to find phascogales is to install a suitable nest box.

What is the best nest box to use for phascogales?

Phascogales require a nest box with a large cavity but small entrance hole. The size of the hole is important as it restricts other much larger dominant species from getting inside to evict phascogales.

A 45cm diameter hole is ideal for phascogales and will keep out much larger Eastern Ring-tail Possums and Common Brush-tailed Possums.



Find out more about the research of phascogales at www.thephascogaleproject.com

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