



## ICONIC WILDLIFE OF KANGAROO ISLAND

**Kangaroo Island is an ecological hub, with a diversity of flora and fauna spawned from thousands of years of separation from the mainland and its relatively late settlement by Europeans.**

Subsequently, animal populations have thrived, providing a wildlife enthusiast's dream. With a variety and abundance of native animals that roam wild and free, you have a great opportunity for the best wildlife experiences – observing animals in their natural habitat.

The 4400km<sup>2</sup> island showcases astonishing diversity. Natural habitats are various and plentiful, from scenic coastal landscapes with expansive ocean views, lush bushland ready for the adventurer to explore and open pastures fringed with native bush corridors. The perfect environment for a wealth of animals to live and prosper. The wildlife here is diverse and abundant, and encounters are common.

The best part is that many of these experiences will unfold in front of you as you are meandering along a quiet walking trail or sitting back at your accommodation relaxing in the evening. Some encounters will benefit from the experience of a local guide, full of knowledge not just about the best locations to see these creatures in the wild, but also with an eagerness to share their local knowledge with you.

Take the time to explore and you have a great chance of seeing kangaroos, wallabies, cape barren geese, fur seals, dolphins and koalas as they go about their daily lives. Head out with an expert guide to see Australian Sea-lions, Glossy Black-cockatoos and if the conditions are right, you have a good chance of stumbling across a Rosenberg's Goanna or Short-beaked Echidna waddling through the bush looking for insects.

The protection of the wildlife on Kangaroo Island is vital. With a large amount of remnant vegetation, including over 24 protected areas, 19 National and Conservation Parks and 5 Wilderness Protection Areas, Kangaroo Island is a sanctuary for many animals, birds and plant life. We've compiled a guide to a few of the 'must – see' iconic Kangaroo Island species. We've included

those species you'll have a pretty good chance of viewing if you're here for a few days and have the right information and conditions.

### Glossy Black-cockatoo

#### Where to find them

Glossy Black-cockatoos feed during the day returning to their nests at dusk. During the day they feed in Casuarina trees, on sheoak cones. A great sign that they may be near are the 'chewings' they leave behind, the ground up cones discarded on the ground as feeding cockatoos pick out the tasty seeds. Around dusk flocks return to Sugar Gum nesting habitat, where they roost in natural hollows or manmade nesting boxes.

Glossy Black-cockatoo habitat on the western end of the Island was significantly impacted by the summer 2019-2020 bushfires. The best place to view them is on the eastern reaches of the Island in Penneshaw at Baudin Conservation Park, and American River, near the hotel precinct. Wander quietly along the walking trail and listen for the birds perched in trees feeding during the day, cracking sheoak cones or at dusk listen for their calls as you sit quietly near Sugar Gums awaiting the return of the flock to roost for the evening. You will hear their distinctive call first and if you are lucky see a flash of their brilliant red tail as they come in to land on a branch high in the treetops.

For the best chance of viewing these critically endangered birds, book a tour with an expert local guide.

#### How to watch them

Glossy Black-cockatoos are rare and timid, making them a challenge to view. Find a quiet spot in the sheoak forest and listen for signs of the birds. Quietly observe them from a distance and you will be content with the experience of watching these rare birds feed amongst the distinct sheoak foliage. In the evening find a quiet clear spot in the Sugar Gum forest and await the drawn out croaky call of the flock as they return to the safety of tree hollows and nesting boxes in the evenings.

## KI Importance

Kangaroo Island has a very special subspecies of the endangered Glossy Black-cockatoo that exists nowhere else. Due to loss of nesting and feeding habitat over many years, the population declined to less than 200 birds by 1996. A Recovery Program has been doing great work to help the population recover and grow in numbers to around 450 birds. The 2019-2020 summer bushfires had a massive impact on this special population. About 75 per cent the endangered Glossy Black-cockatoo population lived in the bushfire impacted area and a significant percentage of its known feeding habitat was burnt. Many of the flocks that habited these areas have moved to further east in search of new feeding sites. Recovery actions are continuing with the building and protecting of nesting sites and planting of sheoak trees.

## Description

The smallest of Australia's black cockatoos, measuring around 48 cm tall, with a stunning red tail. Adult females Glossy Black-cockatoos have distinct yellow markings on their neck and head, as well as black barring across their red tails, which can appear in shades of deep red to orange. Adult males have a dark black-brown head and no barring on their red tail.

Preferring woodlands dominated by Drooping Sheoak for feeding and stands of tall Sugar Gum forest for nesting in hollows. Glossy Black-cockatoo habitat occurs on the western end of the island, which pre-bushfires accounted for around 75% of the population, and is now recovering habitat. There are also areas of habitat in and around American River, Penneshaw and areas dotted along the North Coast.

Breeding season for Glossy Black-cockatoos occurs between January and September, with birds tending to pair for life. Hatchlings are a yellow ball of fluff, fed by its parents, growing to a fledgling by Spring, and dependent on its parents for around 12 months. As Glossy Black-cockatoos are critically endangered it is extra important they are not disturbed at nesting sites, please help protect them by viewing from a distance of at least 30 metres.

## Did you know?

Glossy Black-cockatoos are especially fussy eaters feeding only on seed kernels from Drooping Sheoaks and only on particular trees within a forest. Research has proven that they prefer sheoaks growing on specific soil types and only choosing cones with a good fill of seed!

## Tammar Wallaby

### Where to find them

Tammar Wallabies are best seen near dawn and dusk as they are crepuscular/ nocturnal. (active primarily during the twilight period) With an abundant population on Kangaroo Island, sightings are highly likely, but often a fleeting glance. During the day Tammar Wallabies rest in dense, low vegetation. As the sun shifts towards the horizon, they move through tunnels in the vegetation from their daytime shelter to grassy areas to feed. Whilst commonly spotted on roadsides, the best viewing experience is to find a grassy flat near bushland and wait patiently into early evening. Some great spots include:

- Around the campsites and down towards the jetty at Vivonne Bay.
- Along the D'Estrees Bay Road up to Wheaton's Beach in Cape Gantheaume Conservation Park.
- In the settlement at Nepean Bay, via Western Cove Road.
- Baudin Conservation Park, Penneshaw.
- American River, Cannery Walk.

### How to watch them

Tammar Wallabies are very timid. Sit quietly and watch them from a distance and you will be rewarded watching them go about their business as they move around the fringes of bushland, feeding well into the evening. If you are observing them on the roadside, please park well off the road in a safe place and be aware of traffic.

## KI Importance

Kangaroo Island has the largest remaining natural population of Tammar Wallabies. They were once common in South and Western Australia, but the loss of habitat and predation by introduced foxes and cats, has devastated mainland populations. With such an abundant population on the island, visitors are highly likely to see them, they are truly a special population to observe.

## Description

Much smaller than kangaroos, Tammar wallabies have a dark grey coat with reddish-brown arms, feet and flanks, and distinct white cheek stripes. Adults are around half a metre tall. Tammar Wallabies tend to live in stable groups, which helps them to stay safe from predators. They are herbivorous, feeding on grasses, herbs and shrubs and live in a wide variety of habitats across the island including coastal scrub, heath, dry sclerophyll forest, mallee and woodland thickets. The birth of young Tammar Wallabies usually occurs in late January to early February, however joeys only start to emerge from the comfort of their mother's pouch in early winter, where they will start to spend time feeding on tender grass until they are fully weaned at around ten to eleven months old.

### Did you know?

The Tammar Wallaby has colour vision in the blue and green spectrums and the ability to drink sea water!

## Kangaroo Island Kangaroo

### Where to find them

Kangaroo Island kangaroos are nocturnal, during the day they often rest under vegetation, coming out to graze in the early morning and late afternoon. It is not uncommon to see kangaroos during the day on Kangaroo Island. Commonly spotted on roadsides, but for the best viewing you might find them feeding on grassy flats in many areas right across the island, some great spots include:

- On the Hog Bay Road from Prospect Hill to Baudin Beach, grazing in the paddocks alongside the road, find a safe park, well off the road and watch them feeding.
- At Stokes Bay in and around the grassy flats near the beach carpark and up on the grassy hills, park in the carpark and take a short stroll.

### How to watch them

Kangaroo Island kangaroos are generally shy of humans. If you can find a quiet, slightly obscured place to observe them, you will be rewarded with a relaxed animal going about their normal business. They are most active in the late afternoon, throughout the night and into the early morning. During the day, they are usually found resting in the shade, particularly during hot weather. In the colder months, they will be found grazing in open pastures adjacent to woodland. If startled they will quickly bound off, retreating for the safety of cover. Occasionally adult males can become aggressive if they feel threatened, so please take care and observe from a respectful distance. Very common right across Kangaroo Island, there is a high likelihood of watching these animals graze on grassy flats or skip across the road whilst you are driving, particularly in the twilight hours, so please take care driving in the early morning, late afternoon and evening.

### KI Importance

The namesake of Kangaroo Island, the Kangaroo Island Kangaroo is the only species of kangaroo that occurs on the Island. They have evolved differently to mainland kangaroos and are a subspecies of the Western Grey Kangaroo. Common right across the Island living in a variety of habitats.

### Description

Noticeably different than their mainland cousins, with a shorter and stockier build and much darker chocolate brown fur. Adult male kangaroos can stand up to 105–140 cm tall and females up to 85–120 cm tall. Being very agile, they can leap up to 12 metres in a single hop and reach speeds of 60 km/h.

Kangaroo Island Kangaroos are herbivores, feeding on grasses and native shrubs. They have adapted to require very little water. Common in a variety of habitats right across the Island, they can be found in open woodland, scrubland, grassland areas and on pastureland.

Breeding can occur right throughout the year, particularly when conditions are good, however often the peak is in summer. Kangaroos live in groups called a 'mob', where there is one dominant male, who is the head of the mob. Sometimes the head of the mob will be challenged by another male leading to a fight for the right to be leader. These fights can get quite aggressive with large adult males 'sitting back' on their tails and punching their strong hind legs forward into their opponent in a boxing style fight.

### Did you know?

Kangaroos find it very difficult to move backwards, due to the structure of their legs. They can shuffle backwards in an uneasy fashion using their forearms to push back, however they compensate for this with an ability to swiftly turn and dart away.

## Short-beaked Echidna

### Where to find them

Short-beaked Echidnas are generally solitary, feeding day and night and sheltering in hollow logs, under piles of debris, in self-constructed burrows and among tree roots. During the breeding season from May–September male echidnas form 'trains' behind females, where up to six males will follow one female hoping to become the successful suitor! While elusive they are relatively common and can be found across Kangaroo Island in all types of habitats and tend to be a fortuitous find as you are wandering in the bush or spotted slowly waddling across the road.

### How to watch them

With exceptional hearing and a good sense of smell, echidnas will freeze when disturbed and then curl into a ball, often trying to bury themselves in the leaf litter or soil. If you find an echidna, you will need to give it a few metres of space, sit ever so still, and very patiently for it to emerge and continue on its way. If you remain silent and very still, you will be rewarded with a window of time watching these quirky little creatures go about their business.

## KI Importance

The Short-beaked Echidnas on Kangaroo Island are a sub-species of those found on the mainland. They appear to be common across the Island due to suitable habitat and whilst they still face threats, including feral cats, goannas and vehicles, there are a relatively small number of significant predators. Exact population numbers remain a mystery, although recorded sightings have declined in some areas on the Island.

## Description

The echidna is a stocky animal covered with sharp spines on its back and sides. Its long, thin snout houses a sticky tongue used to catch food. It has a pouch to incubate its egg and carry its baby 'puggle'.

The echidna feeds on a wide variety of invertebrates, including termites, ants, grubs, and beetles. Echidnas use their feet and beak to reach their food, they will lift bark and even flip rocks to discover a tasty meal.

Short-beaked echidnas are found across Kangaroo Island in woodlands, heaths, mallee and coastal areas. They seem to prefer good quality habitat and deep leaf litter but are also seen walking across agricultural land and crossing roadsides, so please take care when driving.

## Did you know?

There are many quirky details about this native Australian creature. A baby echidna is called a puggle! Echidnas belong to the monotreme family, they have both mammalian and reptilian traits. Echidnas produce milk, but lay eggs, they have a pouch to hold and nurture their young and also have hair and spines – and their hind feet point backwards!

## Bottle-nosed Dolphin

### Where to find them

Bottle-nosed Dolphins are common year-round in the waters surrounding Kangaroo Island. Sometimes spotted from the coast or beach, cruising along the shoreline as they move between feeding and resting locations throughout their home range. It is not uncommon to encounter Bottle-nosed Dolphins when out boating, particularly along the north and eastern coast of the island.

A resident pod cruises back and forth around Penneshaw and others patrol waters dotted around the island, sometimes in the calm waters of Emu Bay a pod will cruise the blue line delighting beach goers. Core pods are resident near Hog Bay, North Cape and Dashwood Bay. Dolphins can also be regularly seen from West Bay to Pennington Bay, with the possibility of viewing other species of dolphins, such as Common Dolphins also.

## How to watch them

For the best viewing experience join a local marine tour to interact with these inquisitive and playful creatures. From a boat, they will be ducking and diving amongst the white water of waves, their speed and agility under the water is astounding. Bottle-nosed Dolphins are curious, inquisitive creatures and will often approach a vessel to investigate or even 'play' in the waves caused by the moving boat. If you are in a boat, please be careful as boat strikes pose a threat to dolphins. Take a marine tour with a local guide often visiting local resident pods, where you can watch from the comfort of the vessel or swim nearby the dolphins for a once in a lifetime experience, along with the opportunity to hear about the Islands marine life while cruising a variety of coastal habitats.

## KI Importance

Kangaroo Island provides important habitat for Bottle-nosed Dolphins, the species occurs commonly around Australia and throughout the world. A community volunteer 'Citizen Science' program on Kangaroo Island has been monitoring dolphin populations since 2005.

Dolphin Watch runs regular surveys with their partners allowing local volunteers the opportunity to study these wonderful marine mammals. Images and video footage are collected, identifying individual dolphins by distinctive dorsal fins and body markings. Vital data is recorded on movements and habitats, creating a sustainable, longitudinal study of extraordinary international significance.

## Description

Bottle-nosed Dolphins have a short thick snout or beak, giving rise to their name, with a curved mouth alluding to a smile. They are shades of grey, usually with a slightly lighter underbelly and measure around two to four metres in length. Bottle-nosed Dolphins are incredible swimmers, with their strong muscular bodies designed for propelling themselves at speed through the ocean waves and currents. A curved dorsal fin, powerful tail and pointed flippers help guide and steer them through the water, and at times launching themselves metres out of the water breaching.

Eating mostly fish, Bottle-nosed Dolphins are carnivores, sometimes feeding on crustaceans and cephalopods such as squid. Bottle-nosed Dolphins are commonly seen hunting, playing and cruising along the 'blue-line' where there is a mosaic of bare sand and seagrass meadows and often a tasty meal to be found.

As extremely social creatures, Bottle-nosed Dolphins live in groups called 'pods', with up to 80 dolphins having been seen together on the North Coast of Kangaroo Island. Playing, hunting and working together to raise their young dolphin 'calves', the pod typically keeps relatively close to shore, however at times may travel further out to sea.



Bottle-nosed Dolphins may breed year-round but usually give birth to their calves near the end of summer. With calves suckling for up to 18 months, there is every chance you will see younger dolphins amongst a pod in the bays and coves around the island year-round.

### Did you know?

Remarkable swimmers, Bottle-nosed Dolphins can reach speeds of over 30 kilometres per hour as they glide through the water, they can also dive up to 250 metres deep.

All dolphins use a process called 'echolocation', a series of high-pitched clicks to help them navigate the ocean and to also find food. These clicking sounds essentially bounce off objects in the water, such as fish, other dolphins, rocks – and bounce back to the dolphin in an echo. These clever mammals can then work out the size, shape and location of the object.

## Australian Sea-lion

### Where to find them

At the aptly named Seal Bay you can view the resident colony of Australian Sea-lions basking on the white sandy beach in between fishing trips to the continental shelf. As one of the rarest species in the world, Seal Bay is home to about five percent of the world's total population and is the third largest colony in existence. The beaches and bays of Seal Bay Conservation Park provide an ideal home for endangered Australian Sea-lions and a place to safely rest, play and raise their young.

### How to watch them

On the white sandy beach, sand dunes and coves of Seal Bay is the resident population of around 800 Australian sea-lions. Young pups and juvenile sea-lions play on the beach and in the dunes amongst adults who are most often resting on the beach after around three days at sea fishing. Seal Bay has been home to this resident population for thousands of years, now providing important protection for the population and offers an exceptional nature-based visitor experience.

At this popular tourism destination, you can walk amongst the heart of the Sea-lion colony with an experienced guide, learning about this endangered species and many other coastal inhabitants. There is also a self-guided, wheelchair accessible boardwalk meandering through the dunes to a number of viewing platforms, where you can set your own pace and watch these playful creatures go about their day-to-day business.

### KI Importance

The Australian Sea-lion is one of the rarest seals in the world, decimated by hunting in the 19th century as part of a thriving fur trade. Seal Bay Conservation Park is home to the third largest breeding colony of this species in the world, accounting for around five percent of the world's total. Australian Sea-lions are listed as endangered and declining both internationally and nationally. The Seal Bay colony is a very special colony and its protection is critical.

### Description

Australian Sea-lions are one of the few 'eared' seal species, with external ears. Also known for their ability to 'walk' on land, using their front flippers to hold themselves up and their back flippers to help them 'walk' on land.

Females and young adults tend to be a creamy colour bellies and a silver coloured back. Adult males or 'bulls' are dark brown all over with a creamy white-yellow mane around their head and neck. Breeding season can get hectic with often intense and aggressive battles between large fully grown, 250-kilogram bulls battling it out to defend their territory. Males fight each other from a very young age to establish their individual positions in the colony hierarchy, it is not unusual to see juveniles play fighting on the beach and as they mature young sub-adult males start to get more serious in their challenge for territory.

The Australian Sea-lion is carnivorous, opportunistically feeding on fish, squid, cuttlefish, octopus and small crabs. With an incredible ability to dive between 80 – 275 metres, they generally fish alone, consuming up to 18 kilograms of fish over three days before returning to Seal Bay to rest.

Australian Sea-lions generally live in coastal habitats including exposed islands and reefs, rocky terrain, sandy beaches and vegetated fore dunes and swales. They also use caves and deep cliff overhangs as haul-out sites for resting or breeding.

### Did you know?

The Australian Sea-lion breeding season is approximately every 18 months. There is not a designated regular breeding season (e.g. Winter), and even colonies across the world breed at different times of the year, yet they all have an approximate 18-month cycle.

Raising a seal pup is an intensive exercise for Australian Sea-lions, with pups requiring milk for at least 18 months, and then the female spends an additional 18 months teaching her pup the art of fishing and catching their own food. Females will only breed in the colony where they were born!

## Long-nosed Fur-seal

### Where to find them

Long-nosed Fur-seals (or New Zealand Fur-seals) are native to south-eastern Australia and found all along the South Australian coastline. Viewing is guaranteed at the resident population in Flinders Chase National Park at Admirals Arch, where you can watch these seals play, frolic and rest amongst the rocky shoreline from the safety of the viewing platform. For the more intrepid and experienced hiker, the 34 kilometre long, Cape Gantheaume Coastal Trek in the Cape Gantheaume Wilderness Protection Area will also meander past a resident colony of fur seals. An isolated unmarked track, ensure you do your research before embarking on this adventure.

### How to watch them

Watching seals safely from a viewing platform is the best option, it is surprising how quickly seals can move, even on land. If you encounter a seal in the wild, watch them from at least 30 metres and be aware as they can become aggressive when they feel threatened. The viewing platform at Admirals Arch provides a close view, in their natural habitat, from a safe location. You can watch Long-nosed Fur-seals play and chase on the rocks and frolic in the shallow waves as they go about their day feeling uninterrupted by their human observers.

### KI Importance

Colonies of Long-nosed Fur-seals are thriving and showing signs of recovery following their decimation from commercial sealing during the nineteenth century. The shores of Kangaroo Island are now home to several populations of these seals numbering over 100,000.

### Description

Long-nosed Fur-seals range in size but can grow to around 2 metres and upwards of 250 kilograms for a fully grown adult male. They have a pointed nose, long whiskers and external ears. Adult males are a dark grey to brown colour with a thick 'blonde' mane. Adult females are grey to brown on their back and are slightly lighter underneath.

Carnivorous and opportunistic they generally feed on squid and a variety of small bait fish, hunting in the open ocean between 50 and 1,000 kilometres off the coast. Long-nosed Fur-seals feed near the surface of the water and occasionally take small sea birds, although this is less common. They live along rocky shores around Kangaroo Island where they rest and breed in colonies.

### Did you know?

Long-nosed Fur-seals are commonly seen from the viewing platform at Admirals Arch floating on the surface on their side with one flipper in the air. They are not waving at visitors, but actually resting in the water, with one fin up and one down, they can feel the directions of the wind and water movement and assist in keeping balanced.

Long-nosed Fur-seals can dive up to 380 metres, the deepest of all the fur seals, and whilst seemingly clumsy on land they effortlessly and gracefully glide through the ocean, even when at its most treacherous.

## Koala

### Where to find them

The Koala spends much of the day resting in the treetops, often nestled into the fork of a tree seemingly fast asleep. When feeding you will spy them high up in the canopy and sometimes out near the branch ends reaching for tender leaves. Tending to move around at dusk and the early evening to feed, keep an eye out for their ball-shape high in the canopy, resting in a fork or moving between branches. Koalas occur in riverine habitats right across Kangaroo Island, except for the Dudley Peninsula. Particularly favouring eucalypt habitats including manna gum, blue gum, stringy bark or river red gum, however they have been known to rest in other tree species also. Great opportunities for viewing are the scenic walking trail along Cygnet River at Duck Lagoon, accessed via Kookaburra Road or the Kangaroo Island Wildlife Park. Koalas are often an opportunistic sighting when out enjoying a walk in the eucalypt habitats across the Island.

### How to watch them

Koalas spend between 18–20 hours of each day resting or sleeping, 1–3 hours feeding and the remaining time moving, grooming, or socialising. Vocalising Koalas aren't generally the norm, but when they do make a noise, it can be quite unexpected and surprising. Male Koalas produce a deep bellowing and snorting type noise, most often heard during breeding season. All Koalas can make sounds, females and juveniles generally only call out in a high-pitched squeak or squeal when they feel threatened or agitated. Koalas tend to be observed very quiet and nonchalant, usually seemingly unperturbed by what is going on about them. Watch them quietly from a distance to ensure they get the rest they need.

## KI Importance

Koalas were not on Kangaroo Island at the time of European settlement, and in the 1920s 18 koalas were released in Flinders Chase National Park to save their declining mainland population from the ravages of the fur trade and land clearance. Over time the population became established, with increasing numbers and distribution as the disease-free population expanded.

Only about 1% of Kangaroo Island is highly preferred Koala habitat and in time their overbrowsing has damaged some species of eucalypt trees, across large areas of habitat. To counteract this the Koala Management Program began on Kangaroo Island in 1997 and the population is carefully managed. The summer 2019-2020 bushfires had an impact on Koalas and their habitat across western Kangaroo Island and the population continues to be closely monitored.

## Description

Koalas, one of Australia's iconic pouched marsupials, have thick grey-brown fur with white-tipped fluffy ears, with body proportions similar to that of an infant human. Differing to their Queensland and New South Wales counterparts slightly in appearance with larger body weights, longer fur and fluffier ears, fully grown male Koalas can weigh up to 15 kilograms, and females up to 11. Koalas breed from October to May, with young seen regularly on the back of their mothers throughout spring and summer. Koalas can give birth to twins, although this is rare.

Koalas eat leaves from a few eucalypt species, which generally grow along the river systems on Kangaroo Island. They can eat up to 1 kilogram of leaves a day, have extremely sharp claws and a very powerful upper body allowing them to be world class tree climbers.

## Did you know?

The ability to survive on a diet of eucalypt species alone is only shared with very few Australian animal species, including the Greater Glider. Relatively low in essential nutrients, eucalypt leaves also contain nutrients that are toxic to most animals and contain compounds that impede digestion. The Koala must therefore use precious energy and protein to detoxify these compounds and remove them from their bodies, one of the reasons Koalas are so careful at conserving energy.

## Rosenburg's Goanna

In September, hatchlings of Rosenberg's Goanna begin to excavate their escape tunnel from termite mounds where eggs were laid. In October and November, the orange and grey hatchlings emerge in warm sunny weather to bask and forage, returning to the safety of the nest at night.

## Where to find them

Rosenburg's Goannas are active during the day, retiring to burrows in the cooler evenings. Being cold blooded they are often seen basking in the sun to warm themselves or searching for food across Kangaroo Island. They can be found across Kangaroo Island in all types of habitat. Popular spots include along the many trails and walks of Kangaroo Island, such as in Baudin Conservation Park, Beyeria Conservation Park, and at Murray Lagoon. Also often seen in the popular coastal locations of Stokes, Vivonne, Pennington and D'Estrees Bays. Due to their attraction to an easy meal of roadkill and carrion goannas are commonly spotted along roadsides, also posing a risk to them with passing road traffic. If you decide to view a goanna on a roadside, please take special care to carefully select a safe place to park your car well off the road and in good sight of other traffic.

## How to watch them

Rosenburg's Goannas are likely to be an incidental viewing, although reasonably common they can also act with great stealth in the bush. Watch them quietly and from a distance of around 20 metres. They are flighty animals and can be easily spooked, if they change their behaviour while you are watching them you are probably too close. If you can stay very quiet, calm and still you will be rewarded with a wonderful viewing experience. If you decide to view a goanna on a roadside, please take special care to carefully select a safe place to park your car well off the road and in good sight of other traffic.

## KI Importance

The largest native terrestrial predator on Kangaroo Island, Rosenberg's Goanna was once common across most of South Australia. They are now listed as vulnerable on the mainland and Kangaroo Island is one of their last refuges. Concerningly population surveys indicate that the population here is declining, attributed to altered land use, increased predation by feral cats and feral pigs and increased road traffic.

## Description

The Rosenberg's Goanna's powerful body grows to 1.5 metres long, with black-grey skin finely dotted with yellow and/or white spots. Their strong limbs have long, sharp, curved claws and their muscular tails are long and slender. Their large teeth curve backwards, to prevent prey from escaping.

Rosenberg's Goannas consume spiders, scorpions and other large insects, frogs, snakes, lizards, small birds and mammals. Scavenging on road kill is a welcome addition to their diet, yet a risky activity. Termite mounds make a perfect nursery for goannas which lay their eggs in the mounds as termites regulate the temperature and humidity, making it an ideal egg hatchery. Courtship and breeding occurs during summer, with eggs hatching in spring.

Rosenberg's Goannas live across Kangaroo Island in coastal heathland, woodlands and forests. They thrive in areas of sandy soil and termite mounds are plentiful, often exploring nearby grazing land to find food and shelter or a breeding partner! They dig burrows for shelter and shelter in these away from predators and during times of low or high temperature.

### Did you know?

Whilst the female Rosenberg's Goanna lays the eggs in a termite mound, often both male and female then guard the termite mound until termites have patched the mound and the eggs are safe. This helps hide and protect the eggs until they hatch in spring.

## Cape Barren Goose

### Where to find them

The best time to view Cape Barren Geese on Kangaroo Island is from autumn through to early spring, before they migrate to the mainland to feed. Good viewing opportunities are at the Black Swamp and grassy plains of Flinders Chase National Park where they breed. There are also populations at Murray Lagoon, accessed via Seagers Road and they can often be seen on the Wisanger salt pans grazing in the paddocks.

### How to watch them

Cape Barren Geese are flighty birds and best viewed from a comfortable distance of around 20 – 30 metres to avoid disturbing them. You might find them grazing on grass in a swamp habitat or paddocks. Approach them cautiously and if they are sitting on their nests, they may well be looking after their goslings. If they change their behaviour and show signs of alarm give them some more space.

## KI Importance

The Cape Barren Goose is only found in Australia and is one of the world's rarest geese. Last century, the Cape Barren Goose was hunted for food almost to extinction. Due to conservation efforts, their numbers have increased considerably, and this species is now relatively common within its limited range. The species was introduced to Kangaroo Island and is considered a healthy population.

## Description

The plumage of Cape Barren Geese is pale grey with black markings near the tips of its wing feathers and tail. The unique and delightful bright green-yellow cere (skin above the bill), and small black bill, along with its pink legs and black feet give it its unique and discerning characteristics.

Adults grow to around 85 centimetres tall with a wingspan of around 1.7 metres. Pairs of Cape Barren Geese mate for life, the male Cape Barren Goose builds the nest, on the ground in Native Iris tussocks or a stick saucer nest in open grassy flats. Usually, four or five white eggs are laid from late autumn, with the parents vigorously defending their territory. Goslings hatch in spring and will be seen following the parents closely feeding in pasture and grassland.

Cape Barren Geese are grazing birds commonly feeding on tussock grass, spear grass, various native herbs and succulents. In agricultural landscapes you might see them feeding on pasture grasses such as legumes, barley, and clover.

### Did you know?

Cape Barren Geese have the ability to drink salty and brackish water – which allows them to populate areas without fresh water, and to remain on offshore islands all year round.

### What else is interesting...

There are some often talked about but rarely spotted wildlife on Kangaroo Island, and whilst the chances of seeing these species are extremely rare, if you are super keen to check them off your list, your chances will be better if going with an expert tour guide, or joining a specific citizen science program, that way even if you don't find that elusive animal, you will be contributing to the knowledge and protection of it species.



## Platypus

The solitary and elusive Platypus swim in waterholes as they search for food at dawn and dusk. They have a smooth swimming action with a rolling dive as they chase their food.

### KI Importance

Kangaroo Island contains the only wild population of Platypus in South Australia, be it introduced. Early in the 1920s concerned conservationists recognised Platypus were becoming endangered on the mainland of South Australia and consequently introduced them to Flinders Chase National Park.

### Description

The Platypus is a unique animal with a pliable duck-shaped bill, webbed feet and a broad, flattened tail. It is covered in dark brown, thick, fine, insulating fur. The Platypus uses its bill to detect electrical impulses emitted from its prey.

The Platypus is a carnivore, eating worms, insect larvae, flies, small fish, small shrimps (such as yabbies) and other water-borne species. It spends around 12 hours each day foraging for food.

The Platypus is restricted to freshwater streams and water bodies for their food. When not foraging in water, they rest and nest in a burrow in earthen banks, or occasionally in accumulated stream debris or in low, dense vegetation.

## Kangaroo Island Dunnart

The Kangaroo Island Dunnart is a small carnivorous marsupial found only on Kangaroo Island, South Australia. It is the only known dunnart species on the island and has only been known to science for the last 50 years.

### KI Importance

The Kangaroo Island Dunnart is listed as endangered, with the population thought to be less than 500 and entirely confined to the western end of the island. The 2019-2020 summer bushfires had a significant impact on the habitat and population of dunnarts with approximately 96% of their known habitat being destroyed.

The Kangaroo Island Landscape Board's Dunnart Recovery Program aims to better understand where these native rodents are found on the island, identify immediate and long-term threats to their survival, and manage key threats to the species.

## Description

The Kangaroo Island Dunnart is a small carnivorous marsupial, of similar size to a house mouse, its head-body length is 80 to 90 millimetres with a slightly longer tail. Females weigh less than an Australian 50 cent coin at 10-15 grams, while males weigh 20 to 25 grams.

The Kangaroo Island Dunnart has a slender pointed nose (or muzzle) and large ears. It has grey fur, that is darker on the back and lighter on the belly, a thin grey tail and pale – almost white – fur on the hands and feet.

Like other dunnarts, the Kangaroo Island Dunnart feeds primarily on small animals, mostly invertebrates (spiders, beetles, ants, etc). Within its range, it occupies a variety of native vegetation, both mallee and woodland, sheltering in grass trees (*Xanthorrhoea*), leaf litter, and holes in the ground.

Breeding occurs from late spring into summer; like other small dasyurids, males are unlikely to outlive the breeding season, while females may survive a second year. Dunnarts have up to 10 young per litter.

The species has only been known to science for 50 years, as originally it was thought to be the same species as a mainland variety. Historically, the main threat to the Kangaroo Island Dunnart was clearing of native vegetation. Wildfires in the remaining native vegetation is a serious threat, as most records of the dunnart are from long-unburnt vegetation. Feral cats occur on Kangaroo Island and are also a threat. Overall, little is known about this species due to its relatively recent discovery.

## Getting involved

As part of a joint initiative between National Parks and Wildlife SA and the Atlas of Living Australia, all of the camera trap photos from the Kangaroo Island Dunnart survey sites are now available on-line for citizen scientists to help look through and identify which animals are present.

If you would like to help out and get involved with a bit of citizen science input, please head on over to DIGIVOL Bushfire Recovery Projects and help us ID some animals

## Wildlife viewing checklist

Optimise your viewing experience and take the following items with you:

- **Appropriate clothing and footwear**

Check the weather forecast before you leave and dress appropriately. Slip on a shirt, slop on some sunscreen and slap on a hat when you head outdoors to protect yourself from the sun. The plant disease *Phytophthora cinnamomi* is known to exist on Kangaroo Island. Please use existing hygiene stations to clean your boots to prevent the spread of the disease.

- **Water**

Take plenty of water to keep yourself hydrated as you search for wildlife.

- **Camera**

Use a zoom lens for a closer shot and be sure to turn off your flash to protect the eyes of animals.

- **Binoculars**

Use binoculars for a close-up view of wildlife, enabling you to keep a respectful distance.

- **Field guide**

To identify wildlife and find out more about them.

- **Be prepared**

Obtain as much information as possible before visiting sites.

- **Patience**

Wildlife are wild! It may not always be possible to view wildlife, however the experience of being a part of a natural environment is rewarding in itself and there is always something special to be experienced when out and about in nature.

- **Driving safely**

Kangaroo Island wildlife is active at night. Animals can be stunned by bright lights, so slow down, dip your lights and take time to observe the wildlife. During the day watch out for goannas and snakes basking on warm roads and birds and echidnas foraging along road edges. If you wish to stop for a roadside wildlife viewing experience, make sure you park safely, well off the side of the road, on a clear stretch of road, with your hazard lights on and always be aware of other traffic.

### Injured wildlife

If you happen to come across injured wildlife, please consider your safety first. Please report injured wildlife to the Kangaroo Island Landscapes Board via phone 8553 4444 or notify National Parks staff at one of their sites.