

Northern hairy-nosed wombat



Northern hairy-nosed wombat

Lasiorhinus krefftii

- Status:** Endangered
- Population:** Approximately 200 individuals
- Lifespan:** Up to 26 years in the wild
- Habitat:** Sandy grassy woodland in Epping Forest National Park and Richard Underwood Nature Refuge, Queensland

The northern hairy-nosed (NHN) wombats are the largest of the three wombats, and can weigh up to 40kg and be more than one metre long. Compared with the bare-nose wombat, hairy-nosed wombats have softer fur, longer and more pointed ears and a broader muzzle fringed with fine whiskers. NHN wombats differ from southern hairy-nosed wombats by a longer, very square muzzle, uniformly darker pelage and nasal bones that are shorter than frontal bones.

Did you know?
 The NHN wombat is found in only two locations in the wild in Australia; Epping Forest National Park (Scientific) in Central Queensland and Richard Underwood Nature Refuge near St George.



Bare-nosed (or common) wombat

Vombatus ursinus

- Status:** Locally common, declining in western Victoria and South Australia
- Population:** Tens of thousands
- Lifespan:** Average 15 years in the wild, 20 years in captivity
- Habitat:** Forests, coastal scrub and heath from sea level to above snowline.

The bare-nose wombats are smaller than NHN wombats and can weigh up to 35kg. Bare-nose wombats have a bare pointed nose, small ears and coarser brown fur.

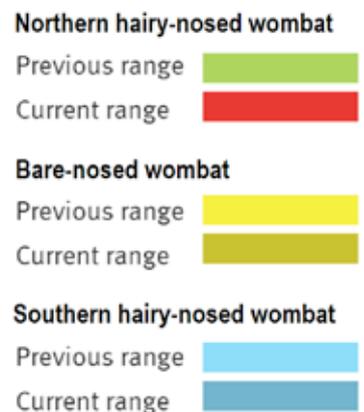


Southern hairy-nosed wombat

Lasiorhinus latifrons

- Status:** Patchy distribution, within their limited range
- Population:** Thousands
- Lifespan:** Average 14 years in the wild, 17 years in captivity
- Habitat:** Arid-adapted occurring across the hot, dry Nullarbor Plains of southern Australia

The southern hairy-nosed (SHN) wombats are the smallest wombat species, averaging 26kg. It has a broad hairy nose, long ears and soft grey-brown fur.



Great state. Great opportunity.

Lifestyle

The NHN wombats' diet consists almost entirely of native and introduced grasses. Most of their grazing is done during the night. Their teeth never stop growing, allowing them to grind their food, even when they're old.

Northern hairy-nosed wombats live deep underground in burrows where they spend most of their time. Occasionally wombats can be seen sunning themselves during daylight hours. Although mostly solitary, wombats often share burrows. Burrows provide protection against extreme climates above ground and provide optimal conditions to allow the wombat to conserve water and energy.

Their strong claws are used to dig their burrows in deep sandy soils usually under trees whose roots provide support. Each burrow can have several entrances. A NHN wombat will mark the entrance and mound near its burrow with dung, splashes of urine and scratches. A burrow can have an extensive network of tunnels, up to 90m long and 3.5m below ground, but only wide enough for a single wombat to pass.

Northern hairy-nosed wombats give birth to one young, usually in the warmer months between November and April. The young stay in the mother's pouch for eight to nine months. The pouch faces backwards so when the mother digs, the pouch doesn't fill with dirt. Joey's vary in the amount of time it takes them to gain independence from their mothers.



Threats

A combination of factors has contributed to the decline of the NHN wombat, including:

- competition for food with introduced grazing animals
- habitat loss through clearing and change of use
- predation by wild dogs
- extended droughts or major flooding events
- the loss of food supply from wildfires.



How many northern hairy-nosed wombats are left?

It is thought that the NHN wombat might have already been in decline when Europeans settled, and was probably the least common of the three wombat species at that time. In the 1980's NHN wombat numbers had fallen as low as 35 individuals. Through protection and close management the species population has steadily increased. At the last count in 2010 there were 163 NHN wombats at Epping Forest National Park (Scientific) in Queensland.

This is a significant achievement. Now with an estimated 200 NHN wombats in two populations their future is looking much more hopeful.

Did you know?

Appearances are deceptive. Wombats can move fast—up to 40km/h over a short distance.

The NHN wombat is the world's largest burrowing herbivore.

There are fewer NHN wombats on the planet than giant pandas or Sumatran tigers.

Further information

Visit www.ehp.qld.gov.au or phone 13 QGOV (13 74 68).

In 2009, the Queensland Government in partnership with global mining company Xstrata, commenced a project to airlift a small number of wombats from Epping Forest National Park to Yarran Downs, near St George.

Xstrata's 3 million dollar sponsorship was the start of this long term project to secure a second population.

Today only approximately 200 wombats remain.