



Mammals of the Venus Bay Peninsula

Native mammals

Short-beaked Echidna

The Short-beaked Echidna *Tachyglossus aculeatus* is common around Venus Bay. It is solitary within a home range of 40-70 hectares so if you often see an echidna it is likely to be the same one. Echidnas dig characteristic triangular shaped holes when feeding. They feed on ants, termites, beetle larvae and other soil invertebrates using a long sticky tongue. This food is ground on horny plates in the mouth. Echidnas will drink from ground level ponds in gardens. Active day or night, they avoid extremes of hot and cold weather. Mating occurs from June-September, when you may see more than one Echidna at a time. Females lay a single egg each year and feed their young on milk. The juvenile is carried in the pouch and weaned at about eight months. Echidnas shelter in logs, crevasses, burrows, litter.

Koala

Koalas *Phascolarctos cinereus* are agile, mostly solitary climbers with sharp claws. Their diet is almost entirely eucalypt leaves. They sleep most of the day and are active for about four hours at night. Sightings at Venus Bay are becoming more common and they can often be seen at Tarwin Lower in the Flora and Fauna Reserve. If we plant more Coast Manna Gums more koalas will come.

Common Wombat

Common Wombat *Vombatus ursinus* females are bigger than males. Wombats eat grass, sedges and tubers. They dig burrows with their sharp claws and powerful short limbs. In winter, females give birth to a single young. Their teeth grow in response to wear.

Eastern Grey Kangaroo

Eastern Grey Kangaroos *Macropus giganteus* are very common around Venus Bay. They are grey with paler fur underneath and grow up to 1.3 metres tall, with a tail up to 1.1 metres long. They feed mainly on grasses and herbs and are mostly active from dusk to dawn, often in large mobs.

Swamp Wallaby

Swamp Wallabies *Wallabia bicolor* have a dark brown upper body and a dark face, often with a white stripe. They grow up to 85 cm tall and feed on the leaves of shrubs, ferns and grasses. They are active during the day but are shy and usually solitary.

Eastern Pygmy Possum

Eastern Pygmy Possums *Cercartetus nanus* are found in Coast Banksia woodland, forests and heathland. They are tiny and very hard to see. Their head and body measure up to 10 cm long. They feed on insects, nectar and pollen and store food at the base of their tail, making it swollen at the tip. They usually breed in summer. Look for them at night on Banksia flowers.

Common Ringtail Possum

Common Ringtail Possums *Pseudocheirus peregrinus* are common around Venus Bay. They have white fur underneath, rufous on flanks and grey on the back, and a coiled tail with a white tip. They make a nest or drey in dense shrub or uses a tree hollow. Mainly solitary but they sometimes form small family groups. They forage at night for leaves, flowers and fruit, using their tail to grip branches as they move.

Microbats

Microbats are the smallest bats in Australia and some species could fit inside a matchbox. They hunt flying insects, including mosquitoes, and eat up to half their body weight a night. They become inactive in winter (torpor) to save energy, so it is important not to disturb them.

Swamp Rat

Swamp Rats *Rattus lutreolus* have dark fur and brown feet, with a tail that is shorter than its body. They grow to 20 cm long. Swamp Rats form extensive shallow burrow systems and runways through the vegetation. They eat mostly stems of grasses and sedges. They are found in dune scrub, heath and grassland areas.

Bush Rat

Bush Rats *Rattus fuscipes* have brown fur and pink feet, with a brown-pink tail shorter than its head and body length. They are shy rats, moving about at night. They grow up to 21 cm long. They eat plants, seeds, fungi and invertebrates. They make nests in soft soil burrows, rock crevices or fallen logs. They are found in coastal scrub.

Swamp Antechinus

Swamp Antechinus *Antechinus minimus* has been confirmed at Venus Bay. They are largely nocturnal and forage for insects. They build nests of dry grass in shallow burrows. Swamp Antechinus mate at the same time within each population, after which the males die.

Southern Brown Bandicoot

Southern Brown Bandicoots *Isodon obesulus* are thought to have been common round Venus Bay before the 1960s. There is little evidence of their continuing presence, but the occasional footprint sighting tells us some may have survived the predations of foxes and feral cats. They eat invertebrates and tubers in the soil. Holes dug for food are the shape of small ice cream cones - conical and small with a neat pile of soil at the edge. Nests are made from living tufts of grass pulled shut around them.

White-footed Dunnart

The White-footed Dunnart *Sminthopsis leucopus* has long white hind-feet. The species has been found in Cape Liptrap Coastal Park south of Venus Bay. They eat invertebrates and small skinks. They make nests from bark under fallen logs or dense leaf litter.

Australian Fur Seals *Arctocephalus pusillus*

Dolphins, Whales

Introduced mammals

House Mouse *Mus musculus* Common

Black Rat *Rattus rattus* Common

House Cat *Felix catus* Common

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes* Common

Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus* Common

Sambar *Cervus unicolor*

Sambar deer were hunted around Middle Tarwin according to the Sentinel Times of 1972. They are the largest deer species in Australia.

References:

Menkhorst, P & Knight, K 2001, *Field Guide to the Mammals of Australia*, OUP.

Museums Victoria website: museumvictoria.com.au/apps/fieldguide

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