

BANDICOOTS IN SUBURBIA

A lady from the suburb of Wilson notified the Department that her young sons had been observing Bandicoots foraging for food in the front yard and patio area of their home.

Toward dusk the animals could be seen emerging from a nearby vacant lot comprising sandy soil with low shrub and sheoak trees.

One of the larger animals could be approached and hand fed, but the others were content to scurry into the garden in search of their natural diet of insect larvae, worms and spiders.

The Short-nose Bandicoot or Quenda (as it is locally called) is one of the hardiest of ground dwelling marsupials that co-habitates with man's urban sprawl. Quendas will exist in an area where their nest remains undisturbed and there is a food source, but the surrounding district is practically built out.

Frequent reports from the Darling Range foothills and outer suburbs indicate a fair presence of these animals in the metropolitan area. For those people who think they may have seen rats in their garden, it might be a good thing to check out the following.

Quendas, in their avid search for food, dig little conical holes in the ground. These are a familiar feature of bushland, and in some cases, suburban gardens. The Quenda's nest is a flattened heap of sticks and debris which is extremely well concealed in vegetation. There is no entrance and the animal simply burrows into the nest and then conceals its entrance; similarly, it burrows out of its nest, covering up the exit. During very hot weather in south-western Australia the animals have been known to construct burrows in sandy soil.

Quendas are entirely nocturnal and are seldom seen during the day unless flushed from their nests. Adults are about the size of a rabbit.

With these rarer native animals frequenting isolated pockets of urban land, local Governments should give more thought to having sections of natural bush and stands of timber in their public open spaces. A complex designed similar to a golf course, would seem to have more success than the usual square of barren, sterile lawn.



The Quenda (*Isodon obesulus*).