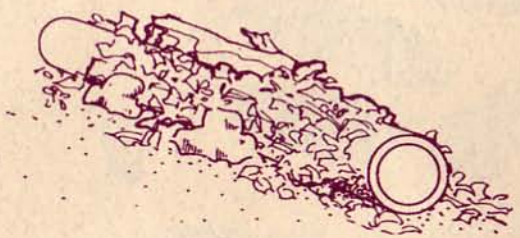
Providing habitat

Well-planted gardens provide the ideal alternative to a natural setting for quendas, as the low shrubs provide suitable daytime nesting sites, and the abundant flowers and greenery attracts a variety of beetles, grubs, worms and other insects that make up part of the quenda's diet.

In natural circumstances quendas create tunnels through the understorey, which they use to move through the bush and escape predators. This can be mimicked in an artificial habitat by providing hollow logs or lengths of concrete or PVC pipe (about 2m long and 10cm diameter). The artificial tunnels can be placed under bushes or covered with leaf litter, and stabilised with rocks.

A basic quenda tunnel design



Providing food

While it may seem a good idea to encourage quendas by supplementary feeding, in general this is not the case. It is important not to have wild animals become dependent upon artificial feeding, as it will eventually be to their detriment. Artificial foods may reduce reproductive success and promote disease, and may result in a loss of predator avoidance skills as quendas lose their fear of people and domestic animals. Artificial feeding may cause frequent gatherings of otherwise solitary animals, often resulting in fights. And what becomes of wild animals dependent of artificial feeding when their caretaker moves house or goes on holiday?

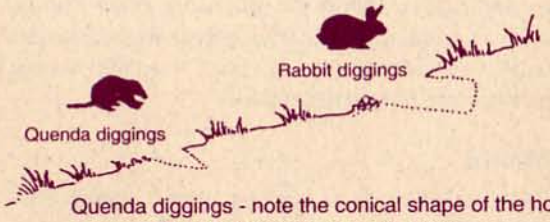
A well-vegetated area should provide a quenda with ample natural food, without the need for supplementary feeding.

Diggings

Quendas occasionally dig in lawns and garden beds in search of beetles, grubs, and spiders, leaving the lawn or garden aerated and pest-free but looking messy. Simply replacing the pieces of grass and dirt that the quenda has removed will keep the lawn and garden looking all right.

Alternatively, quendas can be deterred from a lawn or garden by installing a low barrier around the area. A galvanised mesh with holes no larger than 2cm can be used (such as aviary wire), and should be buried into the ground to a depth of 15cm and standing 50cm above ground level.

Rabbits often dig in lawns for tubers and roots, however their diggings are generally larger and blunter (square-ended) than those of a quenda, and are usually surrounded by telltale small, round rabbit droppings.



Quenda diggings - note the conical shape of the hole.
Rabbit diggings are much squarer.

Relocating

The trapping and removal of quendas by the general public is not appropriate nor is it recommended, and licences are required from the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) for all such activities.

Quendas released into new areas may compete with other wildlife for resources, and may be killed by vehicles, cats, foxes and dogs in their new environment. For advice on this matter, please contact your nearest CALM office to discuss the options available.

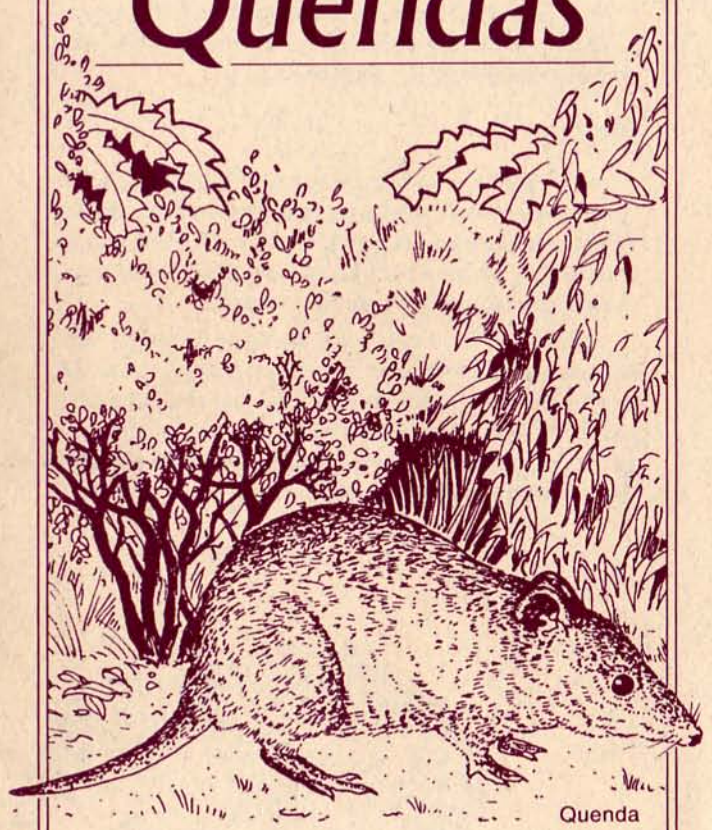
References

Wildlife Notes No. 5 (April 1998). Encouraging Quendas. *Land for Wildlife*, Western Australia.

Walraven, E. (1999). Care of Australian Wildlife. New Holland Publishers, Sydney, Australia.

Prepared by E. Bramwell, Lake Bryde Recovery Catchment Officer.
Department of Conservation and Land Management, April 2001.

Living with Quendas



Quenda

A joint initiative of *Land for Wildlife* and the Department of Conservation and Land Management
Western Australia, April 2001

Living with Quendas

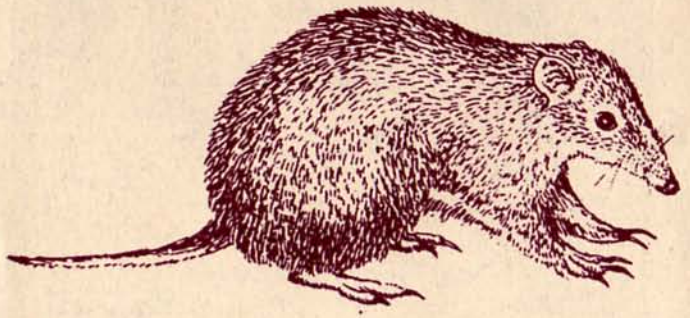
THE quenda, or southern brown bandicoot (*Isoodon obesulus* subsp. *fusciventer*), is a small marsupial often encountered in and around urban areas near bushland in the southwest of Western Australia. The quenda has recently been removed from the State Threatened Fauna List, but like all native animals, is protected under the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*.

The quenda is endemic to the southwest of Western Australia, and is now restricted to the coastal plain area between Guilderton and Esperance.

Biology

Adult quendas are about the size of a small rabbit, and have compact bodies, a pointed head, and a short, stiff tail. They are usually a dark grey-brown in colour with a paler underbelly, and can weigh up to 2 kilograms. Females are generally smaller and lighter than males.

Occasionally quendas are mistaken for large rats, however rats do not have a long, pointed head or short tail, and are generally long and lean in comparison to the stout shape of the quenda. Quendas have a hopping gait and tend to be bolder than a rat. Also, quendas do not climb trees or walls, or chew on electrical wiring as rats may.



Quenda *by M. Pieroni*

Diet

The quenda's natural diet consists mostly of invertebrates (the quenda is classed as an insectivore), supplemented with occasional small vertebrates, and plant material including tubers, bulbs and corms.

In urban areas quendas have been known to take small amounts of fruit, grain and occasionally pet food.

Habitat

Generally solitary by nature, a quenda will defend a home range (foraging zone) of up to 7 hectares, although where food is abundant the home range may be considerably smaller and overlap with those of other quendas.

In natural circumstances, quendas live in dense understorey such as that around swamps or in banksia and jarrah woodlands. Within a home range there may be several daytime nesting sites, which are usually indentations in the ground hidden beneath a shrub, lined with leaves, dry grasses and other soft materials.

Breeding

Quendas will breed at any time of year when food is abundant. Females give birth to up to four young approximately two weeks after mating, and after weaning, the juvenile quendas will establish home ranges of their own, and may live for about five years.

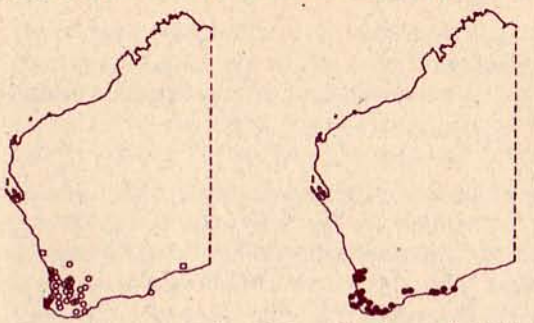
Threats

One of the major threats to the survival of quendas is predation by cats, foxes and dogs. Juvenile quendas are particularly at risk from predation due to their smaller size.

Another major threat to quendas is loss of suitable habitat and habitat fragmentation due to land clearing, or competition for resources with other animals such as rabbits. Fragmentation in particular can create "habitat islands", making dispersal of juveniles into secure habitat very difficult.

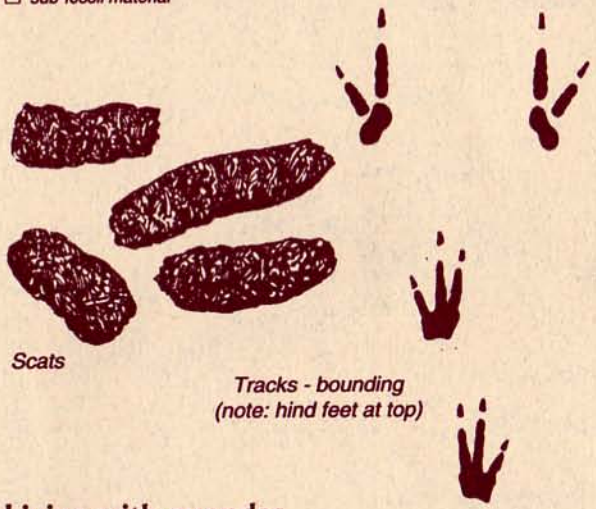
Quendas often fall victim to vehicles as they disperse across roads in search of food or in an attempt to establish home ranges. As roads become larger and vehicles faster and more numerous, this risk increases.

Recorded occurrence of *Isoodon obesulus* in Western Australia



○ *Specimens collected before 1970* ● *Specimens collected since 1969*

□ *sub-fossil material*



Scats

Tracks - bounding (note: hind feet at top)

Living with quendas

Quendas have adapted to living in and around urban areas where bushland occurs nearby. Their home ranges may sometimes include gardens, areas of long grass, and paddocks with dense crops.

If quendas occur in your area and you wish to encourage them on your property, this may be done by providing suitable habitat, suitable natural food, and by excluding cats and dogs from these areas. Even the most docile pet cat or dog will become excited at the prospect of a chase, and may sometimes kill quendas.

Although they are maligned for digging holes in lawns and gardens, there is no evidence of quendas being involved in spreading ticks or diseases.