



FACTSHEET

# Quokka



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**Common Name:** Quokka

**Scientific Name:** *Setonix brachyurus*

**Noongar Name:** “Quak-a” (Augusta and King Sound region) or “Bungeup” (Perth region).

**Conservation Status:** Listed as Vulnerable under ICUN (2014). All fauna on Rottnest Island is protected under the *Rottnest Island Authority Act 1987*.

**Habitat:** Settlement Area, Heath, Woodland, Wetlands and Coastal Habitat.

**Body length:** 40-54 cm

**Weight:** 2-4.5 kg

**Gestation period:** 27 days

**Number of young:** 1

### **Description:**

The Quokka is a type of small wallaby. It has thick, greyish brown fur with lighter brown under surfaces. It has a brown face, short rounded ears, black eyes and a black nose. Its feet, paws and short tail are all brown. The males are bigger than the females.

### **Diet:**

The Quokka is primarily a grazing herbivore. Its main diet consists of tree and shrub buds, leaves, grasses, succulents, seeds and roots. However, the Quokka has been known to eat small animals such as snails and legless lizards. This omnivorous behaviour is thought to occur in Summer and Autumn when food and water are in short supply.

### **In the Wild:**

The Quokka is the only mammal that is native to Rottnest and can be found almost everywhere on the Island. The Quokka is mainly nocturnal. This means it is mostly active at night, preferring to rest or sleep during the day.

The Quokka bounds and hops along the ground. It will sit on its hind legs to look around and will also use its front paws to search for and pick up food.

The Island habitat supports the largest known Quokka population and is essential for species survival. There are currently

around 8,000-10,000 Quokkas living on Rottnest. The Quokka population on Rottnest fluctuates throughout the year. There are generally higher numbers in Winter and Spring and lower numbers during Summer.

In the Winter, Quokkas live all over the Island because there is enough freshwater for them to drink. This water comes from dew and rainfall. As days begin to heat up in November, the freshwater becomes limited. By mid-summer, Quokkas can only get freshwater from a few soaks around the salt lakes and Barker Swamp but they also obtain some freshwater from eating vegetation. The lack of water and nutritious food means that many Quokkas won't make it through Summer but this is essential for regulating their large population on the Island.

All year round, there are large numbers of Quokkas in the Settlement area because of the abundance of food and water. Quokkas have become one of Rottnest Island's main tourist attractions because they are extremely cute and easy to spot.

Quokkas don't tend to move very far. They live in groups around the Island but it remains unknown whether they are territorial. Wild Quokkas can live for up to 10 years.

**Breeding Season:** The breeding season for Quokkas runs from January to September, with majority of births occurring between February and May. Joeys leave the pouch at approximately 6 months old and are weaned off their mother's milk at around 9-10 months old.

Quokkas generally only breed once a year because they experience a period of sexual inactivity, also known as 'seasonal anoestrus.' This non-breeding season occurs from October to late December and coincides with the lack of food and water during Summer.

### Threats:

- Human activity changing diet and behaviour – artificial food.
- Roadkill from buses and bicycles.
- Uncontrolled fire.
- Altered hydrological regimes (changes to the normal water cycle).
- Climate change.
- Disease (threatens individual Quokkas but not entire population).

### DID YOU KNOW?

The Quokka was the first animal to be recorded by Europeans.

It is very important that visitors do not feed Quokkas. Eating 'human food' can be very bad for the Quokkas' health.