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Easter Bilbies

NOT  BUNNIES

FACT SHEET

TEACHER RESOURCE

Bilbies vs Bunnies



Greater Bilby



Rabbit

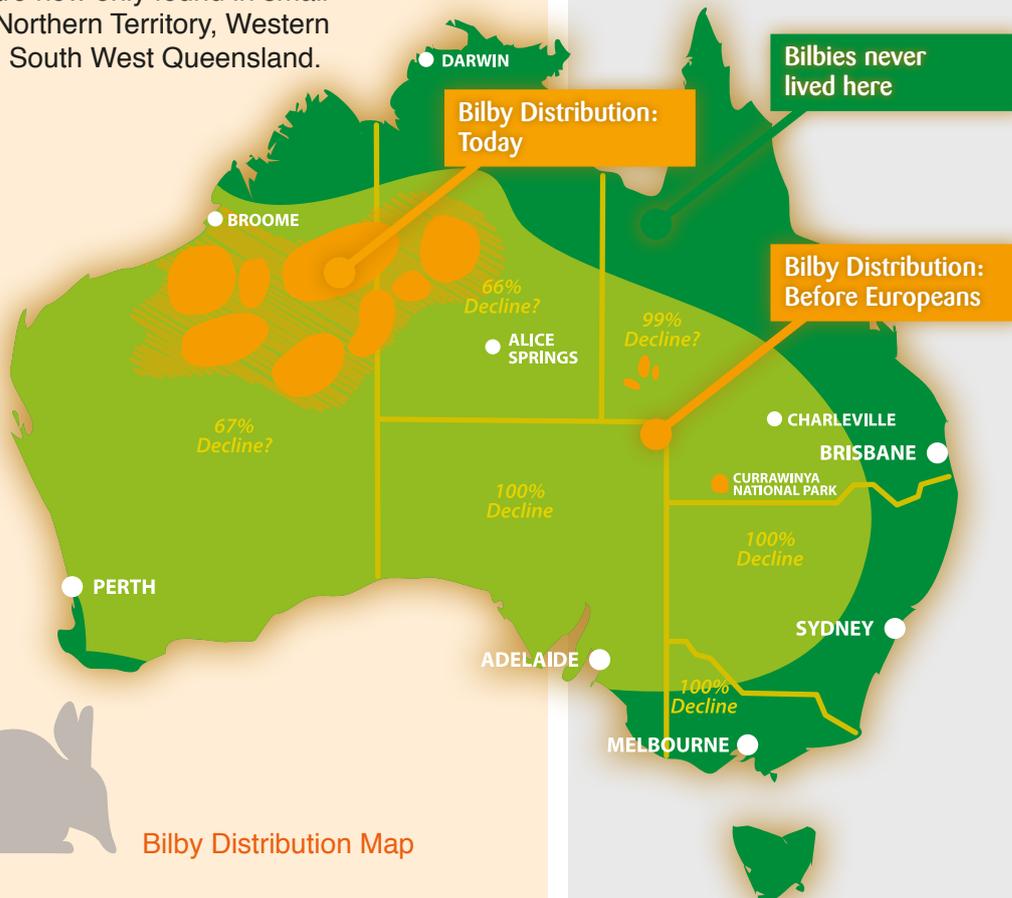
Bilbies

The Greater Bilby was once found on 70% of Australia. Since European settlement 90% of the previous population has been lost. Bilbies are now only found in small areas of the Northern Territory, Western Australia and South West Queensland.

Distribution

Bunnies

The European rabbit is not native to Australia. In 1859, 24 rabbits were introduced to Australia and have since multiplied to form a population of over 600 million in just over a century.



Bilby Distribution Map

Bilbies

vs

Bunnies



Bilby Burrows



Feral Rabbit Pests

Bilbies

Bilbies live in grasslands and mulga scrublands in the hot, dry arid and semi-arid areas of Australia where temperatures can get to over 45°C in summer.

Bilbies live in spiralling burrows which they dig up to 2 metres deep and 3 metres long. This depth helps to keep them safe from predators and also to keep them at a constant temperature of 23°C.

Bilbies

Omnivores:

Bilbies eat bulbs, fruit, seeds, fungi, insects, worms, termites, small lizards and spiders.

Water:

Bilbies don't need to drink water regularly because, like the koala, they get most of their moisture from their food.

Bilbies

The Greater Bilby is a nocturnal marsupial which has a silky light grey and white coat and a long black and white crested tail with a naked spur-like tip. Bilbies have a long snout and well-developed sense of smell to aid in finding food. Their large, hairless ears are extremely useful for listening for predators as well as prey.



Habitat

Bunnies

Rabbits live anywhere they can find food and burrows.

Rabbits take over bilbies burrows.

Rabbits are social animals, living in medium-sized colonies known as warrens.

Diet

Bunnies

Herbivores:

Rabbits are essentially mixed-feeders, both grazing and browsing, but grass is their primary food source. They nevertheless have a diverse diet of grasses, leaves, buds, tree bark, and roots. They ringbark young trees and do not allow for vegetation to grow back.

Water:

Similar to bilbies, rabbits can get their water needs from their diet.

Description

Bunnies

The European rabbit is a smallish, grey-brown (or sometimes black) medium sized mammal. It ranges from 34 to 50 cm in length; weight can range from approximately 1.1 to 2.5 kg.

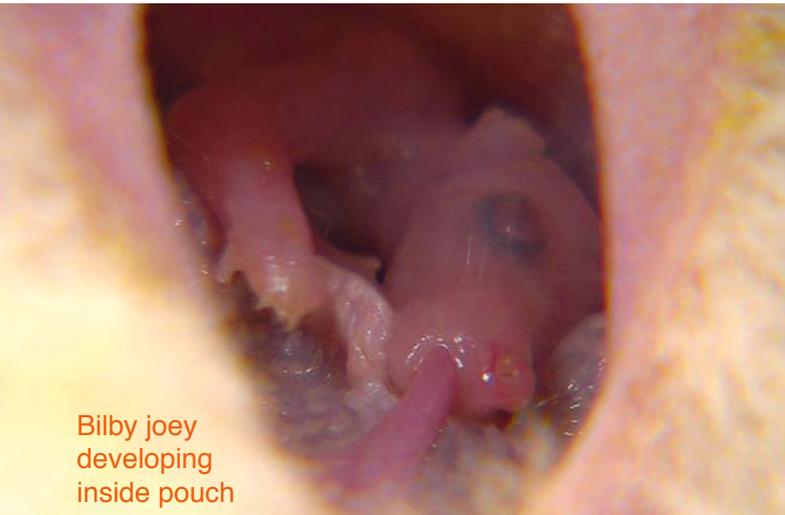
Bilbies



vs



Bunnies



Bilby joey developing inside pouch



Rabbit litter

Bilbies

Reproduction

Bunnies

Marsupials (pouched young):

For an Australian marsupial, the Bilby is a fast breeder, with a gestation period of 12 to 14 days. They stay in the mother's pouch between 75 and 80 days and are independent 2 weeks later.

Female Bilbies are ready to breed at 6 months.

Number of Babies per Litter:

Bilbies usually have 1 or 2 babies per litter, and can have triplets which is rare.

Litters per Year:

During a good season (boom times), a pair of bilbies can have up to 4 litters per year.

The maximum number of babies for one female bilby per year is 14.



14

Baby Bilbies per Year



Mammals:

Rabbits are very, very, very fast breeders. Their gestation period is 31 days.

A female rabbit is ready to reproduce from 3 to 4 months of age. A mature female rabbit can be pregnant continuously for up to 8 months a year.

Number of Babies per Litter:

Rabbits can have up to 12 babies per litter.

Litters per Year:

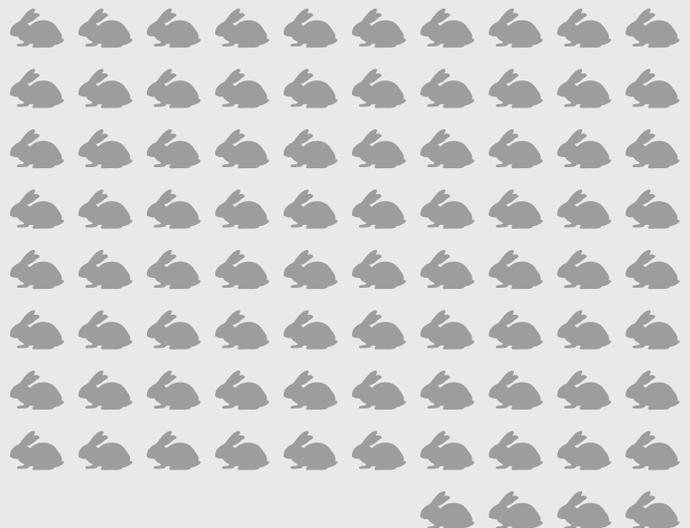
Rabbits can have from 4 to 7 litters per year.

The maximum number of babies for one female rabbit per year is 84.



84

Baby Rabbits per Year



Bilbies



vs



Bunnies



Bilbies are only active at night



Rabbits most active at dawn and dusk

Bilbies

Nocturnal:

Bilbies are truly nocturnal and are only active in the darkness of night. They don't emerge from their burrows until after dusk and retreat at least an hour before dawn.

A full moon, strong winds and heavy rain can keep a bilby in its burrow all night.

Omnivores:

Bilbies are well adapted to the harsh arid and semi-arid environment by eating most of what they can find and do not require water.

Ears:

Bilbies have excellent hearing and also use their ears to cool themselves off by pumping blood into the tiny veins of their ears.

Pouch:

The backward opening pouch of the female bilby prevents the pouch from getting dirty when they are digging burrows or scratching for food.

Adaptation

Bunnies

Crepuscular:

Rabbits are most active around dawn and dusk.

At night they move into open ground to feed.

Words to Learn

Nocturnal
Predators
Competitors

Introduced animals
Offspring
Litter

Backward
Opening
Pouch

Marsupial
Native animals
Gestation

Herbivores
Omnivores



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For more information please contact: Peggy Mucci - Projects Officer

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