

Possum Spotting Adventures

To an outsider it must look all very suspicious...

Meeting under cover of darkness with our standard uniform of beanies, jackets, gaiters and head torches.

Who is that? Oops sorry, I didn't mean to shine my light in your eyes. For a long time, I had no idea what my fellow possum spotters looked like, having only ever seen them at night, wearing beanies to cover their frozen heads.

Yes, we are all here. Now on to the safety induction. What are the hazards and how are we going to mitigate them? We might fall over, get bitten, stung, sprain something, get lost... Alright, we will walk slowly, in groups, with first aid kits, spare batteries, torches, phones, walkie talkies and a GPS. Great, we are good to go!

Off we head, sometimes walking in a line or splitting into groups of two or three if there is a lot of ground to cover. Someone is holding the clipboard and paperwork, someone else has the GPS, someone is navigating the path while the others are giving their necks a good workout, looking up, down, left side, right side. Walk a few more steps, up, down, left, right. Oh wait, the person in the front has just missed a huge cobweb running straight across the path and located the beautiful spider in its centre. We all carefully avoid the web and mostly admire the spider with some giving it a wide berth. Watch out for the rock, we all point our light at it so to avoid the tripping hazard.



Someone is using the new thermal scope and has found something far off in the bushes. We all shine our lights and carefully walk into the bush only to find some birds nesting. Lovely to see the birds, frogs, bats, owls, and spider eyes shining back at us, but no possums.



Wait, I have spotted some orange eyes in a large tree some ten meters away. We all carefully scramble to the tree, taking care not to damage any of the flora along the way. Oh joy, we found a possum and yes, it is a ringtail, with rounded ears and a thin tail with a white tip. Hooray! To have spotted this

beautiful marsupial, listed as critically endangered in Western Australia, and never documented in this area before now. What a wonder and a privilege.

Next, it is on to filling out the paperwork, someone calls out the time, what tree is that? They look different at night. Looks like a Banksia. What are the GPS coordinates? How far away from the path and how high up from the ground? Any other observations? Hmm we seem to find them in mainly flowering trees, and they seem more active after rain. Aww cute, this one has a baby. Five



possums spotted tonight, and a night well spent. We return with meaningful data which provides more opportunities to protect this precious species.

If you are interested in joining us possum spotting or have a property with remnant bushland that might be worth surveying, please contact us at info@torbaycatchment.org.au

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