



Booderee potoroos and bandicoots

The Threatened Species Commissioner has mobilised \$80,000 from the Australian Government to reintroduce vulnerable long-nosed potoroos and endangered southern brown bandicoots to Booderee National Park.

Project

Populations of long-nosed potoroos (*Potorous tridactylus*) and southern brown bandicoots (*Isodon obesulus*) are being translocated from nearby state forests to a new home in Booderee National Park on the South Coast of New South Wales.

Potoroos and bandicoots have long been extinct in Booderee, likely as the result of hunting by foxes. Booderee has carried out an intensive feral predator control program over the last decade, and fox and cat numbers are now so low that the park can again provide a safe haven for these threatened species.

The park plans to introduce at least 36 potoroos and 30 bandicoots. The first group of potoroos was released in Booderee in the last week of October 2014, with 24 animals making the journey from forest areas near the town of Eden. More potoroos will be reintroduced in autumn 2015 and bandicoots will return in late 2015.

Funding

\$80,000



Photo: Southern brown bandicoot (Dave Watts)

Partners

This project is a partnership between Parks Australia which manages Booderee National Park, Forestry Corporation of NSW, the Australian National University and the Southern Ark team from DEPI Victoria. Taronga Zoo is providing veterinary expertise.



Background

Long-nosed potoroos and southern brown bandicoots were present in the Booderee area for thousands of years before the arrival of foxes and cats —evidence of potoroos is abundant in Aboriginal middens dating back to historic times.

Potoroos are a highly threatened group of small mammals related to kangaroos and wallabies. Adult long-nosed potoroos weigh up to 1.6 kg and have a head and body length of about 360 mm and a tail length of 200–260 mm. Their backs are greyish brown and their bellies light brown.

Adult southern brown bandicoots weigh up to 1.9 kg and have a head and body length of about 30 cm and a tail length of about 12 cm. They have small rounded ears and small black eyes. Their fur is grey-brown on their backs and creamy white to pale yellow on their forefeet and belly.

Species to benefit

The obvious beneficiaries are the long-nosed potoroos and southern brown bandicoots, which are significant species for the Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community Council which manages Booderee National Park in partnership with Parks Australia.

This project will have spin off benefits for Booderee's forest ecosystems. Potoroos and bandicoots perform vitally important functions in forests. They consume large amounts of hypogaeal fungi. These 'truffles' are high in nutrients and have a strong smell. The small mammals eat them and then deposit the spores from the fungi in their faeces. As the scattered spores grow into fungi they form a mutually beneficial relationship with forest trees. The fungi grow in the roots of trees, which provide water and carbon to the fungi. The fungi extract nutrients from the soil for the trees. Scientists believe this is probably the reason why large trees were able to grow at Booderee despite the very poor soil. Reintroducing the potoroos and bandicoots will help spread these beneficial fungi further and more efficiently through Booderee's forests. Potoroos and bandicoots also improve soil health by composting the soil when they forage for fungi and invertebrates. Mixing organic matter and improving water infiltration aids plant health and seed germination.

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