



Rufous Bettong



Spectacled Hare-wallaby

Rufous Bettong, *Aepyprymnus rufescens*, Spectacled Hare-wallaby, *Lagorchestes conspicillatus*

What do they look like? Very small, dull grey-brown wallabies about 30 – 50 cm long (body only). Bettongs look more like miniature kangaroos, and are more upright in posture. Hare-wallabies are scruffy in appearance, with small, short arms and a hunched-over gait. Spectacled Hare-wallabies have orange fur around the eyes.

Where do they live? A variety of open woodlands, usually with a moderate level of ground cover including fallen timber, a reasonable grass and shrub layer. Rufous Bettongs are widespread in eastern Queensland whilst Spectacled Hare-wallabies range across the north of Australia. Neither species is usually very common in an area.

What do they need to live, eat and breed? Both shelter in grass 'nests', often with a shallow scrape. They may also utilise fallen hollow logs for this purpose. Bettongs eat herbs, grasses and leaves of shrubs and dig up plant roots and underground fungi or truffles (like mushrooms). Spectacled Hare-wallabies mainly eat grasses and herbs.

When might I see (or hear) them? Both are rarely seen by day. Usually this happens when one walks too close to their daytime hide and the animal erupts from its shelter. Both are often seen at night in vehicle headlights. Bettongs in particular like green pick, and they are often seen in recently burnt country.

What management actions affect this species? Both species need a mixture of good grass cover (for shelter), trees (where fungi is found), and some open patches of green pick (for feeding). Grazing systems that maintain patches of ground cover help these species survive. Avoid extensive wildfires which deplete ground cover and fallen timber over large areas. Infrequent, patchy, cool season or storm burning is best. Broad scale clearing will reduce available habitat. The effect of foxes and cats on Rufous Bettongs and Spectacled Hare-wallabies is uncertain, but controlling these species will benefit any small – medium sized native mammals.

How do they benefit the land I manage? By digging in soil for fungi and plant roots bettongs help spread fungal spores which are crucial to soil health. Their shallow diggings help capture grass seed and litter, helping recycle this into the soil. Both species are part of a large suite of organisms that maintain healthy levels of grass nutrient turnover.

