



Stripe-faced Dunnart



Fat-tailed Dunnart

## Dunnarts *Sminthopsis macroura*, *S. murina*, *S. crassicaudata*

**What do they look like?** Small, grey-brown mammals like a mouse, but with a much pointier nose. Usually a dark stripe running down the centre of the face, but this can be very faint or absent. If you find a dead one, you can tell it's a Dunnart by looking in the mouth, which has canine teeth like a dog, rather than two shearing teeth at the front of each jaw.

**Where do they live?** Dunnarts occur throughout the region. Most habitat types are utilised by dunnarts but they are absent around built up areas. Stripe-faced and Fat-tailed Dunnarts favour drier habitats such as open tussock grasslands and open woodlands, while Common Dunnarts prefer more closed habitats.

**What do they need to live, eat and breed?** Dunnarts are ferocious predators, catching spiders, centipedes, crickets and even vertebrates such as small mice, lizards or snakes. They can kill animals nearly as large as themselves. They live fast and die young, and must eat a large percentage of their body weight per day in order to survive. Most species do not need to drink water. Dunnarts are marsupials like kangaroos. They carry their young in pouches, and when they get larger, on their backs.

**When might I see (or hear) them?** Rarely seen unless the household cat brings them in. Occasionally seen rapidly bouncing across roads at night. Dunnarts may go undetected for years and then suddenly be quite abundant.

**What management actions affect this species?** Maintaining ground cover, vigorous, native pastures and soil integrity are important for dunnart food and shelter. Grazing systems which incorporate spelling are beneficial. Cats and foxes are significant predators of dunnarts, and loss of ground cover (e.g. through overgrazing) means these and other predators can catch dunnarts more successfully. Around homesteads, dunnarts are very attractive prey for domestic cats, so desexing and controlling cats at night may assist dunnart populations.

**How do they benefit the land I manage?** A dunnart eats thousands of insects each year helping to control plagues of insects such as locusts.

**Similar species:** Planigales are related, but are much smaller and flatter.

