

Natural Resources
Kangaroo Island



Kangaroo Island wildlife experiences



Government
of South Australia



Finding wildlife in the wild

Watching wildlife

Watching wildlife can be breath-taking. Follow these tips to optimise your experience.

Observation not interaction

Always put the animals' welfare first. Move slowly and quietly and keep at least 20 m away. Turn off your mobile phone. Use binoculars for that close-up view. Observe the animals without interacting; do not try to touch them, play with them or pursue them. If the animal change their behaviour while you are watching them you are probably too close; retreat slowly and give them more space. When photographing wildlife turn your flash off and use natural light instead to protect their eyes.

Driving safely

Kangaroo Island wildlife is active at night. Animals are blinded by bright lights, so slow down, dip your lights and take time to observe the wildlife. During the day watch out for goannas and snakes basking on warm roads and birds and echidnas foraging along road edges.

Where to find wildlife

Go for a walk among Kangaroo Island's many national and conservation parks. Take advice from park staff and use designated walking trails. Join a tour with experienced guides to gain a greater insight into animal behaviour and ecology. For nocturnal wildlife search at dawn and dusk or join a nocturnal tour. Stay on designated tracks and do not enter private land without permission.

Keep wildlife wild

Human foods can cause illness and death to wildlife so please do not feed them. Feeding wildlife also interrupts their natural patterns of behaviour, which are essential for their survival in the bush.

Injured wildlife

To report injured wildlife phone Natural Resources Kangaroo Island on (08) 8553 4444 or notify parks staff.



Wildlife viewing checklist

Optimise your viewing experience and take the following items with you:

Appropriate clothing and footwear

Check the weather forecast before you leave and dress accordingly. Protect yourself from the sun and slip on a shirt, slop on some sunscreen and slap on a hat when you head outdoors.

Water

Take plenty of water to keep yourself hydrated as you search for wildlife.

Camera

Use a zoom lens for a closer shot and turn your flash off to protect the animal's eyes.

Binoculars

Use binoculars for a close up view of wildlife instead of approaching them.

Notebook and pen

To record your sightings and make notes to identify animals later.

Field guide

To identify wildlife and find out more about them.

Site information

Obtain as much information as possible before visiting sites. Natural Resources Kangaroo Island staff provide a wealth of knowledge and can be contacted on (08) 8553 4444. The plant disease *Phytophthora cinnamomi* is known to exist on Kangaroo Island. Please use existing hygiene stations to prevent the spread of the disease.

Patience

Wildlife are wild! It may not always be possible to view wildlife, however the experience of being a part of a natural environment is rewarding in itself.

All wildlife are protected

All native animals are protected by the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*.



Kangaroo Island kangaroo

Where to find them

Kangaroo Island kangaroos are nocturnal. During the day they often rest under vegetation, coming out to graze in the early morning and late afternoon. Find them:

- » At Black Swamp in Flinders Chase National Park.
- » At Grassdale in Kelly Hill Conservation Park. Park at the gate on the South Coast Road and follow the 2 km track to an open area near an old cottage.
- » At Latham Conservation Park and surrounding paddocks. Enter the park through the double gates around 3 km south east of the Stokes Bay Café along the North Coast Road.
- » On the Hog Bay Road from Prospect Hill to Baudin Beach. Take care when parking. Ensure your car is completely off the road when parked.

KI Importance

Kangaroo Island is named after these kangaroos. They have evolved differently from mainland kangaroos since Kangaroo Island was connected to the mainland 9,500 years ago.

Description

The Kangaroo Island kangaroo is smaller, darker and has longer dark brown fur than its closest mainland relative. Adult males stand 105–140 cm tall and females up to 85–120 cm tall. The kangaroo can leap up to 12 m in a single hop and reach speeds of 60 km/h.

Diet

Kangaroo Island kangaroos are herbivores, feeding on grasses and native shrubs. They have adapted to require very little water.

Habitat

This species is found in open woodland, scrubland, and grassland areas and on pastureland.

How to watch them

Kangaroo Island kangaroos are generally shy of humans. Adult males can become aggressive if they feel threatened. Watch them quietly from a distance of at least 20 m; if they change their behaviour while you are watching them you are probably too close.



Tammar wallaby

Where to find them

Tammar wallabies are nocturnal and are best seen dawn and dusk. During the day Tammar wallabies rest in dense, low vegetation. They move through tunnels in the vegetation from their daytime shelters to grassed areas to feed in the evening. Find them:

- » At Grassdale in Kelly Hill Conservation Park. Park at the gate on the South Coast Road and follow the 2 km track to an open area near an old cottage.
- » Around the campsites and down towards the jetty at Vivonne Bay.
- » Along the D'Estrees Bay Road up to Wheatons Beach in Cape Gantheaume Conservation Park.
- » In the township at Nepean Bay, via Western Cove Road.
- » In Baudin Conservation Park. Access to the carpark is along Frenchmans Terrace and south along Binneys Track.

KI Importance

Kangaroo Island has the largest remaining natural population of Tammar wallabies. They were once common in South and Western Australia, but loss of habitat through land clearance and predation by introduced foxes and cats, has decimated mainland populations.

Description

Much smaller than kangaroos, Tammar wallabies have a dark grey coat with reddish-brown arms, feet and flanks, and white cheek stripes. Adults are 52–68 cm tall.

Diet

The Tammar wallaby is herbivorous, feeding on grasses, herbs and shrubs.

Habitat

This species lives in coastal scrub, heath, dry sclerophyll forest, mallee and woodland thickets.

How to watch them

Tammar wallabies are very timid. Watch them quietly from a distance of at least 20 m; if they change their behaviour while you are watching them you are probably too close.



Short-beaked echidna

Where to find them

Short-beaked echidnas are generally solitary, feeding day and night and sheltering in hollow logs, under piles of debris, in self-constructed burrows and among tree roots. During the breeding season from May–September male echidnas form trains behind females. They can be found across Kangaroo Island in all types of habitat. Find them wandering near the Burgess Hike at Kelly Hill Conservation Park.

KI Importance

The short-beaked echidnas on Kangaroo Island are a sub-species of those found on the mainland. They appear to be abundant across the island due to suitable habitat and no significant predators.

Description

The echidna is a stocky animal covered with sharp spines on its back and sides. Its long, thin snout houses a sticky tongue used to catch food. It has a pouch to incubate its egg and carry its baby 'puggle'.

Diet

The echidna prefers termites but also eats ants, beetles and other invertebrates. It breaks into termite and ant nests with its front paws, catching them with its long, sticky tongue.

Habitat

Short-beaked echidnas are found across Kangaroo Island in woodlands, heaths, mallee and coastal areas. They seem to prefer good quality habitat and deep leaf litter but are also seen walking across agricultural land.

How to watch them

With exceptional hearing and a good sense of smell, echidnas will freeze when disturbed and then curl into a ball, often trying to bury themselves in the leaf litter or soil. If you find an echidna, watch quietly and patiently from at least 20 m away. If they change their behaviour while you are watching them you are probably too close.



Platypus

Where to find them

Platypus are solitary animals best seen swimming in waterholes as they search for food at dawn and dusk. Look for their smooth swimming action with a bow-wave and their rolling dive as they chase their food. Find them at the Platypus Waterholes Walk or Rocky River Hike in Flinders Chase National Park.

KI Importance

Kangaroo Island contains the only wild population of platypus in South Australia. Early in the 1920s concerned conservationists recognised platypus were becoming endangered on the mainland of South Australia and consequently introduced them to Flinders Chase National Park where they are now believed to be well established.

Description

The platypus is a unique animal with a pliable duck-shaped bill, webbed feet and a broad, flattened tail. It is covered in dark brown, thick, fine, insulating fur. The platypus uses its bill to detect electrical impulses emitted from its prey.

Diet

The platypus is a carnivore, eating worms, insect larvae, flies, small fish, small shrimps (such as yabbies) and other water-borne species. It spends around 12 hours each day foraging for food.

Habitat

The platypus is restricted to freshwater streams and water bodies for its food. When not foraging in water, it rests and nest in a burrow in earthen banks, or occasionally in accumulated stream debris or in low, dense vegetation.

How to watch them

Watch for platypus from the look outs located over the Rocky River along the Platypus Waterholes Walk. They are very sensitive to sounds and movements so for the best results remain as still and quiet as possible.



Australian sea-lion

Where to find them

The beaches and bays of Seal Bay Conservation Park provide an ideal home for Australian sea-lions. The beach provides a place to rest after three days fishing at sea, the rocky coves shelter pupping mothers and the reef-enclosed bay protects young pups learning to swim. Find them at Seal Bay Conservation Park on a guided or self-directed tour.

KI Importance

The Australian sea-lion is one of the rarest seals in the world. The species was decimated by hunting and Seal Bay Conservation Park is now home to the third largest breeding colony of this species in the world. The Australian sea-lion generally remains in the colony it was born in.

Description

Australian sea-lions have external ears and walk on land. Adult females have silver backs and cream undersides. Breeding bulls are dark brown all over with a creamy white-yellow mane around their head and neck.

Diet

The Australian sea-lion is an opportunistic feeder diving between 80–275 m for fish, squid, cuttlefish, octopus and small crabs. It generally fishes alone at sea for three days before returning to Seal Bay to rest for three days.

Habitat

Sea-lions live in coastal habitats including exposed islands and reefs, rocky terrain, sandy beaches and vegetated fore dunes and swales. They also use caves and deep cliff overhangs as haul-out sites for resting or breeding habitat.

How to watch them

Seal Bay provides a sheltered cove for Australian sea-lions to rest after fishing and to breed. Please watch them quietly so they can obtain the sleep they need. Guided tours are available from 9 am — 5 pm with an option for a self-guided tour along the boardwalk.



New Zealand fur seal

Where to find them

New Zealand fur seals feed at night in the Southern Ocean and rest on rocky shores during the day around Kangaroo Island. Find them at:

» Admirals Arch in Flinders Chase National Park.

» Cape Gantheaume in the Cape Gantheaume Wilderness Protection Area accessed by the 34 km long, Cape Gantheaume Coastal Trek. This is an isolated, unmarked, rugged trek suitable for experienced hikers only. Before taking the trek discuss the route with a ranger and read the trekking guide on-line at http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/parks/Find_a_Park/Browse_by_region/Kangaroo_Island/Cape_Gantheaume or via the Qr code below.

KI Importance

Colonies of New Zealand fur seals are thriving and showing signs of recovery following their decimation from commercial sealing during the nineteenth century.

Description

New Zealand fur seals are smaller than Australia sea-lions and have a pointed nose, long whiskers and external ears. Adult males are a dark grey to brown colour with a thick mane. Adult females are grey to brown on their backs and are slightly lighter underneath.

Diet

New Zealand fur seals feed near the water surface consuming squid, octopus, fish and occasionally sea birds.

Habitat

New Zealand fur seals live along rocky shores around Kangaroo Island where they rest and breed in colonies.

How to watch them

Watch seals from at least 30 m as they can be aggressive when they feel threatened. They have sharp teeth and can move quickly over short distances. Seals swimming with a flipper in the air are keeping cool naturally.





Glossy black-cockatoo

Where to find them

Glossy black-cockatoos (glossies) feed during the day returning to their nests at dusk. Look for sheoak 'chewings'; ground up sheoak cones discarded by feeding glossies and listen for their call or the crunch as they chew on sheoak seeds. Find them at:

- » Latham Conservation Park. Enter the park from North Coast Road, approximately 1.5 km from Stokes Bay.
- » Baudin Conservation Park. Access to the carpark is along Frenchmans Terrace and south along Binneys Track.

KI Importance

The endangered SA glossy black-cockatoo is only found on Kangaroo Island. Due to loss of nesting and feeding habitat, by 1996 the population had declined to less than 200 birds. The population is now actively managed by the Glossy Black-Cockatoo Recovery Program to prevent extinction. Nests are protected from predators. Feeding and nesting habitat is protected and revegetated. The population has now grown to approximately 360 birds.

Description

A medium-sized black cockatoo, about 48 cm tall, with a red tail. Adult females have yellow patches on their neck and head and black barring on their red tails. Adult males have a dark black-brown head and no barring on their red tail.

Diet

Glossy black-cockatoos feed only on seed kernels from drooping sheoaks.

Habitat

This species prefers woodlands dominated by drooping sheoak with stands of sugar gum.

How to watch them

Glossies are susceptible to disturbance, especially during breeding in January–September when it is critical not to disturb them. Stay at least 30 m from feeding glossies and 50 m from drinking and nesting glossies. Scan the QR code to hear their call.



Koala

Where to find them

Koalas spend most of the day resting in a tree fork, usually climbing into the canopy around dusk to feed. Look for their ball-shape high in the canopy, or as they move between branches. Find them at:

- » Grassdale in Kelly Hill Conservation Park. Park at the gate on the South Coast Road and follow the 2 km track to an open area near an old cottage.
- » The Koala Walk at the Hanson Bay Sanctuary. A small fee applies and information can be found at: <http://www.hansonbay.com.au/>
- » The scenic walking trail along Cygnet River at Duck Lagoon, accessed via Kookaburra Road.

KI Importance

Koalas were not on Kangaroo Island at the time of European settlement. In the 1920s 18 koalas were released in Flinders Chase National Park to save their declining mainland population from the ravages of the fur trade and land clearance. The population quickly established, their numbers rapidly increased and koalas moved across the island. Only about 1% of Kangaroo Island is suitable koala habitat and their over-browsing has damaged trees. To counteract this the Koala Management Program began on Kangaroo Island in 1997.

Description

Koalas have thick grey-brown fur with white-tipped fluffy ears.

Diet

Koalas only eat eucalyptus leaves from a few species which generally grow along rivers on Kangaroo Island. They can eat up to 1 kg of leaves a day.

Habitat

On Kangaroo Island koalas live in trees along river systems.

How to watch them

Koalas spend between 18–20 hours of each day resting or sleeping, 1–3 hours feeding and the remaining time moving, grooming or socialising. Watch them quietly from a distance to ensure they can get the rest they need. Their claws are razor sharp so keep a distance.



Heath goanna

Where to find them

Heath goannas are active during the day, retiring to burrows in the cooler evenings. Being cold blooded they are often seen basking in the sun to warm themselves and searching for food across Kangaroo Island. They can be found across Kangaroo Island in all types of habitat. Find them:

- » Along any walk in Flinders Chase National Park. Park staff at the Flinders Chase Visitor Centre can help select the right walk for you.
- » On the Hanson Bay Hike in Kelly Hill Conservation Park. This 18 km return hike passes through Grassdale Lagoon to Hanson Bay.
- » At Bales Bay in Seal Bay Conservation Park.

KI Importance

The heath goanna is the largest native terrestrial predator on Kangaroo Island. They are vulnerable on mainland South Australia and Kangaroo Island is one of their last refuges. However, in recent years Kangaroo Island numbers have declined due to altered land use, increased road traffic and increased predation by feral cats and feral pigs.

Description

The heath goanna's powerful body grows to 1.5 m long. Its black-grey skin is finely dotted with yellow or white. Their strong limbs have long, sharp, curved claws and their muscular tails are long and slender. Their large teeth curve backwards, to prevent prey from escaping.

Diet

Heath goannas consume spiders, scorpions and other large insects, frogs, snakes, lizards, small birds and mammals. Scavenging on road-kill is a welcome addition to their diet.

Habitat

Heath goannas live across Kangaroo Island in coastal heaths, woodlands and forests.

How to watch them

Watch heath goannas quietly and from a distance of at least 20 m. If they change their behaviour while you are watching them you are probably too close.



Cape Barren goose

Where to find them

The best time to view Cape Barren geese on Kangaroo Island is from autumn through to early spring, before they migrate to the mainland to feed. Find them at:

- » The Black Swamp in Flinders Chase National Park where they breed.
- » Murray Lagoon, accessed via Seagers Road.

KI Importance

The Cape Barren goose is only found in Australia and is one of the world's rarest geese. Last century, the Cape Barren goose was hunted for food almost to extinction. Due to conservation efforts, their numbers have increased considerably and this species is now relatively common within its limited range. The species was introduced to Kangaroo Island and is considered a healthy population.

Description

The goose's plumage is pale grey with black markings near the tips of its wing feathers and tail. The area above its black bill is a unique bright green-yellow and it has pink legs with black feet. Adults grow to around 85 cm tall with a wing span of 1.7 m.

Diet

Cape Barren geese graze the common island tussock grass, spear grass and various herbs and succulents and pasture grasses. Their ability to drink salty and brackish water allows numbers of them to remain on offshore islands all year round.

Habitat

The Cape Barren goose nests on the ground in colonies on small, windswept and generally uninhabited offshore islands. In summer when they are not breeding, they fly between Tasmania and the southern coast of mainland Australia searching for farmland to graze on.

How to watch them

Give Cape Barren geese at least 20 m space to graze, sit on their nests and look after their goslings. If they change their behaviour and show signs of alarm give them some more space.

Where are they?





Contact

Natural Resources Kangaroo Island

37 Dauncey Street Kingscote SA 5223

T (08) 8553 4444

E kinrc@sa.gov.au

W www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/kangarooisland