

There are 2 kinds of large possums in the South West:

### Common Brushtail Possums – Western Ringtail Possums

Even though Brushtail Possums are called 'common' - in the Busselton area Ringtails are far more abundant. Brushies are common because they occur throughout Australia, however there is evidence of a significant decline in numbers and the species in the South West is actually a subspecies - *Trichosurus vulpecula hypoleucus* (Indigenous name: Koomal).

Western Ringtail Possums (scientific name: *Pseudocheirus occidentalis*, indigenous names: Ngwayir, Nguarer) are endemic to the South West of Australia and now restricted to the moister coastal corner around Busselton (plus a few scattered low density populations).

#### Main differences:

Common Brushtail

Possums

Western Ringtail



Size: Adults



The Koomal is one of the smallest subspecies of Common Brushtail Possums

Males: ca 2 kg

Females: 1.5 kg in average

Head-body length: ca 500 mm

Tail length: ca 70% of the head-body length

Both sexes: 1 kg in average  
Males tend to be slightly bigger than females

Head-body length: ca 350 mm

Tail length: ca 350 mm

Babies (at 150 gm)



Tummy naked, short fur on the back



Fully furred and fluffy

Common Brushtail

Possums

Western Ringtail

Skulls

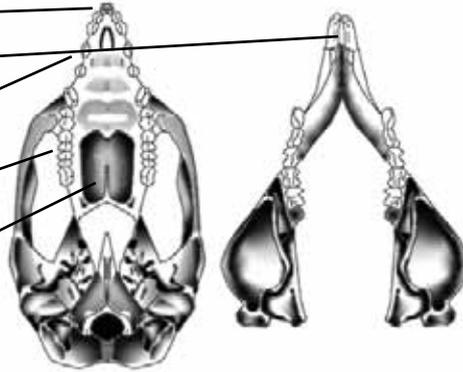
Broad, stoutly built skull with a short snout and strong cheekbones



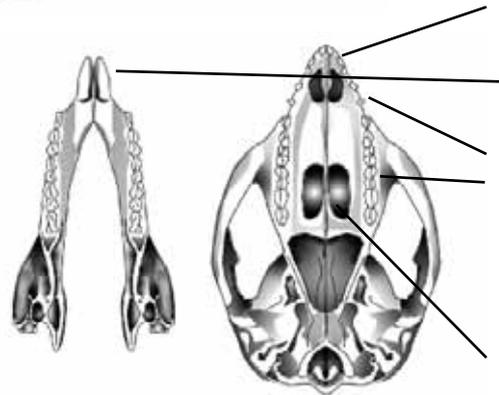
More delicate skull with a pointed muzzle

Teeth

- 3 pairs of upper incisors over two almost horizontal (procumbent) incisors in the lower jaw
- third pre-molar with a long cutting edge
- 4 pairs of grinding molar teeth with smooth mound-like cusps
- palate with one hole that is partly divided.



- 3 pairs of upper incisors over procumbent lower incisors (compressed and blade-like)
- tiny canine teeth
- 3 upper premolars and 4 pairs of molars with sharply curved ridges on the cusps in a straight and even row
- 2 clearly separated holes in the back of the palate



In both species the teeth are close-rooted which means that they don't grow back if they are filed down for any reason.

Tails

Tapered, thickly furred tail with hairless friction pad on last third of underside Prehensile (grasping) but not strongly so. The bushy tip is white or black. Babies' tails are still quite slender and with short fur.



The highly prehensile tail is long, slender and tapered with short fur. The tip of variable length is white (these are twins) with a hairless friction pad on the underside. As their name suggests ringtails' tails are frequently curled into a ring.

## Common Brushtail

## Possums

## Western Ringtail

### Colouring

Colouring is quite variable but in our area most animals display a silver-grey back and white to pale grey belly. The fur is long, dense and fluffy. Faces show dark fur around the nose and chin.



Colouring again is quite variable. Most animals have a dark brown back and a cream white tummy – however, tummies can have grey sides and the white colouring in hour-glass shape. In babies the light areas on tummy and tail can be orangey

### Ears

Ca 50-60mm long oval ears that are furred on the back



Small round ears (20 - 30 mm) with short, fine fur on the back - sometimes with a white spot underneath

### Feet

Fore foot: 5 distinct toes (fingers) evenly spaced



Fore foot: first toes opposite to the other three - like a grasping hand  
Pseudocheirus means 'false hand'.

Hind foot: opposable thumb, two digits fused and short, two long toes (similar to ringtails)



Hind foot: opposable thumb, two digits fused and short, two long toes

Pads are granulated or corrugated for better friction