



Some Fauna in Belair National Park

These are some of the animals it's possible to see in Belair National Park. Perhaps we may see some of these on our walk 14 and 19 August 2018.

Southern Brown Bandicoot (*Isoodon obesulus*)

- solitary marsupials
- short gestation, 12 days, litters of 3-5 young
- dig shallow holes in ground under vegetation
- retreat to nests by day, usually forages at night
- eats insects and larvae, small invertebrates, grass seeds, roots, berries
- keen sense of smell, detects prey deep underground
- preyed on by cats and foxes
- habitats reduced, sightings now rare in BNP



Koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*)

- arboreal (tree-dwelling) marsupial related to wombats
- backwards-facing pouch
- males weigh up to 14kg, live independently, socialise only at mating time, mark trees with scent, loud booming growl
- females weigh up to 10kg, live in small groups
- babies are blind and hairless at birth, peanut-size, climb to pouch and attach to teat, remain 6 months in pouch
- spends 19 hours per day sleeping, nocturnal eaters
- prefer certain gum leaves but will eat other leaves, gets moisture from leaves
- bush fires are a major threat



Western Grey Kangaroo (*Macropus fuliginosus*)

- macropods are largest marsupials, macropod = big foot
- bipedal, hops on hindlegs, using tail for balance
- can reach speeds of up to 60km hour, very efficient locomotion
- jump lengths 8m, up to 3m high
- grazers, eat grass, young shoots and leaves of heath plants
- need very little water
- social animals, live in mobs of up to 100
- male is a buck, boomer or old man, female is a doe or flyer, baby is a joey, and is born after 36 days gestation weighing less than 1g
- can have up to 3 babies at a time at different stages of development, including embryo in "pause mode"; 4 teats in pouch can each provide different milk for each stage.



Short-beaked Echidna (*Tachyglossus aculeatus*)

- name means fast-tongue, spiny; monotreme – egg laying mammal
- padded soles, stout claws, clumsy walkers, strong rapid burrowers
- have fur and spines, roll to a ball in defence
- active day and night depending on temperatures, hibernate in winter
- eats ants and termites, tongue is 15-18cm long and oval in x section, moves fast and curves along ant nest tunnels, can eat 200g ants in 10 mins
- all sex organs are internal, male and female have two folds of skin on belly which female uses as temporary pouch
- coolest of all mammals, temp never exceeds 34°, can swim
- form mating “trains” – up to 8 males follow 1 female
- after 21-28 days gestation egg is laid, placed in nursery burrow closed with a clod of earth. Egg hatches after 10 days, baby “puggle” uses egg tooth on nose to get out, is 13-14mm long and remains in pouch for 180-240 days
- when puggle leaves pouch it is left alone in burrow 5-10 days, must eat a lot at once (20% own body weight per feed)
- never move an echidna – it may have a dependent puggle nearby



Emu (*Dromaius novaehollandiae*)

- belong to a group of large flightless birds known as ratites
- their shaggy feathers are double-plumed, and softer and more flexible than other bird feathers
- spend most of their time foraging, alone or in pairs, grazing on grass and plants and insects
- females make a drumming call
- in summer the female mates with the male, lays 5 – 15 eggs and moves on; it is the male which incubates the eggs and looks after the chicks for at least five months after hatching
- males can be aggressive when defending chicks
- the chicks have striped coats.



References:

Daniels, Prof. Christopher: *A Guide to Urban Wildlife 2011*

Photograph of a Southern Brown Bandicoot from AMLR leaflet, per <http://www.environment.gov.au/resource/southern-brown-bandicoot-isoodon-obesulus> Photograph of Short-beaked Echidna from a www site. Other photos by A D Raine, within Belair National Park

Walking route: Start at Karka Oval car park, walk along Melville Gully Road to Melville House Track. Follow this track to Kari Track and continue to Melville Hill Track and on to Cherry Plantation Road. Return to Karka via Cherry Plantation Road.