

# The Living Valley



## The Long-nosed Potoroo

If you hear something snuffling in the undergrowth or hopping about at night in wet forests or heathlands, it could be a bandicoot, but then, it just might be the rare Long-nosed Potoroo (*Potorous tridactylus tridactylus*).

Probing with its sensitive nose for fungi and roots and scratching for flowers, fruit, seeds and insects these diminutive marsupials scurry about from dusk to dawn. These so-called “rat” kangaroos are vital for healthy Australian forests. They spread fungal spores that grow on the roots of native plants, assisting uptake of nutrients from the soil, essential to maintain healthy forests and their biodiversity.

Known also as ‘Wallaby rats’, these small marsupials (averaging 300 mm long and a kilo in weight) live in areas of thick ground cover that provides protection, nesting material and soils that are easy to dig.

The once widespread Long-nosed Potoroo was amongst the first marsupials described by European settlers. It is now known only from scattered locations across south-east Australia and only one corner of the Tweed.

Last century they were thought to kill farm animals and thousands were poisoned. Now Potoroos are prey to feral dogs, cats, foxes, native owls, quolls and dingoes.

Land degradation and encroaching development cause these little creatures to live on the brink of extinction. It is hard for young potoroos to establish new breeding groups when all the best sites are already taken. It is for these reasons the Long-nosed Potoroo is represented amongst other threatened species on the Treasures of the Tweed mural.

*By the Earth Learning Team, a local community group which encourages your participation and interest in the planet and its living things. 0266791439.*