

Western Australia

1 - 4 October 2026

At the end of September I had to be in Perth for a geography competition, and with flights fully paid for - and abutting a long weekend in the ACT - my dad very kindly agreed to fly up and join me for a few days in the Southwest. With the rest of the family staying back, this was at last a mammal-focused trip where I had full control of the itinerary, yet another milestone for my gradual transition into mammalwatching! In doing this, however, I may have lost my last chance to convince my family that I am not in a cult; after 20 hours of driving in three days, a good proportion of which was at night, I suspect it will be a long time before my long suffering father will let me within touching distance of trip planning again.

I visited a number of sites, and while only a few were mammal focused some species were present at most locations. The pace of this trip meant I essentially only put effort into seeing new targets, and as soon as one was out of the way I made no further attempts to connect with it. As a result, the individual counts for this report are probably underestimates, and I am sure with more time and/or different priorities multiple sightings would be possible for almost all of the species seen on this trip. Mammal sightings are listed in ***bold italics*** for the first mention of each species, and thereafter interesting observations are mentioned in **bold**.

01/10/26: After my dad arrived in Perth just before midnight, we made ready to hit the road at 7 am. Picking up our hire car, we made a beeline for Dryandra National Park, our destination for the next 24 hours. Over the course of a few hours, a slow drive through the reserve turned up a handful of ***Western Grey Kangaroos*** and a selection of endemic birds, but not the hoped-for numbat. I'm not sure what, if anything, we did wrong on this front, but the whole endeavour seemed to me to be a bit unrealistic; even travelling at 15 km an hour, it was virtually impossible to properly scan the forest floor on both sides of the road. Nonetheless, others have evidently had success with this method of searching. We then pulled up at the Gnaala Mia campsite. My dad drove to pick up supplies from the nearest town, and after setting up my tent I went on a walk along the backroads near the camp. Following an overgrown track north of camp, I first flushed a ***Western Brush Wallaby*** from the undergrowth, and 10 minutes later spotted a ***Numbat*** disappearing into a fallen tree. I waited for 10 minutes until it emerged, and then proceeded to spend the next 15 watching the numbat foraging on the forest floor. It eventually moved off into the distance, and I continued back to camp, seeing 3 ***Short-beaked Echidna***.

In the evening I got in the car and drove towards the village. Once again, no numbats were seen, though

I did see more kangaroos. The Woylie Walk near Old Mill Dam turned up another **Short-beaked Echidna** and a glimpse of a probable numbat, but neither of us got a good view and it didn't reappear. We had dinner at the picnic tables by the dam, then drove north to the Sandalwood plantation on Gura Rd. Despite my best thermalling efforts I didn't find any phascogales in either the sandalwood or adjoining casuarina thickets, and after an hour called it quits and returned to the car. A few hours of night driving and thermalling were similarly unproductive, and I was surprised to see no wildlife for long stretches of road. I did however pick up two **Western Quolls**, along with a few **Common Brushtail Possums**, a **White-striped Freetail Bat** hawking for insects in the spotlight beam, and plenty of **Western Grey Kangaroos**.



Left: Numbat **Right:** Short-beaked Echidna

02/10/26: A very cold morning woke me up at 4 am, and with little else to do went on a walk around the camp. I saw one **Woylie** with the headtorch, bounding through the scrub just north of the boundary road. When it was light enough to see I started down Tomingley Rd, finding both my remaining bird targets - Western Shriketit and Regent Parrot - and a **Quenda**, the latter startled in a small heathland strip right outside the campsite. Shortly after we said goodbye to Dryandra, and began the long drive towards the south coast and Cheynes Beach. Along the way we stopped at several birding sites, but saw no mammals whatsoever - however, roadkill at Stirling Range included Western Brush Wallaby.

Upon arriving at Cheynes in the late afternoon, I left my dad to sort out the tents and walked a loop of Arpenteur Nature Reserve, the headland adjacent to the township and caravan park. I only saw **Western Grey Kangaroo**, but ran into another visiting mammalwatcher - a lifer in and of itself! Armed with new information, I dropped in at the caravan park and picked up my thermal, with which I quickly found two **Honey Possums** in the Scarlet Banksias. They seemed completely unperturbed by my presence, and I was able to watch them until it was too dark to see as they moved through the heathland at a surprising pace. Following a quick dinner at the fish and chips place in the caravan park, we drove to Two Peoples Bay. A few frogs, **European Rabbits** and a **Quenda** crossed the road en route. Once at the bay, I walked the short road connecting the visitors centre to the beach. Within 50 metres I had found my first

Western Ringtail Possum in the peppermint trees by the road, which quickly dropped into the undergrowth. It soon re-emerged on a low branch, giving great views. Down at the picnic area just off the road, I found many **Quokka** (albeit not a lifer, as I saw dozens on Rottnest during the competition) grazing, far more shy than those on Rottnest, along with a few **Quenda** and a **Common Brush-tailed Possum**. As I walked back towards the car I got a small mammal through the thermal, which after several glimpses was determined to be a **Yellow-footed Antechinus**. Driving back, I spotted a **Red Fox** by the road.



03/10/26: Another day, another very early start. I was again up at 4, this time to do a loop of the tracks behind the reserve with the thermal. While I didn't see any new mammals, I did get a brief sighting of another **Honey Possum**, as well as a few unidentified blobs in the thermal and lots of Spotted Nightjars. Once it was getting light enough to see, I swapped my thermal out for the camera and walked an extended version of the previous day's loop. Apart from lots of kangaroos and a possible quenda I again didn't see much in the way of mammals, but finally completed the trifecta of endemic heathland birds with Western Bristlebirds on the track and a pair of Noisy Scrubbirds skulking near Back Beach. A mother and calf **Southern Right Whale** were visible off Tourist Rocks, and I spent a while watching these magnificent animals as they moved along the coastline. Their behaviour was notably different to other cetaceans I've seen, with the pair spending extended periods resting on the surface in one place, before submerging and doing the same elsewhere - in some ways more like hippos than whales. They eventually disappeared into the distance, just in time for my dad to pull up to a whaleless bay. After Cheynes I

stopped at several reserves en route to the Tone Perup area, and while I finished my clean sweep of the southwestern endemic birds no native mammals were seen other than kangaroos. At Faunadale Nature Reserve near Manjimup I did see a **Red Fox** with severe mange, sporting greyish brown fur, a long narrow tail, and generally looking very much like a you-know-what. It is easy to see how such sightings could have given rise to the urban legends of thylacines in these forests.



Left: Southern Right Whale **Right:** Tammar Wallaby

Before heading off towards Perth, we made a quick swing by Tone Perup. I had originally wanted to spend a few hours here, but by this point my dad was getting tired and spending any longer on the road was just too much of a risk. Instead, we pulled up by Simcock Rd and I went on a walk with the spotlight and thermal. I immediately saw a **Woylie**, much larger than the individual at Dryandra - so large in fact that I was sure it was a Tammar wallaby at first glance. However, the shape, colour and movement all pointed to Woylie. A few minutes later an actual **Tammar Wallaby** appeared, only slightly bigger than the Woylie. Over the next 20 minutes I saw more Tammar and a few **Common Brush-tailed Possum** and **Western Grey Kangaroo**, before heading over to Distributor Rd. We only got a few kilometres down the road - driving at 10 km/hr - before we had to turn around, but this was enough to see more possible tammar and a brushtail possum. Then, just as we were turning, I caught sight of a dark shape on a tree trunk. I only had it in view for a moment, but I had little doubt that I'd just seen a **Brush-tailed Phascogale**, prompting an immediate call to stop the car and look. Sadly the phascogale never reappeared, and with the clock pushing 9 we left the reserve, arriving in a hostel near Boyanup at 11.

04/10/26: With an 8 am flight out of Perth, we were out of the hotel at 5. I made no attempts to find mammals on the way, but still saw a mystery possum crossing the road a short way out of town - what stood out was a very white tail tip, but some of the brushtails in this part of the country also have this feature. While my gut feeling tells me it was a Western Ringtail, this one will alas have to remain unidentified. After some drama with making the flight - a story for another time - and a close call with check in, we made the flight back to Sydney just as boarding was about to close.

For such a short time window this trip was a huge success, with 16 species of native mammal including all my major targets, 12 of which were lifers. Staying at each place for only a few hours was definitely pushing the boundaries of what was manageable, but from the wildlife watching front this seems to be all that is needed if luck is on your side. In fact, of all the species I had realistically hoped to see, the only misses were Western Pygmy Possum and Red-tailed Phascogale. Not seeing the latter was simply bad luck, but to be truthful I never made a concerted attempt at the possum, instead hoping one would appear somewhere on the way. In addition to mammals, I saw 125 species of bird and 29 lifers, including all but one of my targets (with malleefowl the offending species).

In terms of logistics, I camped at both overnight locations, and did most mammal watching on foot or by slow drives on the back roads. This seemed to be a good way of operating in the area, as it meant it was possible to avoid check in and check out times that would otherwise constrain the hours that could be spent looking for animals. However, the consequence of this was I couldn't contact staff at either place to ask about wildlife sightings, which may or may not have impacted the effectiveness of my searches.

L = Lifer

I = Introduced

Count	Species	Location
4	Short-beaked Echidna	Dryandra NP
1	Numbat (L)	Dryandra NP
2	Western Quoll [Chuditch] (L)	Dryandra NP
1	Brush-tailed Phascogale (L)	Tone Perup NR
1	Yellow-footed Antechinus (L)	Two Peoples Bay NR
4	Quenda [Southwestern Brown Bandicoot] (L)	Dryandra NP, Two Peoples Bay NR
7	Common Brushtail Possum	Dryandra NP, Tone Perup NR, roadsides
1	Western Ringtail Possum (L)	Two Peoples Bay NR
3	Honey Possum (L)	Cheynes Beach
2	Woylie [Brush-tailed Bettong] (L)	Dryandra NP, Tone Perup NR
4	Quokka (L)	Two Peoples Bay NR (also seen Rottnest Is.)

4	Tammar Wallaby (L)	Tone Perup NR
1	Western Brush Wallaby (L)	Dryandra NP
98	Western Grey Kangaroo	Dryandra NP, Cheynes Beach, Two Peoples Bay NR, Faunadale NR, Tone Perup NR, roadsides
1	White-striped Freetail Bat	Dryandra NP
2	Red Fox	Faunadale NR, roadsides
3	European Rabbit	Two Peoples Bay NR, roadsides
2	Southern Right Whale (L)	Cheyne Beach