

Centenary's Wallabies

by Chris Wiley

Most residents of the Centenary suburbs are probably unaware that our small strips of remnant riverfront bushland are home to such animals as wallabies. But if you walk along the Mt Ommaney Walkway during the quieter periods of the day, you may be lucky enough to stumble upon some feeding by the track. More usually, however, the first sign of their presence will be the loud thumping sound they make as they escape through the undergrowth.

The species found along the Mt Ommaney Walkway is known as the Swamp Wallaby, *Wallabia bicolor*. They are the darkest of all wallabies in south-east Queensland, with a charcoal-black face bordered by whitish cheek stripes. Their rich chocolate colour is perfect camouflage in the shady thickets where they live.

They are actually a species that has been considerably advantaged by the spread of exotic weeds such as lantana. This is because they are amongst the shyest of all wallabies and depend on the thick understorey afforded by such weeds.

Being so easily disturbed by human traffic, they have disappeared from most other small bushland reserves in the Brisbane area. Unfortunately, our local wallabies could go the same way without community cooperation. Last year, one Swamp Wallaby was actually killed by a motor vehicle on Arrabri Avenue, suggesting it may have been disturbed from its usual home in the riverfront bushland. I urge all people that use the track regularly to walk quietly, stay on the path, and always keep dogs on leashes!

The bushland in the Westlake area is actually home to a different type of wallaby known as the Red-necked Wallaby, *Macropus rufogriseus*. They generally prefer more open forest with plenty of grass, and while they are certainly not as timid as the Swamp Wallaby, walkers using the parks should ensure they disturb them as little as possible by keeping dogs on leashes at all times. After all, we are one of the very few areas in Brisbane that is lucky enough to have such an icon of the Australian bush living 'on our doorsteps', and we should ensure they continue doing so for many years to come.



Photo: Jeff Wright

Swamp Wallaby (*Wallabia bicolor*)



Photo: Queensland Museum

Red-necked Wallaby (*Macropus rufogriseus*)

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*This Nature Watch column is contributed by your local Centenary bushland care groups.
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