

Rakali

Our Australian Native Water Rat

Hydromys chrysogaster (meaning "golden-bellied water mouse")

The rakali, also known as the 'water rat', is a large, semi-aquatic rodent native to Australia, and found in all states and territories, including throughout Victoria and in our own Bayside area.

Rakali are one of Australia's only two semi-aquatic mammals, the other being the platypus. They are Australia's largest rodent species and are sometimes affectionately referred to as 'Australia's otter'.

The rakali has a long streamlined body, with water repellent fur, a thick muscular tail, a broad face with long whiskers, small rounded ears, and partially webbed hind feet. They are typically a dark grey, brown or black in colour, with a lighter belly ranging from white to gold or orange, and a distinctive white tipped tail. They can grow up to 70cm in length from nose to tip of the tail, and weigh a little over a kilogram (about the size of an adult platypus).

Rakali are nocturnal hunters, mainly preying on small fish, crustaceans, molluscs and water bugs. However they have also been known to eat frogs, small water birds, bird eggs and even other small mammals.

Suited to both saltwater and freshwater environments, rakali make their homes in burrows along the low banks of rivers, lakes, wetlands and along the coast. They have adapted well to urban areas. They are territorial and largely solitary animals.

A rakali female will produce only four or five litters of 3-4 pups, over her life span of around 3-4 years. By comparison, a common pest rat breeds prolifically, typically producing six litters a year consisting of 5-10 pups, over her lifespan of 2-3 years.

Just like many of our other native species, rakali are threatened largely by habitat degradation and loss, and predation by introduced species like foxes and cats. They can be trapped and killed by people who mistake them for pest rats.

'Water Rat' was once the rakali's common name, however the negative association with pest rats lead to their indiscriminate killing. So in 1995 the Australian Nature Conservation Agency phased out the old name, replacing it with the indigenous name 'rakali', which has successfully reversed the stigma attached to this native Australian rodent.

Conservation status: Secure, of Least Concern.

For more information about the Rakali, check out the FoNW website.

 bayfonw.org.au  [@bayfonw](https://www.facebook.com/bayfonw)

 **Friends of Native Wildlife** Inc.
It's wild in Bayside. bayfonw.org.au



HINT

You can easily identify a Rakali by its white tipped tail.



Rakali have golden-yellow belly fur and their back feet are slightly webbed.



GO SPOTTING IN BAYSIDE!

Rakali have been seen at Sandringham breakwater, Brighton Pier, Elsternwick Park, Elwood Canal, St Kilda Harbour, Albert Park Lake and Port Melbourne foreshore. The best time to observe Rakali is a little before sunset.

JOIN US! www.bayfonw.org.au

Friends of Native Wildlife are volunteer residents of Bayside (Melbourne, Australia) active in conserving local native fauna. We promote conservation of our wildlife through education and engagement, surveys, advising local authorities and working to improve habitat.

Check out our website and subscribe to our newsletter for upcoming events, project news, and to learn more about wildlife in Bayside and how you can help to preserve it.

You can help! For a tiny \$5 annual membership fee, you can support the work of FoNW. Thank you!