

# fauNature Pygmy Possum Box



## Encouraging wildlife at home!

Thank you for purchasing a fauNature wildlife box. It is hoped this “home” will give you many hours of pleasure, as it provides sanctuary for our furry friends.

The clearing of native trees across Australia has resulted in the loss of millions of natural hollows. The devastation is particularly apparent in urban environments, which account for 85% of the nation’s human population.



## Which animals will use a wildlife box?

Over 200 bird and mammal species rely on hollows for nesting or shelter throughout the country. These include possums, gliders, bats, parrots, kingfishers, raptors, and ducks as well as other lesser-known species. This box has been specifically designed for the Pygmy Possum (Eastern, Western, Little, etc.), which is considered vulnerable in certain regions. However, a few different animals may utilise the box (e.g. Antechinus, lizards and insects).

## Siting and installation instructions

You’ve bought this wildlife box to enjoy it, so locate it where you can see the box regularly and access it relatively easily. Having said that, it is preferable if certain considerations are met:

A mature native tree is ideal; if not, an exotic tree will do or a younger native where it can support the box. Pygmy Possums are one of the few animals to nest close to the ground. A possum will make use of a box as low as 1/2 m off the ground, however, 1-2 m would be preferable. Pygmy Possums will utilise a number of hollows or “nests” within their territory (Pygmy Possums may make a nest in dense foliage or use a hollow).

It is essential to remember that pygmy possums need a supply of native plants such as banksias, hakeas, grevilleas and melaleucas for them to be able to survive in an area. These are important food sources (they eat nectar and pollen), as well as providing protection from predators when out foraging. Think about putting your box in an area near dense vegetation and/or a food resource so their time on open ground is limited, as this exposes them to predation. This will also increase your chances of attracting a Pygmy Possum into the box.

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The wildlife box needs to be protected from the hot north/westerly sun and the entrance avoiding the wettest winds; northeast through to a southerly direction would typically work (for southern Australia). Ideally, the wildlife box will also be placed on a vertical or slightly forward-angled trunk, to reduce rainwater entry which could affect the inhabitants. Thus, the specifics of erecting the possum box will vary from one location to another.

Hanging a wildlife box by wire was historically recommended to prevent damage to the tree. However, the damage done by tek screws is likely to be minimal; while wire-mounted boxes compromise the tree, if not regularly managed.

A couple of tek screws (100mm) have been included to enable you to affix the box to a tree. Pre-drill the tree and screw in the top tek screw (3/4s of its length) then hang the box through the “keyhole” in the back. Next drill the lower hole then do up the second tek screw. Finally, using the open door for access, tighten the top screw, ensuring the box is firmly affixed to the tree.

The use of “PV Spacers”, small spacing rings which fit over the tek screw between the tree and the box, is highly recommended. They serve two purposes 1) simplify the installation process on difficult trees; 2) perhaps more importantly allow the tree room to grow while minimising the impact on either the tree or the box. These have been included with your box.

Once the wildlife box is in place: empty some native mulch (e.g eucalypt leaves, bark and possum droppings if available) into the bottom of the box.

### Potential predators

Cats may come into conflict with Pygmy Possums, so it is worth keeping an eye on the box to see whether this is the case. Fortunately while potentially vulnerable to cats, Pygmy Possums appear to be able to co-exist alongside this introduced threat. However, if you have a cat, please keep it inside to reduce the risk to predation of this species.

### Keeping the wildlife box clean

Putting up the wildlife box is just the first step, for its continued success maintenance is crucial. The box (assembled) has already been treated. However, to extend its useful life we would recommend re-treatment/coating the exterior of the box with oil or paint. If oil is used (e.g. environmentally friendly Lanotec timber seal), it is recommended to retreat the box every 1-2 years, or exterior grade acrylic paint is likely to last the life of the box, with a few minor touch-ups. The PV Spacers will need to be replaced every 12-24 months and the bedding material ideally changed every year.

Pest species are unlikely to utilise a box of this size. The box may however be taken over by Antechinus or ants. Antechinus are capable of displacing a Pygmy Possum, though ants are unlikely to.



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Antechinus are listed as “rare” in some regions, so providing a home for them is also fantastic. You can distinguish the two types of nest; Antechinus tend to use dead leaves, bark and sometimes feathers whereas Pygmy Possums prefer green leaves to use as their nesting material.

Pygmy Possums will also sometimes go into torpor during winter. Torpor is like a short-term hibernation where animals conserve energy and food resources by lowering their body temperature and metabolic rate. It can last from a few hours to seven days. If you find a Pygmy Possum in your box in this state, please do not disturb it.

### Enjoy your new neighbours

Some wildlife boxes are occupied quickly, others may take a little longer. Often you will attract the species you are targeting, though not always. Either way, we hope you enjoy providing for your wild neighbours.



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[www.faunature.com.au](http://www.faunature.com.au)



[info@faunature.com.au](mailto:info@faunature.com.au)



0406 400 933



@fauNature