

4. Brushtail Possum

Trichsaurus vulecula is the species name for the Brushtail and it means hairy tail and little fox.

The brushtail is the most common of the Australian possums and has adapted to a wide range of habitats. Sound and scent are very important to a possum. Their calls range from hisses to deep guttural coughs, rising to raucous screeches when they are fighting. This can be quite frightening as is the sound they make when running across the roof. On Kangaroo Island, the brushtail apparently spends more time feeding on the ground, possibly due to the lack of predators such as foxes.

Possums eat shoots and leaves of native and exotic trees and shrubs and they can destroy all the fruit on your fruit tree in a single evening.

5. Owls

The Southern Boobook is Australia's smallest owl. By day it roosts in thick foliage and emerges at dusk to sit watchfully on exposed branches and street lights, flying up to capture insects. It is renowned for its acrobatic skill in catching invertebrate prey such as moths. After dark you are much likelier to hear one than see one, as when approached, they slip quietly away. Another name for this bird is the Mopoke. You will know why when you hear one, as they make an oft repeated 'boobook' or 'mopoke' sound.

The female Boobook is fed by the male whilst she incubates the eggs.



The Pacific Barn Owl is more likely to be seen as they often perch at night on guide posts or sit in the middle of the road, their white body and white, heart-shaped facial disk clearly visible by torch light.

These birds hunt for mice by night, flying slowly with their heads down.

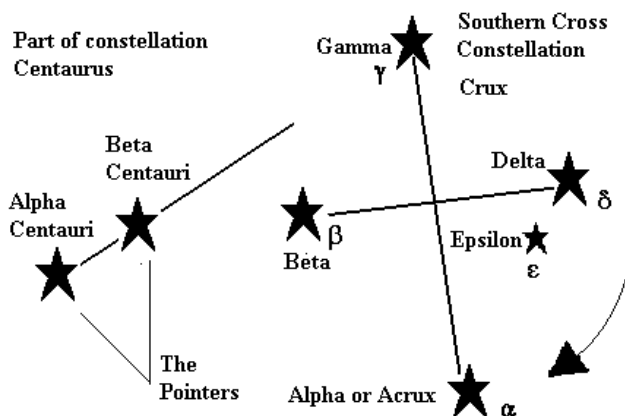
6. Night Sky

Amazingly clear skies above American River, make watching the night sky a very rewarding experience. You can make interpreting it easy by downloading an app such as 'Night Sky' onto your smart phone or tablet.

With the exception of the moon, one of the brightest objects you will see is Venus, better known as the 'morning star' or 'evening star' depending on the time of year. Jupiter over 300 times the weight of earth has four main moons each larger than our moon and can be seen under clear conditions with binoculars.

You can't look at our night sky without looking for the Southern Cross and the two pointers which are part of the Alpha Centauri System, said to be the closest star system to our sun. The diagram below shows the view you might expect from here.

The Southern Cross constellation is very important to Australians as it is one of the three prominent symbols that make up the Australian flag. It is represented by five stars on the right hand side of the flag.



Sponsored by the owners of KI Lodge, The Cook, Hogan & Brock Families. Text & Photos: Jane Renwick.

Self-guided Nocturnal

KI Lodge Night Walk

Collect a torch from our reception desk and set off on your own nocturnal. Spot Tammar Wallabies, search for the Brushtail Possum and listen out for the Southern Boobook.

This walk takes you out through the side gate of the property and around the northern streets of the town. Before returning through the main gates, enjoy the night sky from the foreshore.



1. Setting Out

Nocturnal refers to the night and a nocturnal bird or animal that is most active at night.

The best way to observe our nocturnal animals is to make as little noise as possible as you search for them in our grounds and around the town's streets. Bright lights will disturb them and make them run away so avoid shining torches directly into their eyes and don't use a flash when photographing them. As most of this walk is along a public road, take care if a vehicle approaches as the driver may not be able to see you.

To start your nocturnal leave the main KI Lodge building at reception and walk across the paved area and the driveway. This trail starts where the two 'rusty' wallaby silhouettes are located. There will probably be cars parked in this area, walk behind them and head towards the gap in the brush fence. Before you exit the property use your torch to sweep the grassed area below the parked cars as there's a good chance you will see quite a few wallabies grazing in this area.

Continue on, straight down Ryberg Road, walking slowly and listening out for night life. Rustling sounds in trees or in the undergrowth, will most likely be possums. Use your torch to look ahead for wallabies which may be grazing on the grassy verges of the road. If you hear a night bird, approach very quietly otherwise it will take flight.

On the map you will see four detours, take one or more of these if you want to walk or stay out longer. On each of the detours you must walk back the way you have come.

One of the best places in summer to find wallabies is on the grassy areas surrounding the town hall. Be aware that on windy nights less animals will be about.

On reaching the junction of detour three and four, or where the bitumen road takes a sharp turn left, you can make the choice to walk back along the footpath or along the beach.

If walking along the beach marvel at the night sky as you go. Listen out for fish and stingrays flipping about in the water and on a still night you will hear birds calling. Return to KI Lodge through the main gates.

2. Possibilities

- ◆ Tammar Wallaby
- ◆ Brushtail Possum
- ◆ Night Sky
- ◆ Southern Boobook (Owl)
- ◆ Pacific Barn Owl
- ◆ Echidna
- ◆ Kangaroo Island Kangaroo
- ◆ Pygmy Possum

3. Tammar Wallaby

The Tammar is an original inhabitant of KI. Other populations are found on ten or more offshore islands adjacent to the Australian mainland.

Females become mature by nine months while still suckling, males mature at 2 years. Reproduction rates are high with more than 90% of females carrying young by the end of the breeding season. Mortality rates are also high; pouch young are often lost by one-year-old females. After a long, dry summer with limited poor quality food, many adults die with the onset of cold, wet weather. Despite these obstacles, wallabies abound in and around the township.

Some Tammar wallabies live in areas with almost no fresh water; they get enough moisture from salty sea plant juices and can even drink sea water.

