



# Wombat

Wombats are **marsupials** native to Australia and belonging to the family **Vombatidae**. They measure around 1 meter in length and are **highly habitat-tolerant** – so much so that they are found in wooded, mountainous, and heathland areas of **south-eastern Australia**, including Tasmania. The exact genetic origins of *Vombatidae* are still unknown, but researchers propound that wombats may have diverged from other Australian marsupials relatively early, that is, around 40 million years ago. Wombats are the outcome of successful **adaptation strategies** to environment which, in time, have enabled them to develop **rodent-like teeth** and powerful **claws** useful to dig complex **burrow systems**. Wombats defend home territories centered on their burrows, and react aggressively to intruders using these two powerful tools. Unlike other marsupials, they have also developed a **backwards-facing pouch** which prevents wombat cubs from getting soiled when the mother is digging. Since they are mostly **nocturnal animals**, they are not commonly spotted; yet, they leave behind ample evidence of their passage – often in the shape of distinctively **cubic dung**. Thanks to their extraordinarily **slow metabolism** (taking between eight and fourteen days to complete digestion) they can survive in arid environments. They also move slowly - when threatened, however, they definitely speed up and can reach up to 40 km/h for up to 90 seconds.



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