

# Few studies focus on threatened mammalian species that are 'ugly'

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Many Australian mammalian species of conservation significance have attracted little research effort, little recognition, and little funding, new research shows. The overlooked non-charismatic species such as fruit bats and tree rats may be most in need of scientific and management research effort.

Investigators looked at research publications concerning 331 Australian terrestrial mammal species that broadly fall into categories they labeled as the 'good' (monotreme and marsupial native species such as kangaroos, echidnas, and koalas), the 'bad' (introduced and [invasive species](#) such as rabbit and foxes), and the 'ugly' (native bats and rodents). Studies on the 'good' were mostly on their physiology and anatomy, with less ecological focus. The 'bad' have been the subject of ecological research and methods and technique studies for population control. Despite making up 45% of the 331 species studied, the 'ugly' have attracted little study.

"We know so little about the biology of many of these [species](#). For many, we have catalogued their existence through genetics or taxonomic studies, but when it comes to understanding what they eat, their habitat needs, or how we could improve their chances of survival, we are very much still in the dark," said Dr. Patricia Fleming, lead author of the *Mammal Review* article. "These smaller animals make up an important part of functioning ecosystems, a role that needs greater recognition through funding and research effort."

**More information:** Patricia A. Fleming et al. The good, the bad, and the ugly: which Australian terrestrial mammal species attract most research?, *Mammal Review* (2016). [DOI: 10.1111/mam.12066](https://doi.org/10.1111/mam.12066)

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