



Bandy

Bandy lived with her family in the bush. They belonged to a bandicoot family.

About one week ago she was born and she lived in her mother's pouch where it was warm and cosy and well protected.

Animals with a pouch are called marsupials. Kangaroos, koalas, wombats and possums are all marsupials.

Bandicoots are also marsupials. Because their babies live in their mother's pouch drinking her milk, bandicoots are called marsupials.

Inside her mother's pouch, Bandy found one of eight teats which gave her plenty of milk every day. Bandy's bigger brother was with her in the pouch.

Bandicoots are an endangered species. Endangered species means that there are not many of them left and that they need protection.





The pouch of the female bandicoot opens backwards so that when mum is digging she doesn't cover her baby with sand.

Bandy and her brother often looked out from their mother's pouch into the wide, wide world. There was plenty of room in the pouch for more babies but their mother only had two this time. She had room for at least four, and sometimes six, babies depending on how much food she could find.

Bandy and her brother could not leave their warm and safe spot in the pouch for there were many dangers out in the world. There were wild cats, called feral cats, which were unwanted pets that were dumped by people and had to find food for themselves. After a while they became wild and vicious.

Another danger was the foxes. Foxes never used to live in Australia. They were brought here by the early settlers.

They were lovely, cute animals. When the farmers started to loose their hens and chickens, and sometimes



even their lambs to these cunning animals, people did not think them so cute any more. The foxes were very cunning hunters and the farmers lost many animals.

Apart from feral cats and foxes there were also dogs that were quite a danger to the bandicoots.

So you can imagine that the mother had to teach her babies about all these dangers that existed outside the mother's pouch.

It was hard enough for their mother to find enough food and to keep out of reach of all these dangerous cats, foxes and dogs. Then there were also those fast moving objects on the roads.

"They are called cars", Bandy told her brother.

She had heard her mother talk about them.

They move fast and they smelled badly.

"If you get run over by one of those things you are dead", Bandy added wisely.

One day their mother decided it was time for her young children to leave her pouch and look after themselves.

"Go on", she said. "You must look after yourself now. Don't worry, you can do it. I have trained you well. So off you go now", their mother urged them.

Bandy's brother, who was bigger and stronger than she was, quickly disappeared into the distance. He could look after himself. But Bandy was not so sure if she could manage. She stayed close to her mother and now and then she hopped back into her mother's pouch. That was where she felt safe and protected. But her mother kept on reminding her that she would not survive if she did not learn to be independent and look after herself.

The next day, while Bandy and her mother were looking for something to eat, a fox suddenly jumped out from behind a bush. Bandy managed to run away quickly but her mother was not so fortunate. The fox pounced on



her and the next moment she was disappearing fast out of sight with Bandy's mother dangling from her jaws.

You can imagine how sad Bandy was!!
What would she do without her mother? She had always



cared for her so well and protected her from danger. Now look what happened. She was taken by a fox herself. Bandy felt very sad, lonely and frightened. She panicked and hid herself in a safe and dark place all alone with her grief and sorrow.

Bandy could not stay in that dark place otherwise she would not survive in this harsh world. Now she was forced to look after herself without her mother's help.

It was quite difficult at first and even a bit scary all by herself. She began to realise how tough life can be without a mother and without the protection of her mother's pouch. It was always so safe and warm in there.

She started to rummage around for something to eat and found some ants, earthworms and some juicy caterpillars. That satisfied her hunger for a little while. But it was hard looking for food and at the same time looking out for danger. Who knows, the fox might even come back and eat her, too. It made her quite nervous.

One day she walked a bit further than usual and can you guess what she found? She saw a house. She had learned from her mother that there was always plenty of food to find near a house. So she came closer and closer to the house. She soon discovered with her sensitive nose that there were no cats or dogs anywhere near that house. Fortunately for her she was right, too. Perhaps she could stay there for a while.



At first she only dared to come out of the bushes when it was dark outside, for then the people living there would not be able to see her.

Often she was able to find bread crumbs and other leftover food scraps. She would quickly dash out from her hiding place, pick up the titbits and run back for cover again. After all you could never be sure if these people could be trusted, could you?



After a couple of weeks Bandy started to come out in the daytime and the people even saw her. They seemed quite excited about that and even threw extra food on the lawn for her. These people seemed very friendly and caring so perhaps she had nothing to worry about them. After a while she became more daring and went further and further from her hiding place.

She noticed that one day in the week the people who lived in the house were all gone for a long time in the morning. Later on they were gone again for a long time in the afternoon. She thought she had heard them say that day was called Sunday. She did know what that meant, though. Perhaps one day she would find out, she thought.

Sometimes this family ate outside. They all sat around the table. First it was very quiet for a while and then Bandy could only hear the father's voice. Carefully she moved around between their feet. At first they did not like that so much and one of the girls was even a bit frightened of her and lifted her legs out of her reach. But they could not help being scared. Perhaps they did



not know that she would not harm them. All Bandy was really interested in was food, and plenty of it. So they often gave her small pieces of bread or sausages. She really loved that. Sometimes they left a plate outside and Bandy cleaned it up for them, just to be helpful.

On some days there were many big boys at those people's place and they kicked a round thing around the yard. It was very noisy and scary at those times and she kept well out of the way.

Bandy was slowly getting used to all these people and even when those big boys were there she did not mind any more because they were all very friendly. They seemed to like her very much and they all started to call her Bandy.

One day, one of the boys was moving around on a thing with two wheels, going very fast. It all happened so quickly. Bandy had no time to move out of the way. That thing hit her and she got hurt. She was bruised all over. The boy also got a fright himself, though, it seemed. I suppose he couldn't help it, Bandy thought. But just to



be sure she ran away as fast as she could. She was very scared of those fast moving things. She better be more careful in the future, she decided.

She stayed away for a couple of days. It seemed too dangerous to go near the house. The family started looking for her and called out for her.

"Bandy, Bandy, where are you?"

Perhaps they thought she was killed by that thing with two wheels. But Bandy was not so sure if it was safe. Every time she saw that fast moving thing on two wheels she quickly hid behind the plants and shrubs again. Better to be safe than sorry, she thought.

One day Bandy met another bandicoot. At first it made her feel a bit uneasy. But this one wanted to be friends. And he was a boy.

They wanted to start a family and after about twelve days Bandy had four little babies in her pouch. Life became quite busy for her. She had to eat much more to make sure she had enough milk for her babies. The father did not want to come too close to the house, so it was up to Bandy to get the pieces of food the family

threw out on the veranda for them. In the bush they always found plenty of food, too. They ate almost anything; worms, insects, larvae and small lizards. People could always see where they have been because of the



cone shaped holes they left behind in the sand. The tracks of their front paws look very much like the feet of a chicken.

The babies grew very quickly and within two months the time came for them to move out of Bandy's pouch. There was no room for them all!

But, just like Bandy when she was young, these babies also did not want to leave the safety of their mother's pouch.

One evening, Bandy took all four children for a walk. They usually did that at night because they were nocturnal animals, that is, asleep during the day and awake at night. This was going to be the last time she was going to do this, Bandy had decided, for they really had to learn to look after themselves. She had to be firm with them, she thought, otherwise they would not be able to survive in the bush.



Then, as they all crossed the road together some big, noisy, smelly things on four wheels came rushing down the street. They were playing silly games and leaving black dirty marks on the road just as the bandicoot family was trying to cross over. The big boys call that burnouts, Bandy thought. They were reckless and driving much too fast.

Three of Bandy's children were killed as the wheels rode over them and the fourth one managed to scurry to the other side of the road safely. But Bandy never saw it again. She called out loudly from the side of the road, but heard no reply. She was very sad.

Many bandicoots get killed on the roads. There are not many bandicoots left in Western Australia. Some years ago they could be found in nearly everyone's garden. But more and more houses are being built and big bulldozers clear all the trees away and push over all their hiding places and nesting spots.

Sadly, Bandy turned around and went home again. Home was where these friendly people live. Bandy called them her friends. They cared for her and gave her plenty of



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Page 12 of 12

food. Every member of that family loved her and cared for her.

They treated her as one of the family.

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