

A note for grown-ups

One Small Possum · Book One · *Pip Wakes Up*

Pip's first morning is a real one. Here is the true story of the mountain pygmy-possum – the only Australian marsupial that sleeps the winter away – and some things to talk about after the story.

Australia's only hibernating marsupial

No other Australian marsupial truly hibernates. The mountain pygmy-possum sleeps through the alpine winter, and it is the only one that does.

Seven months asleep

They can hibernate for up to seven months, curled in a nest deep among the boulders, waking only briefly.

Colder than your fridge

During hibernation body temperature falls from around 35°C to as low as 2°C, and the heartbeat slows right down.

Snow is a blanket

Under the snowpack the temperature stays steady between about -2°C and +2°C. Snow does not endanger them – it protects them. Less snow means a harder winter.

Living on the roof of Australia

They are the only Australian marsupial that lives solely in alpine and sub-alpine country, in boulder fields in Victoria and New South Wales.

Very few left

Fewer than 2,000 remain in the wild, which makes them one of Australia's most endangered mammals – and one of the most cared for.

Talking points for after the story

- What is the first thing you notice when you wake up in the morning?
- Pip's mountain looked ruined, but it was only sleeping. Can you think of something that looked finished and then came back?
- Marbut told Pip to wait. Is waiting easy or hard for you?

