

Hair rose along my arms as I laid in the darkened tent, forcing myself to breathe and remain calm. I'd woken to movement in my sleeping bag, and terrified to move, I couldn't even nudge Jack for help. Overwhelmed by the need to scream, icy dread ran down my spine, breaths coming in small gasps as something brushed against my legs. Tourists' concern about wildlife in Australia no longer seemed amusing, and I whimpered. Jack woke and turned a flashlight on, casting his shadow against the tent. Hands shaking, I opened the sleeping bag and a pygmy possum crept out.



Author's Note:

Back on the island, we used to go camping a few times each summer. One of our [favorite locations](#) was rife with wombats until mange almost wiped out the entire colony. Every trip to that location brought us home with memories and stories that still haven't died out. One of the most eventful times we camped there, our beach shelter wasn't secure enough and blew away, and when my husband went to chase it, he had to scramble up a twelve foot sand dune. Somewhere between climbing up, retrieving the structure, and returning to the beach, he sprained his ankle. The adventures didn't stop there, though. While swimming, we spotted a [lion's mane](#), and grabbed kids to pull them out of the water until the jellyfish moved on. Deciding we'd had enough beach adventures, and with the ankle still sore and now swelling, we headed back to our campsite to elevate and ice it.

We pulled out board games, and sat in the shade of a gum tree playing until something fell from the tree and landed on my husband's bare leg. Before he had time to react, the offending caterpillar stung him, requiring more ice. Later that evening, curled up in sleeping bags and listen to the kids giggle about their pretend ghost stories, I dozed off, only to be woken in the middle of the night by two roos fighting outside of our tent. No biggie, until their kicks started hitting our tent, and one of those kicks landed on me. I punched back, and both roos huffed before running off.

The next morning, skies threatened rain, and the ankle looked horrible. We ended the camping trip so we could head straight to the emergency room, but before we got our tent packed away, a mouse ran under it.

I can face Australian wildlife, but a mouse? Absolutely not. Rather than screaming, I waited for it to crawl back out. Except, it didn't. Five minutes later, the rain was getting closer and that darn little mouse still hadn't exited. When my sister-in-law noted the predicament, she came and rescued me, chasing the rodent away so I could finish packing up our site.

Hours later, in the emergency room, they diagnosed my husband with a severely sprained ankle putting him on crutches for weeks. We had other camping adventures, but nothing so eventful ever happened unless you [count the time the Tasmanian Devil took up refuge with us](#). Despite that, none of it stopped us from camping again.

So why a [pygmy possum](#)? Because they are tiny and adorable. We had one take up resident in the rafters of one of our homes back on the island. It became a nightly ritual to watch it creep out and climb down the vines along the front of the house. Perhaps it, too, became used to seeing us, because it would eventually pause and stare right back through the window until it decided we weren't entertaining enough and it moved on with its night.

The Reluctant Author

