



Wildlife pushed to edge of extinction

Victoria is facing a biodiversity crisis. The most cleared state in the country, almost a third of our native animals and close to half our native plants are extinct or threatened with extinction.

Many of the valuable ecological services we take for granted are also under threat, including clean air and water, pollination and pest control.

Add the pressures of climate change, habitat fragmentation, rampant weeds and feral animals, and it's easy to see why Victoria's natural environment is in a state of crisis.

As the lead organisation of the Victoria Naturally Alliance, a coalition of nine environment groups that want to see concerted action taken to protect the state's biodiversity from a range of threats, the VNPA is calling for a massive boost in conservation efforts to recover this environmental debt and repair our damaged landscapes.

The State Government has already responded to our concerns by launching the Land and Biodiversity at a Time of Climate Change White Paper and we're pushing for more funding to help land managers protect and enhance native vegetation on their property.

We want to see a White Paper that sets an agenda not only for the protection and preservation of current ecosystems but also for restoration of native vegetation on both public and private land.

The alliance is made up of the Victorian National Parks Association, Australian Conservation Foundation, Environment Victoria, The Wilderness Society, Bush Heritage Australia, Trust for Nature, Invasive Species Council, Greening Australia (Vic) and Bird Observation & Conservation Australia.

Species under siege

The combination of habitat loss, climate change, invasive weeds and feral animals is pushing Victoria's native animals to the brink of extinction.

- Already 30 per cent of Victoria's animals are either extinct or threatened.
- Environmental Sustainability Issues Analysis for Victoria, CSIRO



Victoria's faunal emblem, the tiny Leadbeaters Possum, is at risk of becoming extinct if numbers continue to plummet.

Photo: Natalie Holland

- The highest number of threatened species in any one region of Australia is in north-western Victoria.
- National Land and Water Resources Audit, 2002
- Even under the lowest global warming scenario major reductions and losses in species and ecological communities are predicted under climate change.
- More than a third of the 90 Australian animal species so far identified as at risk from climate change are found in Victoria and are on the state's threatened species list. These studies are far from comprehensive – the actual number is likely to be much greater.
- Climate Action Network Australia

A land in need of repair

Since European settlement in Victoria we've lost about 70% of our native vegetation through land clearance. This rapid development has taken a heavy toll:

- 44% of Victoria's native plants are either extinct or threatened.
- Environmental Sustainability Issues Analysis for Victoria, CSIRO

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Victorian National Parks Association

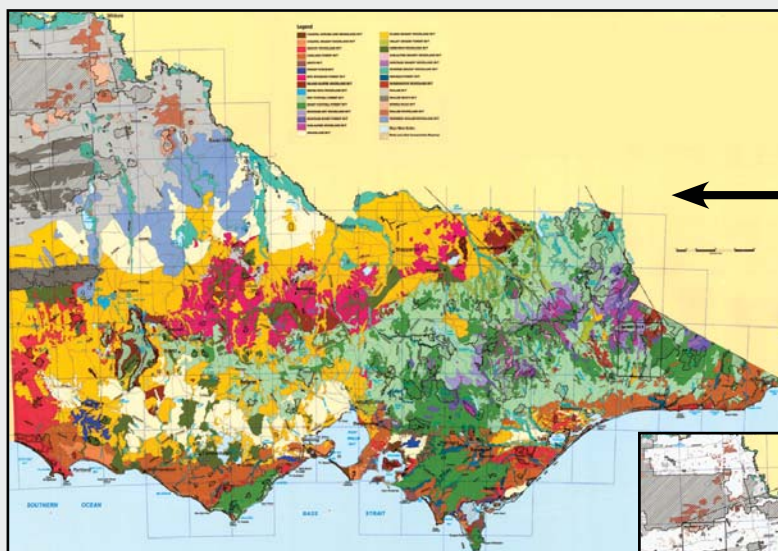
Fact sheet – Land and biodiversity at a time of climate change



Victoria's original bushland

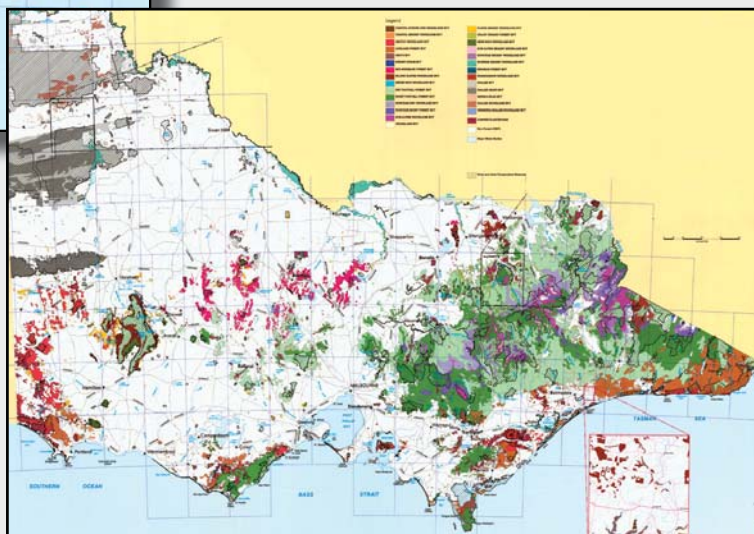
Victoria used to be rich in habitat for our native animals, including grasslands that stretched all the way from what's now the edge of Melbourne to the South Australian border.

- Grasslands
- Plains Grassy Woodland
- Box Ironbark Forest



What's left

But in just 170 years Victoria has lost much of its original native bushland. Our grasslands have all but vanished and our Box Ironbark Forests, the honeypot for many of our birds in winter, have been devastated.



- 75% of our waterways are degraded and 35% of wetlands destroyed.
 - The Health of Our Catchments: A Victorian Report Card
- 12% of Victoria's remaining native vegetation is on private land yet supports 30% of our threatened species populations.
 - Department of Sustainability and Environment
- Under a business-as-usual scenario more than 20% of agricultural land and 60% of irrigation land will be degraded by 2050.
 - Environmental Sustainability Issues Analysis for Victoria, CSIRO
- Invasive weeds such as blackberry are probably the single biggest cause of habitat loss and land degradation in Victoria. The impacts of feral animals is also wreaking havoc on our biodiversity.
 - Nature Conservation Review Victoria 2001

We are committed to working with governments, industry and the community to:

- Identify what is needed to adapt and react to threats facing Victoria's biodiversity, including the impacts of climate change.
- Control feral species invading native habitats.
- Maximise what is robust, and propose changes to improve the health of ecological processes.
- Ensure ecological restoration is adequately funded and legislated for by government.
- We need top quality science and data as well as practical on-ground knowledge to plan for resilient ecosystems that can adapt to the vagaries of climate change.

Chance of a lifetime

The VNPA believes the State Government's Land and Biodiversity at a Time of Climate Change White Paper inquiry, launched in April 2007, offers an historic chance to turn the tables on this biodiversity crisis.

Find out more

Download our submission to the first stage of the White Paper from the VNPA website.

To learn more about Victoria's biodiversity crisis and what you can do to help visit the Victoria Naturally Alliance website, www.victorianaturally.org.au.