

# Wildlife impacted by floods

## Factsheet



### Key points – floods and wildlife

- Where flooding occurs, animals will attempt to move to higher ground.
- Wildlife trapped in trees or higher land by flooding should be left alone to wait for the water level to drop.
- Individuals and wildlife carers and rescuers should not enter or go near flood waters to attempt to assist wildlife. This is extremely dangerous.
- Motorists should be extra vigilant for displaced animals along roadsides.
- Wildlife that does not appear to be injured should be left alone as they are likely to be fatigued and stressed. Unnecessary handling will stress animals further.
- If you see wildlife resting in your garden, you should keep people and pets away and allow it to rest and recover. Noise should also be kept to a minimum.
- There is a risk that some animals may get caught in fences or other debris. Members of the public are urged to take care if attempting to help injured or distressed animals. Improper rescue techniques by an untrained or inexperienced person can cause further distress or injury to the animal, as well as putting the rescuer at risk.
- For assistance with injured wildlife (away from flood waters), please contact your local wildlife carer or rescue group, or call Wildlife Victoria on (03) 8400 7300.
- Anyone seeing animals that appear injured as a result of flooding or caught in flood water should call the DELWP Customer Service Centre on 136 186 or report through the Wildlife Emergency App.

### DELWP's role

Under Victorian emergency management arrangements, the Department of Environment, Land Water and Planning (DELWP) is the lead agency for wildlife welfare arising from declared emergencies. This covers a range of emergency events including fire, flood and storms. Response triggers and actions vary on the type of emergency event and sometimes the location or the specific nature of the event itself.

During floods, DELWP monitors wildlife impacts through the State and Regional emergency management teams and ensures that wildlife welfare is appropriately managed where safe to do so and that wildlife and biodiversity are included in relief and recovery plans.

Wildlife response during flood events will only be undertaken to address significant and immediate wildlife welfare impacts, where it is safe to do so. These interventions will be focused on addressing the immediate suffering of individual or groups of animals. Where wildlife are trapped on higher ground, their condition will be monitored. If the welfare of these animals is significantly compromised (starving, emaciation, drowning) then an intervention will be considered. It is essential that any intervention will not cause further stress and suffering.

With floods, emergency response activities are targeted based on individual situations aimed at managing wildlife welfare. At all times human safety is the highest priority and no activity posing a risk to emergency services or members of the public will be undertaken.

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## How do floods impact wildlife?

The impact of significant rainfall events and flooding on landscape is determined by a range of factors including the topography of the land, vegetation cover, pre-existing soil moisture and the duration and intensity of the rainfall event.

Wildlife can respond to flooding by moving out of the way of rising waters to higher ground, where they are able to do so. Wildlife impacted by flooding are likely to be fatigued and stressed and are best left alone to recover if they are uninjured.

Sometimes wildlife can be caught in trees or temporary islands as a result of flooding. These animals will be able to survive for several days until flood waters recede and they are able to move away. Approaching these animals in an attempt to relocate them has a high likelihood of resulting in further stress in the animal and place responders at risk.

## Hazards

Severe storms and flooding lead to a broad range of potential hazards that may impact your safety. Wildlife rescuers, carers or members of the public must not enter flood water to rescue wildlife.

Flood waters are dangerous, and risks can include:

- Flash flooding, swift and/or deep water
- Submersed trees and branches
- Biological hazards (e.g., diseases, viruses, bacteria)
- Debris in flood waters
- Hypothermia
- Unpredictable nature of high velocity water (the force and depth of flowing water is deceptive and relentless).

Due to the range of hazards that can occur with flood waters, the use of boats to reach wildlife stranded on higher ground is not recommended.

## Other safety measures and hazards:

### Driving

- Do not attempt to drive through flooded waters
- Drive to road conditions
- Be aware of erosion of road surfaces

### Other

- Be aware of fallen or unstable trees and limbs
- Be aware of fallen powerlines

## Provision of food

Feeding of wildlife is not recommended as it can cause a range of issues for the existing and recovering environment, wildlife and community members.

The need for targeted feeding for specific species will be based on intelligence from the impacted area, consultation with wildlife specialists and scientific advice. The appropriate food required for supplementation, method of delivery and duration of the program will be monitored to measure its effectiveness.

Please refer to [Wildlife affected by floods](#) webpage for more information.

## Reporting of injured wildlife during floods

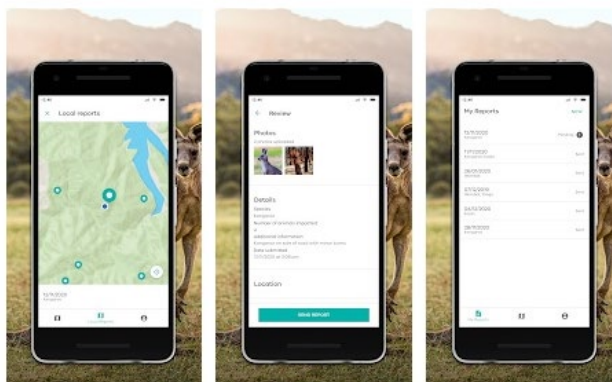
Members of the public who come across injured wildlife due to declared emergencies such as floods or fire or caught in flood waters can report these animals directly to DELWP via the Wildlife Emergency App or by phone:

METHOD	DETAILS
App	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wildlife Emergency App (download from <a href="#">Google Play</a> or <a href="#">Apple Store</a> )</li><li>• DELWP on <b>136 186</b></li></ul>
Phone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wildlife Victoria (24 hr service) on <b>03 8400 7300</b></li></ul>

Individual wildlife away from flood waters or outside of an emergency event that are injured can be reported to an authorised local wildlife carer, rescue group or Wildlife Victoria.

## Wildlife Emergency App

The Wildlife Emergency App provides a straightforward way to report wildlife injured to DELWP 24 hours a day during emergency events such as floods or fire in Victoria.



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This App allows members of the public to submit reports providing basic information on location, suspected injury, species and the addition of photographs (if appropriate). If your device is not connected to the internet, you can still create a report and will be prompted to submit it when your device has an internet connection.

The Wildlife Emergency App can be download from [Google Play](#) or the [Apple Store](#).

**Individuals and wildlife carers and rescuers should not enter or go near flood waters to attempt to assist wildlife. This is extremely dangerous and may lead to the loss of life.**

Further information:

<https://www.wildlife.vic.gov.au/wildlife-emergencies/wildlife-affected-by-floods>.

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ISBN 978-1-76136-134-0 (pdf/online/MS word)

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