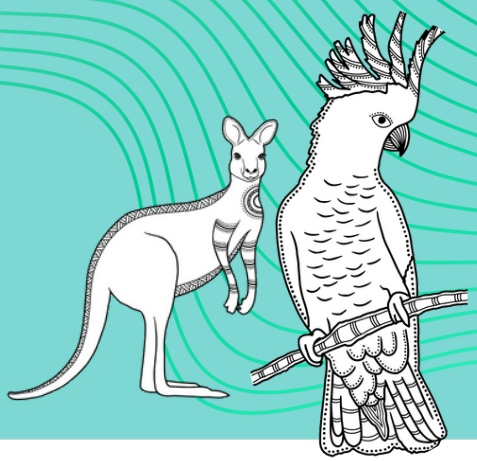
DEECA Statewide Wildlife Advisory Newsletter

Issue 4, December 2025



Welcome to the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action's (DEECA's) wildlife management newsletter.
In this issue...

- New neighbours? when kangaroos come to visit
- Phillip Island (Millowl) Wildlife Plan update
- High Pathogenic Avian Influenza
- Get involved: flying-fox surveys
- Possum proof the home and garden
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DEECA Statewide Wildlife Advisory Services (SWAS) recognises and values the deep connection that First Nations people have to Country, all lands and waters, plants and animals. We acknowledge elders past and present as custodians, teachers and leaders, and pay respect to them. SWAS is committed to supporting self-determination and asks, listens and learns with an open mind.

We are in Ballambar - season of butterflies - in the Brambuk seasonal cycle for Gariwerd/Grampians region*; Barengi Gadjin, Gunditjmirring and Eastern Maar Country.

In Ballambar:

- Summer heat starts, hot, dry days, stable weather
- Murnong is flowering in heathlands
- Kangaroo Grass is seeding
- seed pods of Silver Wattle open
- snakes and lizards bask, butterflies chase each other in the warm sun
- lacewings hatch
- many birds still have young
- pygmy possums have young
- echidnas are seeking ant nests

*Bureau of Meteorology - accessed 29 october



Black Rock Skink
Djab Wurrung Country



Jacky Lizard
Jadawadjali Country

New Neighbours? when kangaroos come to visit

Dry conditions in Victoria means that kangaroos might have to range further for food and we sometimes see them coming in to graze on nature strips and lawns. Once rains come and bushland areas again have fresh growth and water, kangaroos will usually move away again.

Kangaroos are large animals and can concern residents. They may also be a risk to motorists, and of course cars are a risk to kangaroos themselves.

Decisions on the best way to manage risk sit with the land owner or manager. Any proposed actions must be lawful. Exclusion fencing is the best way to keep kangaroos out, but this is not always a workable solution.

Consider changing an area to make it less attractive to kangaroos. Things like reducing lawn and planting more shrubs may help. Road managers and authorities often manage risk with signs, and in more high-risk cases speed reductions.



Living with wildlife – kangaroos
or contact Statewide Wildlife Advisory Services at wildlife@deeca.vic.gov.au

Phillip Island (Millowl) Wildlife Plan Update

DEECA has updated the Phillip Island (Millowl) Wildlife Plan (PIWP) webpage. As reported in our March 2025 edition, the PIWP aims to understand and manage negative impacts of abundant wildlife. The collaborative approach continues to shine through as the key strength of the plan.

The page now contains:

- progress updates
- annual reports detailing major works
- updates on research supporting an evidence-based management approach
- updates on trials of various wildlife management methods

The webpage is only getting started! As the implementation phase of the PIWP enters it's final year, the page will continue to grow. Beyond this phase, the site will be a resource for all land managers. It's a case study in collaborative, evidence-based wildlife management.

Phillip Island (Millowl) Wildlife Plan



Bunurong Country

High Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N1 global outbreak

Due to the global outbreak of the HPAI H5N1 virus, or H5 bird flu, there is an increased risk of the virus arriving in Australia. H5 bird flu is most likely to arrive in spring or summer, carried by migratory birds from overseas. There is also the potential for H5 bird flu to arrive in Australia at any time of year.

H5 bird flu is currently impacting all parts of the world except for Australia/Oceania. While DEECA has responded to H7 bird flu detections in Victoria, the H5 strain is yet to be detected.

H5 bird flu differs from other avian influenza strains as it is more infectious and can cause mass mortality in wild birds. There is no effective treatment for H5 bird flu and the prognosis for affected birds or mammals is poor. As H5 bird flu is highly infectious and can be spread by the movement of birds, people and equipment, biosecurity practices are crucial to minimise further disease spread. DEECA has developed land manager guidelines outlining biosecurity requirements and steps required to dispose of dead birds.

DEECA is the control agency for managing emergency animal diseases, and would lead Victoria's emergency response to an H5 bird flu outbreak. We are also working closely with government agencies, land managers, the wildlife welfare sector, Traditional Owners and other relevant organisations to prepare for a potential HPAI H5N1 detection in Victoria.

Our extensive emergency preparedness activities include:

- identifying and prioritising at-risk species and developing detailed response plans
- scenario planning to slow disease spread and manage impacts on wildlife
- planning for limited public access to landscapes where there are H5N1 outbreaks
- working collaboratively with the Commonwealth, states and territories on surveillance
- establishing a wildlife-focused Expert Advisory Group to advise on threatened species priorities.

Guidelines for managing wildlife infected with H5 bird flu on public land



Report it

Report sick or dead wildlife by calling the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline: 1800 675 888 or online at https://forms.bio.vic.gov.au/wildlife-influenza-investigation

Report clusters (5 or more) of sick or dead wild birds of any species, anywhere in Victoria and report even one sick or dead:

- penguin, pelican or black swan
- bird of prey (e.g. hawk, owl, eagle)
- marine mammal (e.g. seal, sea lion, dolphin).

Get involved: Flying-fox surveys

The Grey-headed Flying-fox (GHFF) is a nationally threatened species with an important role in pollination and seed dispersal. To better understand and protect Victorian populations, DEECA's Statewide Wildlife Advisory Service (SWAS) coordinates quarterly monitoring surveys at GHFF camps across the state, and you can get involved!

These surveys help track population trends, inform planning decisions and land-use activities, and support community engagement.

Public land managers such as local councils and Parks Victoria are uniquely positioned to:

- provide access and local insights into GHFF camps
- lead or support safe and effective monitoring
- respond to community enquiries about flying-foxes
- contribute to national conservation efforts

contact SWAS via wildlife@deeca.vic.gov.au to get involved.



More info at www.wildlife.vic.gov.au/flying-foxes

Possum-proof the home and garden

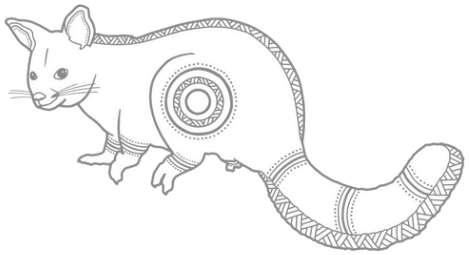
Possums are common visitors in Victorian homes and gardens, attracted by food and shelter. While you may enjoy seeing them, they can be noisy in roofs or damage plants. Managing possums takes effort, but there are effective strategies.

Both Common Brush-tailed and Eastern Ring-tailed Possums frequent backyards. DEECA's website lists ways to protect plants and fruit trees, including fencing, tree guards, possum spikes, and wildlife-friendly netting.

To discourage possums sleeping in the roof:

- install nest boxes as alternative homes.
- prune overhanging branches or use trunk guards.
- watch after dark to find entry points.
- block access once possums are out. A one-way flap will help ensure all possums using the roof space are out, before sealing permanently.

Landowners can trap Common Brush-tailed Possums without authorisation, but they must be released on the same property. Best-practice is to install one-way flaps, over traps. One-way flaps ensure all possums that are using the roof space have the chance to leave. Blocking roof entry points is essential to prevent re-entry. Other conditions apply —see DEECA's website.



Koala welfare and tree canopy health: clearing up a common misconception

People often worry that unhealthy tree canopies mean koalas nearby are in trouble. While this seems logical, research shows it's not always true.

Trees can look stressed for many reasons—drought, poor soil, pests, seasonal changes, or long-term climate shifts—and these issues don't necessarily affect koala health. Koala welfare cannot be determined by tree canopy condition alone.

What causes this concern?

- Tree stress (leaf loss, dieback) is easy to spot, so people assume it signals poor habitat.
- Koalas are iconic and vulnerable, so any environmental stress can be emotionally linked to their welfare.
- Media stories sometimes reinforce this connection without evidence.
- Many don't realise tree decline can occur for reasons unrelated to koalas.

How does DEECA monitor koalas and address these concerns?

DEECA collects evidence from population surveys, health checks and habitat assessments. These give us accurate information about koala numbers and well-being, so conservation decisions are based on evidence—not assumptions. Koala health is assessed through direct monitoring, not by looking at tree canopy alone.



Further reading:

Moore, B. D., & Foley, W. J. (2000). *A review of feeding and nutrition of koalas*. Australian Journal of Zoology, 48(3), 317–333.

Landsberg, J., & Wylie, F. R. (1991). *Dieback of rural eucalypts: causes and management*. Australian Forestry, 54(2), 84–91.

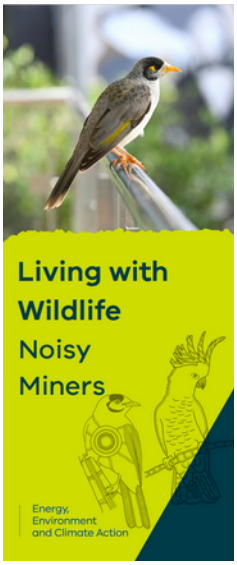
McAlpine, C. A., et al. (2006). *Modelling the impact of climate change on koala populations*. Biological Conservation, 127(2), 153–165.

Rhodes, J. R., et al. (2011). *Linking disease and habitat fragmentation: koala chlamydiosis in a landscape context*. Journal of Applied Ecology, 48(4), 792–802.

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (2023). *National Koala Monitoring Program*.

Resources

DEECA's Statewide Wildlife Advisory Services offers a range of *Living with Wildlife* flyers addressing common wildlife issues reported by the public. Click the images below to access each flyer. If your community is experiencing a common wildlife issue that isn't covered here, get in touch! Email us at wildlife@deeca.vic.gov.au.





























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