

Victoria's bushfire emergency: Biodiversity response and recovery

Report Summary



Photo: Louise Durkin

Context

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning has undertaken desktop assessments, analysing data for thousands of species to understand the impact of the fires on Victoria's biodiversity, highlighting species of immediate concern and identifying a range of potential actions that would benefit those species. This is compiled in the preliminary report *Victoria's bushfire emergency: Biodiversity responses and recovery*, which sets the direction for Victoria's long-term plan for the recovery of biodiversity.

The preliminary report summarises the impacts of the Victorian bushfires as at 11 January 2020 and outlines a plan of action over different time frames to assist with biodiversity recovery. It forms the basis for which Government and other investors can start to allocate resources to secure the greatest overall benefit to biodiversity in the immediate term, whilst also thinking about the medium and long-term.

The preliminary report has been developed by DELWP Biodiversity Division in collaboration with other DELWP staff, agency partners, stakeholders, land managers and biodiversity experts. The report is intended to be a living document and will continue to be updated as the bushfire situation in Victoria changes and as more data and information becomes available.

Summary of impacts (as of 11 January 2020)

- The Victorian fires have burnt mostly in areas that have high biodiversity value.
- There are over 170 Victorian rare or threatened species that have had more than 50 per cent of their habitat impacted in the current fire extent. This includes 13 species listed under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. There are also a number of non-threatened species that have been impacted.
- The current fire extent impacts at least 60 per cent of over 50 National parks and nature conservation reserves in Victoria.
- 70 per cent of the Warm Temperate Rainforest is within the fire extent.
- The majority of the distribution of seven vegetation communities listed under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* (FFG Act) are also within the current fire extent.
- A significant area of habitat across Victoria has now burnt multiple times since 2000. This can result in regeneration failure for Alpine Ash.
- Species and vegetation communities of most immediate concern include the Long-footed Potoroo, Ground Parrot, Glossy Black-cockatoo, Large Brown Tree Frog, Diamond Python, Freshwater Galaxiids, Colquhoun Grevillea, Betka Bottlebrush and Warm Temperate Rainforest.

Response and recovery actions

In collaboration with partners, DELWP has developed a long-term plan to help biodiversity recover following the Victorian bushfires. The preliminary plan outlines initial priority actions across a range of themes for recovery of fire impacted species and vegetation communities.

This includes a focus on immediate actions as well as thinking about medium- and longer-term actions required to support fire affected species.

- Immediate reconnaissance of critical fauna, flora and habitat to assess the status of key species and identify and design protections for key unburnt refugia.
- Intensified and sustained management of threats (e.g. control of invasive herbivores such as goats, deer, horses and rabbits, and control of feral predators such as foxes and cats).
- Emergency extraction to prevent extinction and limit decline for key species.
- Maximising the long-term resilience of key populations (e.g. through translocations and captive breeding, protecting and managing key areas outside the fire extent).
- Enhancing Traditional Owner connection to Country through actions to reset and heal Country.

Development of the report

How was the report developed?

The preliminary report was developed using a range of methods, including a desktop analysis to assess the impact of the current bushfire extent on over 4400 species, as well as consultation with key agencies and species experts.

Who was involved?

DELWP lead the development of the report with consultation with key agencies. Input to the report was also provided by species experts, academics and land managers who were brought together for the first Biodiversity Bushfire Response Workshop held on 10 January 2020.

When will the report be updated?

The report will continue to be updated as the bushfire situation in Victoria changes and as more information becomes available. Updates to the report will be made as we learn more about the impact of the fire from severity mapping and on-ground assessments in the coming weeks. Fire severity mapping will be critical for highlighting pockets of the landscape for protection – for example, where the fire has been less damaging. DELWP will also continue to seek input from our key partners and species experts to add additional information to the report.

Supporting Victoria's fire-affected biodiversity

As we learn more about the extent and impact of the fires, the collective actions of all Victorians to assist in the recovery of our wildlife and habitats will be guided by the report and response plan.

We encourage land managers, partners and community groups alike to refer to the report and plan associated actions as we work together to ensure Victoria's biodiversity is healthy, valued and actively cared for in line with Protecting Victoria's Environment – Biodiversity 2037.

How you can help

If you see wildlife that appears to be injured or distressed as a result of the fire, please contact your local DELWP office, DELWP Customer Service Centre on 136 186 or Wildlife Victoria on 03 8400 7300.

To donate to the Zoos Victoria Bushfire Emergency Wildlife Fund, visit www.zoo.org.au/fire-fund. Donations are tax-deductible and 100% of all funds raised will be used to support the recovery of bushfire affected wildlife and their habitats.

Further Information

To stay up to date on the latest recovery actions and view the preliminary report, *Victoria's bushfire emergency: Biodiversity response and recovery* please visit: <http://www.wildlife.vic.gov.au/home/biodiversity-bushfire-response-and-recovery>

© The State of Victoria Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning 2020



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence. You are free to re-use the work under that licence, on the condition that you credit the State of Victoria as author. The licence does not apply to any images, photographs or branding, including the Victorian Coat of Arms, the Victorian Government logo and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) logo. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Disclaimer

This publication may be of assistance to you but the State of Victoria and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.

Accessibility

If you would like to receive this publication in an alternative format, please telephone the DELWP Customer Service Centre on 136186, or via the National Relay Service on 133 677 www.relayservice.com.au. This document is also available on the internet at www.delwp.vic.gov.au