

## Bringing back the biodiversity

Across Australia predation by foxes has played a role in the decline of many native wildlife species.

The Southern Ark project aims to benefit the biodiversity of East Gippsland's native species through fox control.

Across Australia foxes have pushed many species to the edge of extinction, and on some occasions even over that edge.

Life can be difficult for species that already live 'on the edge', be it the edge of their distribution, the edge of the river, or the edge of extinction.

In many instances the arrival of the fox often means these species 'on the edge' quietly disappear.

The fox control program that is part of the Southern Ark project aims to turn that trend around, and provide all native species with as much chance of thriving as possible.

## Further Information on Southern Ark

- Contact the Department of Sustainability and Environment's Customer Service Centre on 136 186
- Contact the department's Orbost office on (03) 5161 1222
- Visit the department's website: [www.dse.vic.gov.au](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au)
- Email queries to: [southern.ark@dse.vic.gov.au](mailto:southern.ark@dse.vic.gov.au)

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# Southern Ark

bringing back the biodiversity...

## Helping Species on the Edge



# Southern Ark project

Benefiting the biodiversity of East Gippsland through fox control

Fox control helps those species on the edge...

## Of the water...

### THE NATIVE WATER RAT AND THE PLATYPUS

It might seem surprising given their aquatic habits, but native Water Rats regularly fall prey to foxes. When fully grown these rats are large and powerful, but are still no match for foxes. The fact that they are confined to fairly linear habitats (i.e. alongside rivers and creeks) makes them susceptible to predation and possibly localised extinction.

Platypuses also occasionally get eaten by foxes. They are most vulnerable when they travel overland, which they do as juveniles, when water bodies dry up, or when they forage in shallow creeks.

While neither of these species is regarded at risk as a result of fox predation, the fact that foxes do eat these secretive water-loving animals whenever they catch them gives us further examples of how efficient foxes are as predators.



Platypus  
Peter Marsack



Water Rat  
Paul Gullan

## Of their range...

### THE DIAMOND PYTHON

Diamond Pythons are the most southerly occurring species of python in Australia. The range of this charismatic ambush predator extends into Far East Gippsland with the majority of the distribution located in eastern New South Wales. While the species has been recorded from Mallacoota Inlet to Point Hicks anecdotal reports have them occurring as far west as Lake Tyers. Given their secretive nature, the habitat they live in, and the fact that this area of Victoria has very few people, it is not surprising the exact distribution is not well known.

While juvenile pythons and females incubating eggs are particularly vulnerable to predation by foxes, even fully-grown pythons can still fall prey to foxes.

As fox numbers decline, not only will predation on pythons decline, but the increase in potoroo and bandicoot numbers will give the snakes more to eat! While it is important to ensure the recovery of a wide range of species that foxes eat, it is equally important to ensure that ecosystems retain or regain their balance, and this means that native predators must recover as well.

Diamond Pythons may be one species that needs a helping hand to recover. While the threat from foxes will be significantly reduced, other native predators, especially lace monitors (goannas), will still be around and all too willing to gobble up a small python.

## Of extinction...

### THE BRUSH-TAILED ROCK-WALLABY

Brush-tailed Rock Wallabies used to be abundant in the rocky country that occurs along the Snowy River.



Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby  
DSE/McCann

Like all other species of rock-wallaby living in southern Australia, they have declined dramatically following the arrival of the fox. A huge conservation effort is currently under way in an attempt to save the species in Victoria. A major part of this effort is controlling foxes along the Snowy River corridor.



Diamond Python  
DSE/McCann

