

# Southern Ark project

Benefiting the biodiversity of East Gippsland through fox control

## FACT SHEET

### Biodiversity benefits of Southern Ark

**Southern Ark** is a new conservation initiative aimed at facilitating the recovery of native animals and improving the stewardship of public land in East Gippsland through an integrated, large-scale and ongoing fox control program.



- There is a strong link between increasing populations of wildlife and the improvement this has on biodiversity. This is because native animals behave in a way that benefits the native forests in which they have evolved and live. Potoroos and bandicoots, for example, are involved in the dispersal of the spores of particular types of fungi that grow on the roots of trees and shrubs.
- By reducing fox numbers and the level of predation on native wildlife, there will be more native animals to carry out these natural processes, many of which have slowed since foxes have arrived and caused a collapse of the medium-sized mammal fauna.
- Native mammals play an important role in the forest ecosystem and the broad-scale control of foxes across the forested and coastal areas of far East Gippsland could lead to one of the most significant improvements in biodiversity ever achieved in Victoria.
- Research and management programs in East Gippsland and other parts of Australia, have shown that effective control of the introduced Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) allows the recovery of a host of threatened species, and paves the way for the reintroduction of others that have become locally extinct.
- In particular, "Project Deliverance" in East Gippsland, has demonstrated that a cost-effective, targeted fox baiting program can be implemented over large areas and can significantly increase the abundance of medium-sized native mammals.
- Similar recoveries have been achieved in other States that have undertaken large-scale fox control programs.
- Predation by foxes has been identified as a key threat for many native species. Species such as the Long-footed Potoroo, Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby, Diamond Python, Hooded Plover and Little Tern will all benefit from large-scale, on-going fox control.
- The reduction in competition for resources allows populations of native predators to recover. Species likely to benefit include Spot-tailed Quoll, Powerful Owl, Sooty Owl, Masked Owl, Diamond Python and Lace Monitor.

More information about the **Southern Ark** project is available at [www.dse.vic.gov.au/southernark](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/southernark) or by calling the Department of Sustainability and Environment's Customer Service Centre on 136 186.

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