



## A biodiversity snapshot of south west Victoria

*South West Victoria features the basaltic volcanic plains, the rolling terrain of the Victorian Midlands, the Glenelg plains in the very south west corner, the Otway Ranges and the coastal communities of the Otway Plains.*

The Victorian Volcanic Plain is characterised by remnant grasslands, small patches of open woodland, stony rises denoting old lava flows, the low peaks of extinct volcanoes dotting the landscape and numerous scattered shallow lakes.

The remnant grassland communities are floristically rich, usually dominated by Common Tussock Grass or Kangaroo Grass with a wide variety of perennial herbs. The bioregion supports many reptiles, birds of prey, waterbirds and several ground-dwelling birds, but few mammal species. Several species including the Eastern-barred Bandicoot, Corangamite Water Skink and Basalt Rustyhood Orchid are endemic to the Victorian Volcanic Plain, and the Striped Legless Lizard is most strongly associated with this bioregion.

The Victorian Midlands comprises four bioregions. Dundas Tablelands is an undulating area to the west of the Grampians, much of which has been cleared for agriculture. The Greater Grampians bioregion is dominated by the striking parallel ranges and valleys which comprise the Grampians National Park, and retains substantial areas of native vegetation. The diverse flora of the park supports a number of endemic species and is of great floristic and ecological interest.

The topography of the Goldfields bioregion is dominated by rolling plains and low hills between Stawell and Wangaratta, north of the Great Dividing Range. It supports fragmented native forests and woodlands, mostly on the relatively poor soils. The Central Victorian Uplands bioregion was formerly dominated by foothill forest, some of which is still found on the upper slopes.

In fertile areas where native vegetation has been cleared, the fragmentation and alteration of habitat has been a key factor in threatening the survival of a number of species. Characteristic rare and threatened fauna in the Victorian Midlands include the Brush-tailed Phascogale, Squirrel Glider, Swift Parrot, Regent Honeyeater, Bush Stone-curlew, Pink-tailed Worm-lizard, Woodland Blind Snake and Common Dunnart.

Substantial areas of native vegetation remain in the less fertile parts of the Victorian Midlands. In some cases this vegetation is in remarkably good condition — weed-free, structurally diverse, species-rich and with ecological processes largely intact. For example, parts of the Grampians National Park fit this description.

The Glenelg Plain extends from south-east of Edenhope, for some 230 kilometres to the southern Victorian coastline. Coastal communities are composed of beach and dune vegetation, coastal cliffs and saltmarshes. Woodlands occur through much of the region, particularly in the north. A large proportion of this is Heathy Woodlands and there are lowland forests, predominantly Brown Stringybark.

The bioregion supports a wide variety of reptiles, birds of prey, waterbirds, woodland and ground-dwelling birds, and an array of mammal species. Threatened species include the Red-tailed Black Cockatoo, Brolga, Rufous Bristlebird, Hooded Plover, Powerful Owl, Heath Mouse, and numerous orchids.

The Otway Ranges support a wide variety of vascular and non-vascular plants, arboreal and terrestrial mammals, reptiles, forest-dwelling birds and birds of prey including the large forest owls.

The Otway Plain includes coastal plains, river valleys and foothills from the Bellarine Peninsula west to Fairhaven. The bioregion is characterised by coastal heathland and woodland, and open forests with heathy understoreys dominated by Messmate and other gum Eucalypt species, for example Manna Gum and Grey Gum

### Further resources

For more information about Victoria's unique biodiversity, please visit [www.dse.vic.gov.au/landwhitepaper](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/landwhitepaper)



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