

What is a Leadbeater's Possum?

The Leadbeater's possum *Gymnobelideus leadbeateri* is a tiny, delightfully feisty mammal found only in Victoria; a perfect choice for the State's Faunal Emblem.



Features & Adaptations



- 1 **Club-shaped Tail** - The shape of the tail is a unique and distinctive feature of this species. It improves balance and agility.
- 2 **Dorsal Stripe** - A black dorsal stripe running the length of the back is a characteristic feature of this species.
- 3 **Lack of Gliding Membrane** - Unlike some of its relatives such as Sugar Gliders, Leadbeater's possums lack a gliding membrane.
- 4 **Ears and Eyes** - Oversized ears and eyes are crucial for navigating dense forests, sourcing food and avoiding predators in the dark!
- 5 **Paws** - Specialised toes with bifid toe pads help the possums grip the smooth, wet eucalypt trunks as they scamper, leap and climb.
- 6 **Pouch** - Females can have 2 litters of 1-2 babies each year. The young climb to the pouch, where they develop for 3 months.

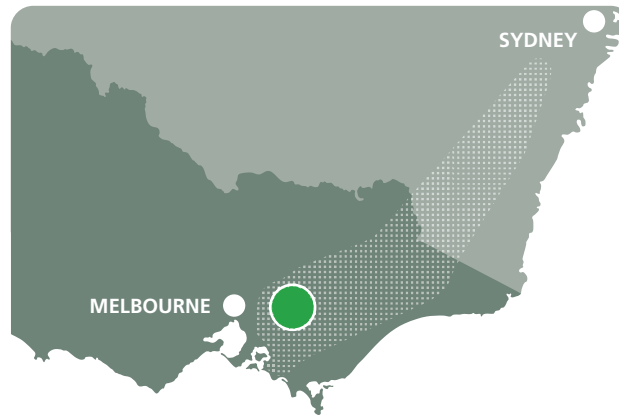
Leadbeater's Possum population distribution

It is difficult to accurately estimate the wild population size due to the possum's cryptic behaviour. Leadbeater's possums are split into two genetic groups:



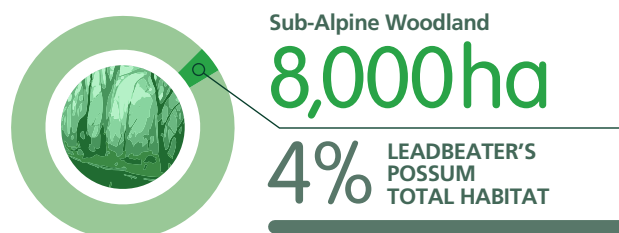
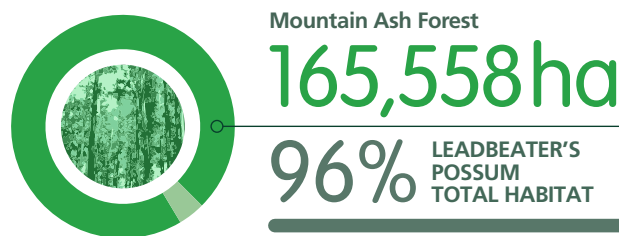
Where are they found?

Leadbeater's possums are the only mammal endemic to Victoria. They have one of the most restricted distributions of any Australian mammal and are only found in a 70 x 95km area of Victoria.

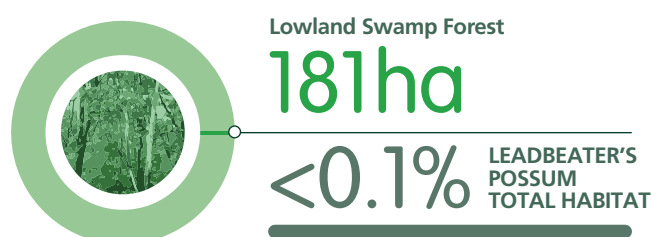


Estimated Historical Distribution (based on historic records and subfossils)
Current Distribution

Highland Population

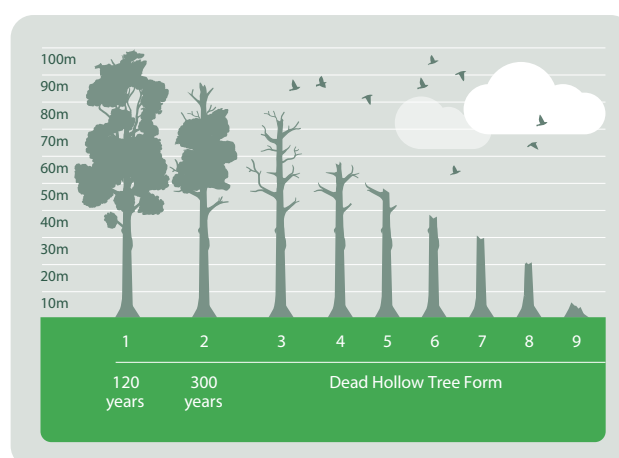


Lowland Population



The highly restricted distribution of Leadbeater's possum is linked to forest type and climate. Their abundance in local areas is related to the availability of tree hollows. It takes trees at least 200 years to develop hollows suitable for families of Leadbeater's possums.

Hollow formation timeline



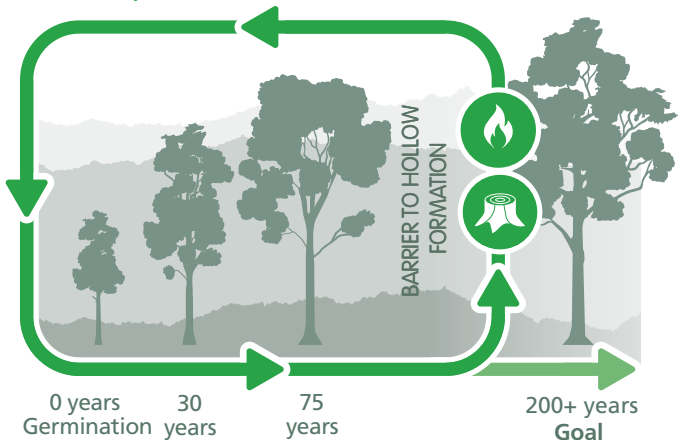
Why are they critically endangered?

>50% of Leadbeater's possum habitat has been lost in the last 20 years due to logging, fires and natural collapse of old, hollow-bearing trees.



- Bushfires** result in the loss of old hollow-bearing trees and produce young forests where hollows are limited.
- Climate change** increases the frequency and severity of bushfires.
- Unsustainable forest practices** prevent forests from reaching the maturity needed to form hollows.

Forest Cycle



Habitat destroyed in bushfires



What's the solution?

To ensure the long-term future for Leadbeater's possums in the wild we need to:

- Value and protect Victoria's current old-growth forest.
- Implement practices which enable trees to reach maturity.
- Anticipate future bushfire and climate change impacts and ensure mature forests are sufficiently protected.



Victoria's network of parks and reserves are an integral part of Aboriginal cultural landscapes. Parks Victoria respects the deep and continuing connection that Traditional Owners have to these landscapes and recognises their ongoing role in caring for Country.

Care for our possums by printing this poster on recycled paper or by viewing it on your device.