

# Grampians (Gariwerd) National Park

## Fire Recovery - Biodiversity Update

May 2025

### Background

In December 2024, a bushfire started from dry lightning on Mount William Range in the Grampians (Gariwerd) National Park. Extreme weather and dry vegetation caused the fire to spread quickly, affecting both the park and adjacent private land. Less than a month later, additional fires ignited from lightning on the western side of the park, burning across Victoria Range, Victoria Point and the Victoria Valley.

In total, the Grampians fires burned 135,000 hectares—nearly 80% of the park. Biodiversity, cultural sites and visitor assets were severely impacted.

### Biodiversity impacts

All six significant conservation areas within the park were affected, including important habitat for priority species like the critically endangered Brush-tailed Rock Wallaby (BTRW), Long-nosed Potoroo, Southern Brown Bandicoot, Heath Mouse, and Smoky Mouse.

The biodiversity recovery programs commenced during the fire and continues, to ensure the long-term recovery process for the landscape and wildlife species which are protected under State and Federal legislation.

### Brush-Tailed Rock Wallabies

During the fires, strategies were put in place by Parks Victoria, Department Energy Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) and the Horsham Incident Control Centre to help protect the critically endangered southern Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby (BTRW) in an area of the Serra Range.

Remote cameras were used to monitor the animals, and an emergency feeding operation commenced to support their survival. This included food drops from helicopters and drones which moved bulk supplies of food to 17 monitored feeding stations across 5km of remote

and rocky escarpment. These feeding sites continue to be serviced weekly by ground crews.

Cameras have confirmed BTRW at all 17 ground-feeding stations, including the far east of the escarpment, a major increase in their local range since their reintroduction to the landscape in 2008.

Images from the cameras have also confirmed that they are actively feeding and drinking from the feeding stations, including images of 3 young healthy joeys.



Image: Brush Tailed Rock Wallaby

### Enhanced monitoring

A new and enhanced monitoring program has been established by staff, to expand the monitoring area throughout the colony.

Additionally, scat collection for the colony survey has been ongoing, with over 100 samples collected so far. More than 500,000 camera trap images have been taken since late December, with 55 cameras at both locations. Habitat and vegetation on-going assessments are also being carried out at both colonies to allow for adaptive management of the ground feeding program.

## Threatened Small Mammals

During the fires, local Parks Victoria rangers established a trial in the fire affected areas, testing artificial habitats. These cardboard pods act as temporary cover for small mammals and reptiles to protect them from risk of predation by foxes and feral cats. The pods will gradually compost as native vegetation recovers.

The pods were placed in high conservation areas, where Long-nosed potoroo and Southern Brown Bandicoots have been recorded. Since deployment of the cameras, Southern Brown Bandicoots have been captured showing activity and survival in the trial areas. This exciting trial in the Grampians (Gariwerd) National Park was supported by DEECA, Deakin University, Zoos Victoria and local volunteers.

Long-nosed Potoroo have also been recorded by the remote cameras in April after the fires. It has taken months of dedicated effort to achieve this first positive sighting following the devastation of the summer fires. Additionally, staff captured images of endangered smoky mice in the Victoria Range following the fire, thanks to the efforts of our partners at Museums Victoria and Wimmera Catchment Management Authority.

An additional 190 habitat pods have been placed in other high-value conservation sites affected by the fires, bringing the total number of habitat pods to 350. An extra 60 cameras have also been installed to monitor the habitat pods and support the overall recovery efforts for small mammals following the fire, increasing the total number of cameras deployed for this project to over 120.



*Image: Local community providing valuable support*

## Partners and Community Support

Friends of the Grampians, Halls Gap Landcare and local community provided much needed support with the assembly of habitat pods and supporting food drops to the BTRW. Geelong Lutheran College also supported the team in Autumn, through the PV volunteer program.

Deakin University's small mammal monitoring program commenced early this month. The program will assess the long-term responses of small mammal populations to large landscape fires and changes in climate.

This important monitoring was initiated after the 2006 Mount Lubra fire and has been ongoing since 2008. To support this work, staff have completed re-establishing over 200 research areas across previous fire affected monitoring sites. The process combines the methods of setting traps at regular intervals along a line to capture and study the health of the animals.

Other biodiversity works with partners include assisting Museums Victoria to reestablish Smoky Mouse monitoring sites in the Victoria Range and installing new cameras along the Mount William Range.

The 36 long-term monitoring sites for the Great Gariwerd Bird Survey have been re-established. Local staff worked with over 30 volunteers in May to collect this very important data.



*Image: Staff assessing small mammal pods*

## Pest Control Programs

A larger predator control program is being implemented around the habitat pod locations and other critical conservation areas. It incorporates different ground and aerial operations. Staff have re-establishing over 300 of the 400 bait stations that have been affected by fire.

An aerial shooting program was undertaken in January, February, March and May, targeting deer and other invasive species including goats and foxes.

This program is part of an ongoing joint effort by the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA), and Parks Victoria to help protect the impacts of invasive animals and plants within the natural environment after fire.

## Further Information

To keep up to date with the Grampians National Park Recovery Project or more information on 'what to see and do' in the park, visit [parks.vic.gov.au](http://parks.vic.gov.au) or Brambuk the National Park and Cultural Centre in Halls Gap.