



## What you can do

Support Council efforts by encouraging others. Join interest groups. And on your own property, take the following actions where you can.

Find out what vegetation types, habitats and flora and fauna species occur on your land, or might potentially be established there, given the right management. Offer habitat to whatever indigenous species your place can support – particularly threatened species (**Action sheet 6**).

Ensure your property is not having a negative impact on surrounding habitat and environments. Identify and learn how to control any environmental weeds that you may have on your land. Ensure your garden is not providing havens for pest animals and your pets are not causing nuisance to wildlife and are confined away from habitat areas.

### Hollow logs and tree hollows

- Maintain logs and hollows of all shapes, sizes and locations, in trees that are alive, dead, or fallen as logs, as these are critical habitat for flora and fauna species and assist in soil moisture retention. Provide fauna with suitable nest boxes where there is a shortage of natural hollows.

### Organic litter

- Recognise the importance of organic litter on the soil surface in areas of natural vegetation and its role in providing habitat for small animals such as lizards and insects.

### Quality of vegetation, and diversity in vegetation structure

- Ensure that appropriate vegetation layers (trees, large shrubs, medium shrubs, small shrubs and groundcovers) are present to maintain healthy natural ecosystems.
- Be aware of the broader habitat values across the landscape (**see Action sheet 1**). Link patches by planting indigenous species in a way that connects habitat on your property with that on nearby private land, parks, forests and reserves.
- Protect and enhance any waterways and wetlands on your property as they are critical components of a healthy ecosystem.

## What Council will do

On its own land and in areas such as roadsides for which it has responsibility, Council will maintain healthy natural ecosystems by prioritising habitat maintenance in its management programs, by implementing the Weed Management Strategy, Environment Strategy and committing to implementing this Flora and Fauna Plan.

- Where other agencies and private land owners are responsible for habitat management, Council will proactively influence and form partnerships with other agencies and land owners:
- to educate the community about, and advocate for, the ecological principles that underpin habitat preservation, enhancement, and restoration
- to encourage the retention of native vegetation and the associated habitat elements on private land for native fauna species (e.g. retention of hollow-bearing trees as shelter for Leadbeater's Possum, and retention of understorey trees for food and movement for native fauna)
- to encourage residents through various biodiversity extension programs and the ongoing, support of friends and landcare groups.

## Legal responsibility

In addition to Council regulations, the Wildlife Act 1975 (Vic), administered by the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE), protects habitat vegetation for protected wildlife. That includes nests and nesting hollows. The Act also directly protects native animals.

The Planning and Environment Act 1987 (Vic) makes specific provision for the Upper Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Region and establishes a planning permit requirement for most development involving the removal of vegetation for construction in the Yarra Ranges Council. Every land owner has a responsibility to be aware of what planning controls affect the use and development of their land.



Action Sheet

# Habitat management on your property

## Related materials

### Guidelines

Yarra Ranges Council Flora & Fauna Plan 2012: Sustaining biodiversity for current and future generations Yarra Ranges Council Environment Department

### Websites

- **Yarra Ranges Planning Scheme**
  - <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/yarraranges/home.html>
  - [www.dse.vic.gov.au](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au)
  - [www.dpi.vic.gov.au](http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au)
- **Native plants and vegetation communities**
  - [www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Residents/Trees\\_Vegetation/Yarra\\_Ranges\\_Plant\\_Directory/Yarra\\_Ranges\\_Local\\_Plant\\_Directory](http://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Residents/Trees_Vegetation/Yarra_Ranges_Plant_Directory/Yarra_Ranges_Local_Plant_Directory)
  - [www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/eServices/Online\\_Maps](http://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/eServices/Online_Maps)
- **Threatened species**
  - <http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/plants-and-animals/native-plants-andanimals>
- **Environmental weeds**
  - [http://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Residents/Greener\\_Living/Weed\\_Control](http://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Residents/Greener_Living/Weed_Control)
  - [http://vro.dpi.vic.gov.au/dpi/vro/vrosite.nsf/pages/lwm\\_pest\\_plants](http://vro.dpi.vic.gov.au/dpi/vro/vrosite.nsf/pages/lwm_pest_plants)
- **Revegetation guides**
  - <http://www.publish.csiro.au> – search restoration ecology

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Habitat management on your property





## Habitat management on your property

This Action sheet provides information for residents about habitat management on their property. Protection and regeneration of indigenous vegetation and associated protection of the fauna it supports is critical to maintain current and future populations. By protecting a diversity of ecosystems on both public and private land we have a better chance of maintaining habitat requirements for a variety of fauna species and preserving other beneficial ecosystem processes such as water and nutrient cycles.

### Integrated management of flora and fauna

Plants and animals interact with non-living ecosystem components such as soil, water and sunlight. They are all interdependent. Indigenous plants provide habitat in the form of hollows, nesting material, shelter and a food source for indigenous animals. Indigenous animals in turn perform services for native plants (e.g. pollination, dispersal of seeds and pest control). Wholistic land management that recognises these symbiotic relationships is important for the land manager to keep in mind. When managing the vegetation on your property you should consider not just their botanical value but also the role they play in the wider ecosystem, such as habitat for fauna, moderating water run off and binding of soil. Species diversity is critical for maintaining ecosystem processes, reflecting the ecological principle of **Strength with diversity**.



### Ecological principle: Strength with diversity

Think of your property as part of a **patch of habitat** – one piece in an interlocking jigsaw puzzle that sustains the unique flora and fauna of the Yarra Ranges.

National Parks, State Parks and bushland reserves are vital for the protection of indigenous flora and fauna, and many threatened species. To maintain diversity we need to protect a percentage of each vegetation community, wherever it occurs – not just those that happen to occur in parks, reserves and forests. Your property can be a valuable food source, shelter or provide a link for wildlife between larger patches of native vegetation. We need residents' help to protect our unique flora and fauna.

Our municipality has at least 1365 indigenous flora and 375 indigenous fauna species plus many more not yet classified or recorded. But it is important to remember that individual species alone provide limited ecological value. What influences habitat and other ecosystem values for flora and fauna is their placement across the landscape, their interactions at a local patch and broader landscape level, and the quality of the habitat attributes of each site.

The quality of a patch of vegetation is measured by a large range of ecological attributes that combine to support habitat for a range of fauna species. This includes the number of large, potentially hollow bearing trees and the health of the canopy cover. It also includes the diversity of trees, shrubs and ground cover species and the amount of natural regeneration or seeding of these species that occurs. The amount of weeds onsite is a key factor as weeds can dominate native vegetation and prevent regeneration. Other critical habitat components include logs, leaf litter and natural soil structure.



Many forest-dwelling animals (e.g. gliders, possums, parrots, owls, bats) use hollows for nesting sites. There are 55 fauna species in Yarra Ranges that depend totally on hollows for survival and a further 24 are partially hollow-dependent. Removing trees containing hollows directly diminishes the habitat that supports one in five fauna species in Yarra Ranges (21%). Feather-tailed Glider (Esther Beaton Wild Pictures).

Hollows are precious! They take at least 100 years to form naturally in trees.

Wetlands and waterways (see Action sheet 4) are critically important and require strong protection. Even smaller formations such as drainage lines and boggy areas are important for habitat, and as moist corridors between drier landscapes.



### Flora and fauna goals

#### Goal 1 PROTECT

**Goal 1** involves protecting indigenous vegetation, keeping weeds at bay, avoiding the removal of native vegetation wherever possible, minimising the impact of invasive animals, reducing the impact of wastewater and stormwater, protecting soil health, maximising carbon storage in vegetation and soil, and protecting aquatic habitats.

#### Goal 2 ENHANCE

At the scale of individual properties, **Goal 2** makes the diversity of habitat most relevant: providing diversity in the structure of vegetation with indigenous species. Instead of a park like setting with trees and mown grass think of a diversity of canopy trees, tall shrubs, medium shrubs and smaller ground covers and herbs matching your local bushland reserve.

#### Goal 3 RESTORE

**Goal 3** involves promoting natural regeneration of indigenous plant species and revegetation with useful habitat plants to enhance the diversity of habitats available to local wildlife on both public and private land.

#### Goal 5 KNOWLEDGE

**Goal 5** is about encouraging everyone to find out what vegetation and habitats occur on your land, and then learning how to care for it.

#### Goal 6 STEWARDSHIP

**Goal 6** aims to encourage all residents to take ownership and pride in our environment.

#### Goal 7 INFLUENCE

**Goal 7** recognises that residents and Council can work together as champions for the environment and pass that message onto neighbours, family and friends.

Diversity of structure: Small cracks in dead trees make excellent roosting sites for small insect-eating bats. In the higher canopy of dead or living trees larger hollows provide nesting sites for owls and the larger species of possum (for example mountain brushtails). Smaller hollows will be used by a range of birds, reptiles and mammal. Pictured is a Tawny Frogmouth.

