

Facts:

- Without active intervention we will lose what wildlife is left within the next 15 to 20 years.
- Wildlife trapped in isolated islands of bushland will die off due to loss of genetic diversity, the genes essential for species survival.
- Numbers of terrestrial animals and ground foraging birds have declined sharply due to loss of essential understory vegetation.
- We must quickly restore understories. Even Bracken is an important understory component, essential for small terrestrial nesting birds. It can be grassland or heathland depending on the Ecological Vegetation Class (EVC) of the area. Understory provides the best food and shelter for small terrestrial animals and the bigger old growth trees rely on the understory as well.
- Foxes and cats are pillaging our fauna in our remaining bushland reserves. They have taken over the niche of Quolls, Antichinus, Dunnarts, and Dingoes.
- Many bushland remnants are too small to support self-sustaining populations of a number of species without linked, continuous, continuous wildlife corridors. An effective habitat network needs to be established to facilitate the movement of wildlife through the landscape.
- Kangaroos are integral to the ecological health of Australia. The soft padded feet and long tail of the kangaroo are integral to the ecological health of the land as regenerators of native grasses. Kangaroos have been living harmoniously and in balance with their environment for millions of years. They are perfectly adapted for their natural habitat. Any seedling that falls into the long-tapering footprint of the kangaroo is buried into the hole left by the toenail. Covered and with moisture concentrated at one point, the germinated seedling has a chance of survival. Their tail drags along behind them while they are grazing, pressing the ground, rolling seeds into the earth. Kangaroos play an undeniable part in biological diversity and ecological integrity. Their urine and faeces is a natural fertilizer essential to the health of the bush.

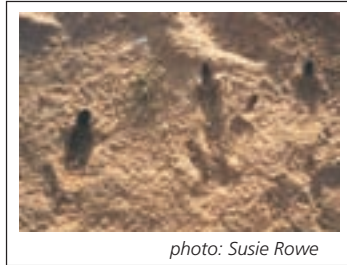


photo: Susie Rowe



Eastern Grey Kangaroo with joey
photo: David B. Croft

Authorised by:

Australian Wildlife Protection Council Inc,
Coalition for Wildlife Corridors, ecologists Malcolm Legg (who carried out all the survey work), Glenn Ehmke & Hans Brunner.

With thanks to the Mornington Peninsula Shire, DSE, Parks Victoria and all the private land owners who were involved in the 85 fauna surveys.

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publication design: moocreative



Australian Wildlife Protection Council
A voice for wildlife

PROPOSAL TO LINK WILDLIFE CORRIDORS, SAVE WHAT IS LEFT OF NATIVE FAUNA ON THE MORNINGTON PENINSULA AND CREATE DEVILBEND NATIONAL PARK



Fauna surveys conducted over the last ten years, have highlighted a major decline in the distribution and abundance of native animals on the Mornington Peninsula. Of 85 bushland reserves and private land bush blocks surveyed, only 5 species of native terrestrial or arboreal mammals were present in more than half of the sites surveyed.

Indicator species such as the Eastern Grey Kangaroo and the Agile Antichinus have seriously declined in numbers over the Mornington Peninsula to a threatened status. Out of 85 sites surveyed 70 had no Eastern Grey Kangaroos and in the remaining 15 they were extremely rare...as were other remaining species that once flourished in the region!! The once common Agile Antechinus, was only found in just over 35 bushland areas and has disappeared from the Port Phillip Bay side, and is now only found on the Westernport catchment or where significant bushland still exists. The Southern Brown Bandicoot and Long-nosed Bandicoot were found in less than 4 bushland reserves. They are now critically endangered.

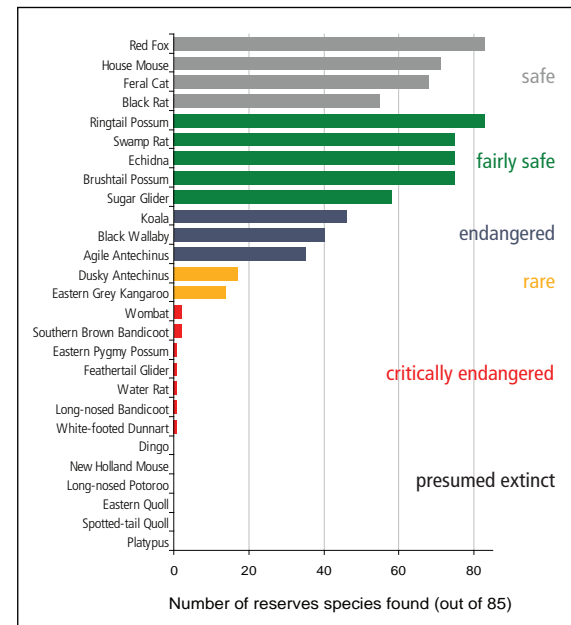
In order to secure the future of small, isolated populations of wildlife now in serious decline, key habitat areas will need to be effectively linked so re-colonisation and genetic exchange between populations can take place. Large bushland areas of wildlife corridors, minimum 100 metres in width are urgently needed to link habitat between Devilbend Reservoir and Westernport Bay, from Devilbend to Arthur's Seat to Peninsula Gardens & Greens Bush (Mornington Peninsula National Park) to Tootgarook Swamp.

We can only achieve this by involving private landowners, such as those within the highlighted area (in red) overpage on the map, to kindly donate a sufficient area (minimum 100 mtr strip is required) of their land as a wildlife corridor to enable our precious native animals safe passage to link to other habitat. We call on the government

to provide subsidies and empower all custodians of the land to link remnants and large reserves in key areas of the region.

In addition there have been kangaroo proof fences erected in the area preventing safe migration of our wildlife. Several bushland lots, creek lines and drainage lines within the private land also need to be fenced off from domestic stock, weeded and revegetated.

Saving any wildlife is hopeless unless we control weeds, foxes and feral cats by an urgent deadline and deal with feral birds such as common starling and common myna from aggressively taking over the essential breeding tree hollows for our native arboreal fauna.



These areas, along with other remaining bushland areas need to be linked and small reserves below the minimum viable area threshold bolstered to create sustainable landscapes of habitat patches and corridors.



The Dusky Antechinus
photo: Malcolm legg



The native White-footed Dunnart
photo: Malcolm legg

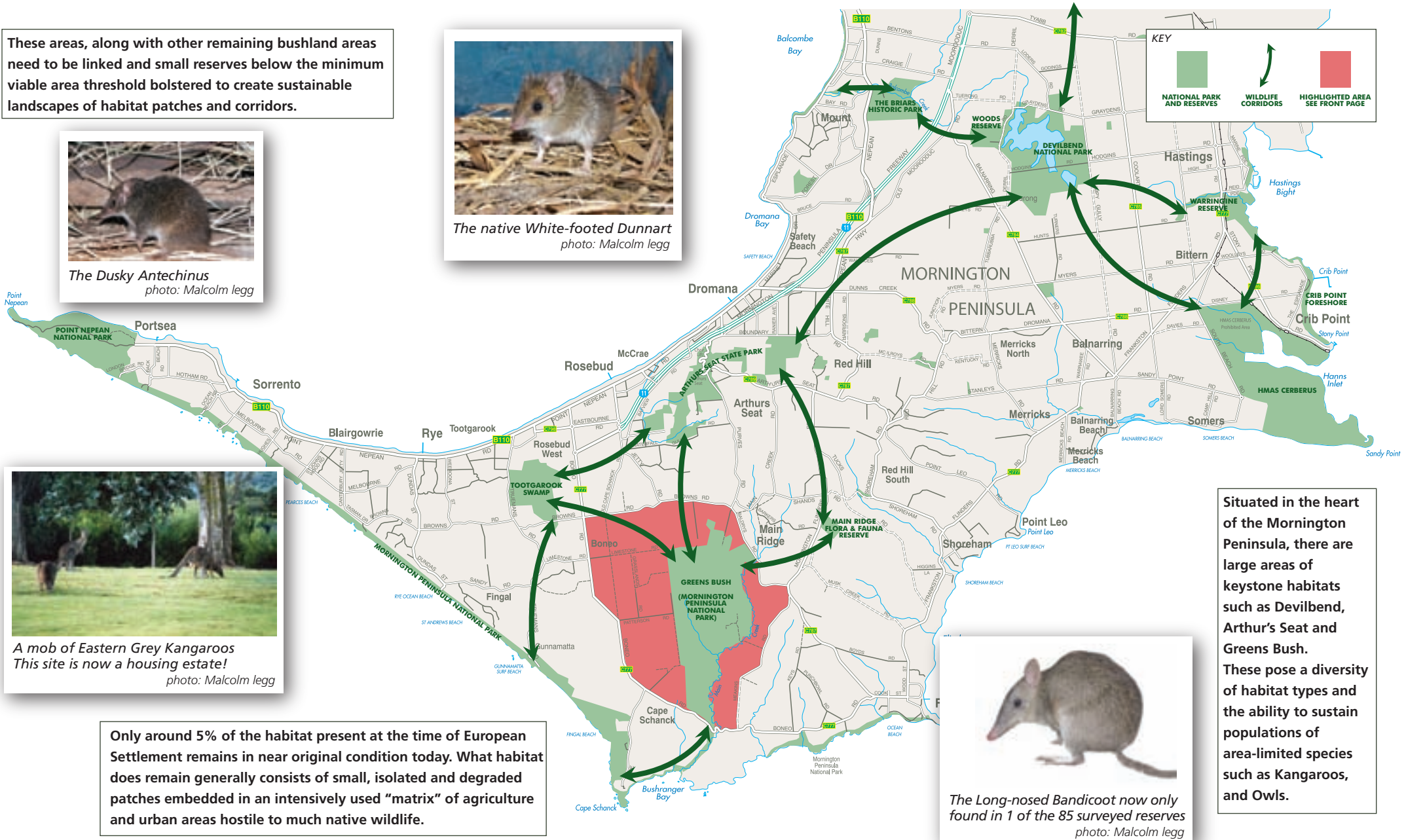


A mob of Eastern Grey Kangaroos
This site is now a housing estate!
photo: Malcolm legg

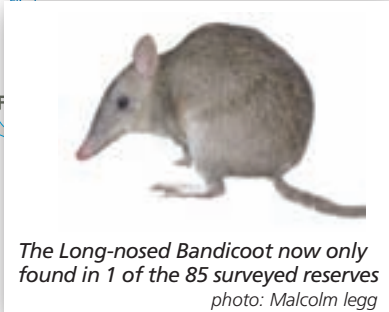
Only around 5% of the habitat present at the time of European Settlement remains in near original condition today. What habitat does remain generally consists of small, isolated and degraded patches embedded in an intensively used "matrix" of agriculture and urban areas hostile to much native wildlife.

Conservation concern for the future of wildlife on the Mornington Peninsula

When habitat is lost from a landscape/region, the number of species decline and local extinctions result. Extinction however, is a process, not an event, and the time scale over which species loss occurs is highly variable and species-specific. Therefore, despite the fact that major changes may have occurred in the past, the effects of those changes are in many cases yet to be fully manifested. This "time lag" between landscape change and species loss is termed "species relaxation" or "extinction debt". A number of studies both overseas and in Australia where landscape modification is very recent (~200 years) have identified extinction debt as a significant concern for biodiversity conservation in highly modified landscapes. Even in the absence of further direct loss and fragmentation of habitat, degradation of habitats will continue as weed invasions, dieback, edge effects and other processes impact isolated remnants, and isolated populations will continue to suffer the effects of genetic drift, inbreeding and susceptibility to chance events. Thus, the local populations of some species may be expected to decline to extinction over time. This is reflected in the large number of threatened and declining species in the region today.



Situated in the heart of the Mornington Peninsula, there are large areas of keystone habitats such as Devilbend, Arthur's Seat and Greens Bush. These pose a diversity of habitat types and the ability to sustain populations of area-limited species such as Kangaroos, and Owls.



The Long-nosed Bandicoot now only found in 1 of the 85 surveyed reserves
photo: Malcolm legg