

Victoria's Biodiversity

Victoria has a diverse range of environments for plants and animals to live in. This includes environments such as mallee forest, grasslands, rainforests, heathland, woodlands, wetlands, estuaries and coastline environments.

As a result, Victoria is home to an amazing variety of plants and animals including 3,140 native species of vascular plants (plants that have an internal water and food transport system, like ferns, flowering plants, trees and mosses), 900 lichens, 750 mosses and liverworts, 111 mammals, 477 birds, 46 freshwater and 600 marine fish, 133 reptiles, 33 amphibians and an enormous number of invertebrates, fungi and algae.

This diverse range of environments and species, and the genetic variety they contain is known as biodiversity.

Biodiversity is our scientific, cultural, environmental and spiritual inheritance and its health is crucial to our economic and social wellbeing. It is important we all work together to conserve our environmental biodiversity and ensure its health for future generations.

Challenges for Victoria's biodiversity

Rapidly expanding urban development together with land clearance for agriculture and forestry has resulted in huge and often harmful changes to our environment.

Issues such as salinity (too much salt in the soil), soil acidity, weeds, the loss of native vegetation, feral animals and pollution of waterways are contributing to the loss of Victoria's biodiversity as well as costing the community billions of dollars.

Protecting our biodiversity

Parks Victoria manages a large network of public land including parks, rivers, bays and other reserves. It also shares conservation responsibilities with other public and private land managers. Parks Victoria's protected



land estate covers approximately 17 percent of Victoria. These protected areas provide a great opportunity to study our biodiversity and the importance of protecting it.

Parks Victoria is guided by several laws, including the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988, which has been introduced to protect native species and entire communities and to ensure plants and animals that are not native to Victoria are controlled.

In 1997 Victoria's Biodiversity Strategy was developed, providing a structure to help ensure the objectives of the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 are met. This has involved classifying bioregions, undertaking research into native wildlife and their needs as well as concentrating on particular habitats, major threatening processes and environments that need urgent attention.

What are Bioregions?

Bioregions are large, geographically distinct areas of land that have similar characteristics such as geology, landform patterns, climate, ecological features and plant and animal communities.

For further information

Parks Victoria
Information Centre

Call 13 1963

or visit the
Ranger Roo website

www.rangerroo.com.au

The Junior Ranger Way

Know before you go, respect
parks and wildlife and leave no
trace along your way, that's the
Junior Ranger Way!

Victoria is divided into 28 bioregions.

Each bioregion provides habitats in which different plant and animal species survive alongside people. This relationship gives a well-managed bioregion the flexibility to adapt to natural evolution and human induced activity.

Within each bioregion we all share a responsibility to ensure habitats and ecosystems are protected and that human activity is conducted in a sustainable way.

Native Vegetation

Native vegetation is an important part of each bioregion. Native vegetation includes trees, herbs and grasses that have grown naturally in Victoria before European arrival.

Native vegetation is divided or classified into three separate layers: over storey (plants greater than five metres tall); under storey (plants between five metres and 0.5metres) and the herb layer (non-woody plants less than 0.5m high).

The greatest diversity of plant systems is usually found in the under storey and herb levels of an ecosystem. These plants are important because they provide food and shelter for many animals and create suitable conditions for larger plants to grow. Unfortunately these layers are often most easily damaged and the hardest to re-establish.

The actions we take today will greatly influence the quality of life for future generations. The Biodiversity Strategy encourages Victorians to better understand and appreciate our rich and diverse flora and fauna and ecosystems, and to take an active part in their conservation and management for future generations.

Visiting one of Victoria's many parks is a great way to appreciate a wide range of bioregions and the unique biodiversity of each area. Individuals, community groups, industry, and government agencies all have a vital role to play in protecting our environment into the future.

Want to Know More?

<http://www.dse.vic.gov.au> (search for biodiversity.)