



Fauna

Western Victoria's fauna includes a variety of threatened species that rely on a range of natural features in the region as habitat. We have been conducting field surveys since 2021 to help us identify and protect important fauna during the planning and design of the proposed Western Renewables Link.

Why are we conducting fauna field surveys?

Field surveys and investigations help ecologists to identify and confirm the types and numbers of fauna in the area and protect important fauna through the planning and design of the proposed Western Renewables Link.

The Biodiversity Impact Assessment, one of 20 technical reports being prepared for the Western Renewables Link Environment Effects Statement (EES), will provide detailed information about fauna in the project area including those listed as threatened and measures to avoid, mitigate or manage potential impacts on fauna.



Golden Sun Moth

The Golden Sun Moth is listed as vulnerable under federal legislation. It is a medium-sized moth that spends much of its life cycle as larvae underground and emerges to breed in the summer months. The primary threat to the Golden Sun Moth is loss of suitable grassland habitat.

The species was recorded in several areas of habitat in the western portion of the proposed route, in areas that have not been subject to agricultural activities such as soil disturbance and fertiliser application. Golden Sun Moth habitat was more limited in the eastern portion of the proposed route as the landscape has been subject to more intensive agricultural development, with cropping and pasture improvement more prevalent throughout that portion of the project area.

Delivered by

AusNet

Growing Grass Frog

The Growing Grass Frog is a large predatory amphibian that is listed as vulnerable under federal legislation. The species was once common in waterways across central Victoria but has had a dramatic decline in numbers due to modifications to waterways (loss of streamside and in-stream vegetation), water quality decline and the introduction of exotic, predatory fish species. The highly mobile species is reliant on slow-moving water, with dense aquatic vegetation in and around the area. The species also hunts in areas of adjoining grassland, feeding on a range of invertebrate species. Growing Grass Frogs also use adjoining areas with fallen timber and rocks for temporary hibernation in winter. While the species has not been recorded in the study area during targeted surveys for the Western Renewables Link EES, it is known to rely on some of the waterways in the vicinity. As a result, we have assumed that Growing Grass Frogs are present in mapped or expected habitat areas.



What area is being assessed?



The study area for fauna includes 10km around the land identified for use during construction and operation of the proposed project, covering an area of about 500,000 hectares.

Victoria's *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* defines fauna as: "any animal-life which is indigenous to Victoria whether vertebrate or invertebrate and in any stage of biological development and includes fish and any other living thing generally classified as fauna but does not include humans".

How are the field surveys and investigations being conducted?

An initial desktop assessment was undertaken for the wider study area to identify species likely to require further assessment. This includes species listed as threatened under Victorian or federal legislation.

After developing a list of relevant threatened species for the project and reviewing the 'likelihood of occurrence' of each species including considering habitat assessments, targeted and general field surveys have been undertaken in areas of identified habitat.

In the limited areas where we have been unable to conduct fieldwork, we have used high-resolution aerial imagery to consider potential biodiversity values.

Community members also provided about 250 pieces of feedback (social pinpoint data) about flora and fauna features of importance to them in and around the project area. This information has been investigated by ecologists and has helped them identify important flora and fauna.

- ✓ INITIAL DESKTOP ASSESSMENT
- ✓ FIELD SURVEYS
- ✓ HIGH-RESOLUTION AERIAL IMAGERY
- ✓ 250+ PIECES OF COMMUNITY FEEDBACK ON FLORA AND FAUNA

How is the information being used?

Field surveys and investigations are required to confirm the existing conditions and environmental sensitivities of the land and assess the potential impacts of the project. The findings of field surveys are helping us to identify the proposed route with the least overall impact and to identify indicative tower sites and access track locations in consultation with landholders.

What is fauna?

Fauna includes all forms of animal life in a particular region.



What field surveys have been conducted so far?

In addition to general fauna surveys in suitable habitat, we have completed targeted surveys for specific threatened fauna species in accordance with the relevant Commonwealth and State survey guidelines. To date, we have completed targeted surveys for the following threatened fauna species:



Tree hollow surveys for hollow-dependent predatory birds: Barking Owl, Masked Owl, Powerful Owl.



Remote, motion detection, infrared camera survey for mammals: Brush-tailed Phascogale, Dunnart, Southern Brown Bandicoot, Southern Greater Glider, Spot-tailed Quoll.



Surrogate habitat surveys: Striped Legless Lizard and Tussock Skink.



Call playback spotlighting for amphibians: Brown Toadlet, Growling Grass Frog and the predatory birds mentioned above.



Remote audio recorders for bat species and a variety of bird and amphibian species, as well as general fauna presence.



Targeted observations undertaken for threatened invertebrates: Golden Sun Moth and the threatened mammal: Grey-headed Flying-fox.



We have assumed that species with localised habitat requirements are present in mapped or expected habitat areas identified through the desktop or preliminary assessments, where surveys have not progressed to date.

What have we found?



720

Number of fauna species within 10 kilometres of the proposed route according to the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas



32

Number of federally listed threatened fauna species within 10 kilometres of the proposed route according to the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas

Brush-tailed Phascogale

The Brush-tailed Phascogale, or Tuan, is a small, arboreal, carnivorous marsupial that is listed as vulnerable under the *Victorian Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*. The species can have large home ranges and their diet primarily consists of invertebrates as well as eucalypt nectar. A key threat to the species is the loss of large old trees and their associated hollows from the landscape. Brush-tailed Phascogales are also at risk from predation from introduced predators such as foxes and cats, particularly when lack of hollows forces them to nest closer to the ground.





In addition to the remote camera survey undertaken, there are recent records for the species in bushland areas in proximity to the proposed route throughout its length.



More information

You can find the latest information about the project and biodiversity impacts on the project website's **Resources** page, and the latest project information on the project website's **News & Events** page.


Western Renewables Link

 westernrenewableslink.com.au
 1800 WRL WRL (975 975)
 info@westernrenewableslink.com.au
 PO Box 638, Ballarat VIC 3353

Information straight to your inbox




Sign up for information straight to your inbox at the Project website westernrenewableslink.com.au.

Need an interpreter?

 If English is not your first language or you need an interpreter, please call 13 14 50.

Complaints

If you have a query, a compliment or a complaint, you can let us know by using the online enquiry form on westernrenewableslink.com.au. Or you can let us know by:

 1800 WRL WRL (975 975)
 info@westernrenewableslink.com.au
 PO Box 638, Ballarat VIC 3353

Feedback

You can provide feedback on this document via our website westernrenewableslink.com.au or by calling 1800 WRL WRL (975 975) or by emailing info@westernrenewableslink.com.au

Delivered by

AusNet