



Monaro grassland earless dragon

Use this handy guide and learn how to spot a dragon on your land

The Monaro grassland earless dragon (*Tympanocryptis osbornei*) is a small lizard up to 16 cm in length, including its tail, and weighing 1–9 grams.

It has 3 thin white lines running along its back, dividing an irregular pattern of light and dark brown or reddish cross-bands. It has no external ear openings. Like other 'dragons' it has rough spiny body scales and a raised stance.

Where does the dragon naturally occur?

The Monaro grassland earless dragon lives in natural grasslands in the Monaro district.

It thrives in paddocks with open space between grass tussocks and rock cover for basking.

It mainly occurs on freehold pastoral land as well as travelling stock reserves, primarily, but not always, on basalt soils.

The Monaro grassland earless dragon has been described as a 'goldilocks species', preferring some grass cover but not too much.

The patchy pattern on the dragon's back makes for amazing camouflage in grassland habitat. It's the only dragon in the region found in grasslands, so if you see a lizard there it's probably a Monaro grassland earless dragon.

Department of Planning and Environment

In partnership with
Landcare, Local Land Services, Upper Snowy Landcare Network





Get in touch

We would love to hear from you if you think you have the Monaro grassland earless dragon or its habitat on your property.

Awareness and management of your land can help with the dragon's survival. Grants and property assessments are available to help protect and manage habitat.

If you would like more information please email: monaro.dragon@environment.nsw.gov.au

Is there support to look after dragon habitat?

The NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust offers a range of options for landholders interested in conserving and managing biodiversity on private land.

Grants to protect and manage native vegetation on private land may be available through organisations such as South East Local Land Services and Landcare groups.

Saving our Species can provide advice on how to manage grasslands so you can share your land with the dragon.

Why are populations declining in the wild?

Much of what was natural grassland in the region has been modified through the spread of weeds, intensive grazing, ploughing, pasture modification and fertiliser application. This has led to the loss of species diversity in many grasslands in south-eastern Australia.

How you can help

- Retain areas of native pasture and increase their extent, condition and connectedness.
- Manage stocking rates and timing to maintain grassland and habitat conditions.
- Try and leave rocks in the paddocks.
- Avoid driving in natural grassland habitat.
- Manage weeds.
- Avoid activities that disturb the dragons during their November to March breeding season.

Dragon facts

- The Monaro grassland earless dragon is unique, found nowhere else in the world.
- It withstands cold by sleeping beneath rocks, in the burrows of wolf spiders and within cracks in the soil. Compared to similar dragons, it has a thicker neck fold to protect itself from bitter Monaro winters.
- It is a 'sit and wait' predator that feeds on grassland insects like ants and beetles.
- It has a short lifespan, living around 12 months but sometimes longer, and breeding only once.
- It lays its clutch of eggs in the surface layer of soil, making it sensitive to overgrazing, ploughing, drought conditions and weeds which alter its habitat.
- Well-developed tussocks of native grasses provide important shelter from predators and overnight shelter in summer.

Cover photo: Monaro grassland earless dragon. Tim McGrath; Page 2: Monaro grassland earless dragon. Lachlan Hall/DPE.

Published by: Environment and Heritage, Department of Planning and Environment, Locked Bag 5022, Parramatta NSW 2124. Phone: 1300 361 967 (environment and national parks enquiries); Email: info@environment.nsw.gov.au; Website: www.environment.nsw.gov.au.

ISBN: 978-1-923076-93-8; EHG 2023/0308