

# Action statement

*Flora & Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*

## Heath Skink (*Liopholis multiscutata*)

Taxon ID: 12420

Action statements are developed under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* (FFG Act). Their preparation and implementation complement the FFG Act strategy *Protecting Victoria's Environment – Biodiversity 2037* and its vision that “Victoria’s biodiversity is healthy, valued and actively cared for”.

### Species and Distribution



Heath Skink. Image from Atlas of Living Australia.



This habitat distribution model displays the indicative range of the Heath Skink based on occurrence records and likely habitat. See [NatureKit](#) for an interactive map.

### Conservation Status

**Critically endangered**

**Listing criteria:** 3.1.3(b)(i) of the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Regulations 2020.

This means that:

- The total number of Heath Skink mature individuals is very low, the number is likely to continue to decline; and each subpopulation is extremely small.

**Corresponding International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) criteria:** C2a(i).

More information on IUCN listing criteria can be found here: [IUCN Red List criteria](#).

### Species Information

Species information such as its description, distribution, ecology and references are provided in the [Heath Skink Species Forecast Report](#).

## Threats

Threats listed below have been identified through expert consultation, published literature and spatial analysis.

Threat	Description
<b>Fire</b>	
Bushfire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bushfire in 2014 eliminated one population of the Heath Skink and substantially reduced another at Red Bluff Flora and Fauna Reserve.</li> <li>Fire can result in habitat degradation, mortality, reduced availability of food sources, and increased predation risks.</li> </ul>
Fire management activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fire management operations such as creation of fuel breaks (soil disturbance, slashing) may remove habitat, cause mortality of individuals, and reduce regeneration.</li> </ul>
<b>Introduced species</b>	
Introduced plants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduced plants change the structure and composition of native habitats, resulting in changes to habitat extent and/or condition. The invasion of transformer weeds, particularly Buffel Grass (<i>Cenchrus ciliaris</i>), is a threat to the Heath Skink.</li> </ul>
Introduced predators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Predation by foxes (<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>) and possibly feral cats (<i>Felis catus</i>) contributes to mortality of the Heath Skink.</li> </ul>
<b>Human disturbance</b>	
Recreational activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recreational activities such as 4WD and other vehicles on large sand-dunes that the species occupies, may damage habitat and alter the behaviour of the Heath Skink, potentially impacting recruitment and mortality rates, and/or persistence at these sites.</li> </ul>
<b>Population dynamics</b>	
Loss of genetic diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Small, greatly reduced, and/or isolated populations are at increased risk of loss of genetic diversity, which leads to a heightened risk of reduced recruitment and/or increased mortality rates.</li> </ul>
Small population size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Small populations have lower resilience to the risk of stochastic events, and increased risk of genetic decline.</li> </ul>

## Conservation Objectives

Conservation objectives are informed by the conservation status and criteria under which the species was listed under the FFG Act. This provides a framework to understand how we can work towards recovery and improve the species' conservation status over time as per the objectives of the FFG Act.

The key objectives of this action statement are:

- Mitigate threats to populations and habitat to increase resilience, improve genetic fitness and minimise future population decline.
- Maintain the Heath Skink's range and/or extent, by providing opportunities for natural movement.
- Increase the wild population size to at least 250 mature individuals.
- Increase knowledge of biology, ecology, distribution, demography, emerging threats, and conservation requirements.

- Support community participation and improve awareness of the Heath Skink and conservation of its habitat.

## Conservation Actions

The actions below have been identified through expert consultation, published literature and spatial analysis. Actions are listed in alphabetical order to allow all interested parties to prioritise based on their context, capacity and capability. Landscape scale actions may mitigate threats for other species. For more information on where to undertake actions that benefit multiple species and identify the most beneficial locations to undertake actions for this species, please refer to [NatureKit](#).

Action	Description
Avoid and/or mitigate impacts associated with fire management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that species distribution data and ecological information is available and considered in fire management activities.</li> <li>• Undertake biodiversity values check prior to fuel management in areas of the species habitat, to confirm treatment suitability and timing.</li> </ul>
Control introduced plants*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement and maintain effective control of introduced plants in priority areas and undertake revegetation with appropriate native species. Control the spread of Buffel Grass where necessary and prevent it from establishing in conservation reserves.</li> </ul>
Control introduced predators*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement and maintain effective control of feral cats and foxes in priority areas.</li> </ul>
Manage public access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heath Skinks would benefit from measures to protect large dunes and desert heathland habitats from vehicle and motorbike disturbance.</li> <li>• Manage public access to limit the risks of human disturbance.</li> </ul>
Manage road and track works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect habitat from disturbances caused by track construction and maintenance.</li> </ul>
Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve understanding of the Heath Skinks' movements and/or dispersal and habitat requirements.</li> <li>• Improve understanding of population dynamics (e.g., sex ratios, recruitment, causes of mortality) to inform management priorities.</li> <li>• Increase understanding of genetic risks and management options.</li> <li>• Identify habitat refuges and investigate a suitable fire regime that meets the Heath Skinks' ecological requirements and promotes its recovery.</li> <li>• Investigate the impacts of known threats and potential management actions.</li> </ul>
Survey and monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake targeted field surveys to confirm the extent of all known populations and seek to discover previously undetected populations based on predicted habitat and ecological information.</li> </ul>

\*Indicates landscape-scale actions that may deliver benefits to multiple species

## Past Actions

The key conservation management actions listed below have been delivered in the past 10 years.

Past action	Description
Avoid and/or mitigate impacts associated with fire management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impacts associated with fire management activities have been managed through a values checking and risk mitigation process for planned burning and roading activities.</li> </ul>
Control introduced predators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Predator control via fencing of one site and fox baiting within the fenced area at the time of fence establishment.</li> </ul>
Manage public access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A vehicular track was diverted around one of the large sand-dunes occupied by the species in Big Desert, and some obstructions to vehicles were put in place on the same dune. These measures have allowed the species to return to areas which had been damaged by vehicles, and likely increase in abundance on this dune.</li> </ul>
Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completion of a study analysing and assessing monitoring data to evaluate the trajectory of the population status.</li> </ul>
Survey and monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing work to map the distribution of Heath Skink colonies and monitor active burrows and warrens.</li> </ul>

## Decision Support Tools

Decision making for conservation actions is supported through the following Victorian Government tools which may be of assistance in choosing the most appropriate or beneficial actions for biodiversity:

- [Choosing actions for nature: NatureKit](#)
- [Biodiversity Knowledge Framework](#)

## Further Information

- [Heath Skink Species Forecast Report](#)
- [Threatened Species Assessment report – Heath Skink \(\*Liopholis multiscutata\*\)](#)
- [Commonwealth Species Profile and Threats database](#)
- [Victoria's changing climate – understanding the impacts of climate change in Victoria](#)
- [Commonwealth Threat Abatement Plans](#)
- [Genetic Risk Index](#)
- [Flora and Fauna Guarantee Regulations 2020](#)
- [IUCN Red List criteria descriptions](#)

## Get Involved and Take Action

If you are interested in supporting this species' recovery, there are some important things you need to consider.

The Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) is committed to engaging and partnering with Traditional Owners on how they wish to be involved in the planning and implementation of actions for this species. Steps must be taken to avoid harm and where appropriate ensure actions can deliver cultural benefits.

You can find advice about required approvals, land manager and/or owner permissions, options and incentives for private land conservation, and engagement with Traditional Owners and public land managers here: [Action statements \(environment.vic.gov.au\)](#)

To identify the relevant Traditional Owners, use the [Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Register and Information System \(ACHRIS\) Welcome to Country and Acknowledgements Map](#).

You can also register your interest in taking action so we can connect you to other people or organisations working to help us secure the future for this species at [threatened.species@deeca.vic.gov.au](mailto:threatened.species@deeca.vic.gov.au)

## Reporting Actions

Activity data is critical to monitoring the implementation and progress of actions and evaluating action statements. These data are also used to:

- Determine progress towards achieving the contributing targets for [Protecting Victoria's Environment – Biodiversity 2037](#).
- Inform the five-yearly State of the Environment Report.

For guidance on reporting actions undertaken on this species, refer to [Activity Data](#).

## Submitting Monitoring Data

The Victorian Biodiversity Atlas (VBA) provides a foundational dataset showing where biodiversity occurs across the Victorian landscape and how it may have changed over time. As a core input for decision support tools that inform conservation action, public land management, research activities and reporting, we encourage all participants in the delivery of on-ground actions to submit species records and observations, including for introduced plants and animals, as they carry out their projects.

For further information see: [Victorian Biodiversity Atlas \(environment.vic.gov.au\)](http://environment.vic.gov.au)

Sign up and begin submitting your data today at: <https://vba.biodiversity.vic.gov.au/>

### Acknowledgment

We acknowledge and respect Victorian Traditional Owners as the original custodians of Victoria's land and waters, their unique ability to care for Country and deep spiritual connection to it. We honour Elders past and present whose knowledge and wisdom has ensured the continuation of culture and traditional practices.

We are committed to genuinely partner, and meaningfully engage, with Victoria's Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities to support the protection of Country, the maintenance of spiritual and cultural practices and their broader aspirations in the 21st century and beyond.



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