

Benefiting the biodiversity  
of East Gippsland  
through fox control

# Southern Ark project



Long-nosed Potoroo cover photograph © Ian McCaan



Fox illustration © Karina Hansen McInnes

## Further information on *Southern Ark*

Obtain further information by:

- Visiting the website: [www.dse.vic.gov.au/southernark](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/southernark)
- Contacting the Department of Sustainability and Environment's Customer Service Centre by telephone on 136 186
- Emailing queries to: [southern.ark@dse.vic.gov.au](mailto:southern.ark@dse.vic.gov.au)

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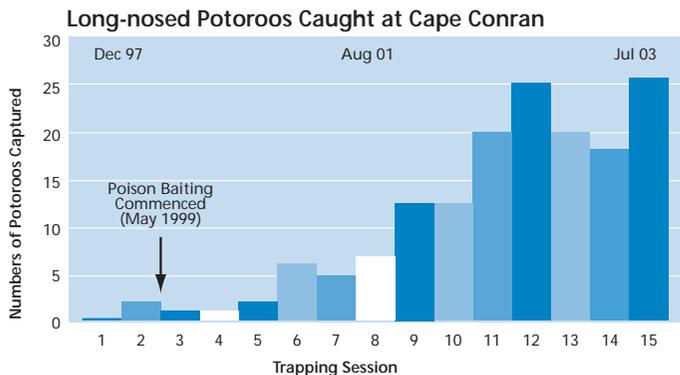
*Southern Ark signage throughout the baiting area is a reminder that poisoned baits have been laid, which could be a danger to domestic pets.*



## Previous research: 'Project Deliverance'

*Southern Ark* builds on the demonstrated success of a research project called Project Deliverance, which commenced in July 1998 and concluded in July 2003. Project Deliverance was a large-scale, field-based research project investigating the response of medium-sized mammals, such as potoroos, bandicoots and possums, to effective fox control.

The research was carried out across three sites in Far East Gippsland, each ranging in size from 7,000 - 14,000 hectares. At each site, Fox-off® baits were buried along track networks and the activity of foxes and abundance of medium-sized native animals was monitored. The following chart shows the dramatic increase in Potoroo numbers over several years.



# Southern Ark project

Benefiting the biodiversity of East Gippsland through fox control

Red foxes are not native to Australia. They are a major threat to our wildlife and ecosystems.

**Southern Ark** is the first large-scale fox control project in south-eastern Australia. It builds on many years of research that confirms the positive impact that fox control has on the health of ecosystems.

**Southern Ark** aims to facilitate the recovery of native animals and improve the stewardship of public land in East Gippsland through an integrated, large scale ongoing fox control program. This will be achieved through a joint research and management approach, where management methods will be continually improved by what has been learnt from research.



Southern Brown Bandicoot  
© N.N. Birks

Red Fox © N. N. Birks

## Foxes kill wildlife

Introduced from England in the 1870s, the fox has had a devastating impact on native animals across Australia. In forested areas, where rabbits are relatively scarce, foxes prey on native animals. The fox is believed to have contributed to the extinction of at least twenty native Australian mammals. Examples in East Gippsland include the Eastern Quoll and Tasmanian Pademelon.

## An effective partnership

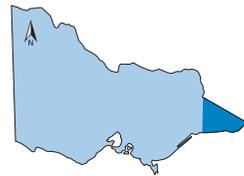
**Southern Ark** involves a partnership approach from a number of government agencies (Department of Sustainability and Environment, Department of Primary Industries, and Parks Victoria) working closely with the East Gippsland community.

## Baiting with care

**Southern Ark** uses poison Fox-off® baits to target foxes. The baits are buried deep within specially constructed bait stations, which are positioned at one-kilometre intervals along forest tracks. The bait stations are checked and rebaited regularly to ensure that the pressure on the fox population is maintained.

The potential for impact on wildlife other than foxes is extremely low and has been addressed using a host of measures that reduce the chances of non-target animals locating and consuming bait. There is a commitment to ensure that the risks to non-target species remain low through a combination of monitoring and ongoing research.

Increasing populations of wildlife in East Gippsland can significantly improve the biodiversity, and ultimately, the 'ecological health' of the forest.



Victoria's East Gippsland:  
The ongoing baiting program will be implemented across approximately one million hectares of public land.

## You Can Help!

- Ensure your dog does not wander alone within the baiting area
- Landholders in the **Southern Ark** area are encouraged to undertake complementary fox-control programs
- Report any suspicious deaths of native animals (contact details overleaf)
- Never feed foxes
- Tell your family and friends of the **Southern Ark** project

## Biodiversity benefits

**Southern Ark** aims to assist the recovery of a wide range of native wildlife including mammals, birds and reptiles.

Another benefit will be improved ecological processes that have been in decline since the arrival of the fox. Mammals play a number of important roles in the forest ecosystem. These include pollination and seed dispersal for native plants, the dispersal of fungal species important for plant growth, soil aeration and the breakdown of leaf litter through digging and raking.



The 'ecological health' of the forest depends on the harmonious relationships between the living components and their environment. Introduced foxes upset this balance.

## Social and economic benefits

**Financial:** Farmers will benefit from a reduction in fox predation on lambs and other livestock and the reduced spread of weeds and diseases carried by foxes.

**Tourism:** **Southern Ark** will lead to the establishment of East Gippsland as the largest area in south-eastern Australia where native animals can be relieved of predation pressures from foxes. This has significant tourism potential, with the growing desire amongst both Australian and international tourists to experience Australian animals in the wild.

## Sustainable forest management

Through the implementation of the **Southern Ark** project, the status of many threatened species and ecosystems can be substantially improved in State forest, which is managed for both conservation and timber production.