

Zoos Victoria's Fighting Extinction Species

GRASSLAND EARLESS DRAGON

Tympanocryptis pinguicolla

Critically Endangered



Australia's most critically endangered reptile, the last confirmed sighting of the Grassland Earless Dragon in Victoria was in 1969, with unconfirmed sightings continuing to 1990. Elusive and difficult to study, the dragons may continue to survive in Victoria in low numbers. Living in open

temperate grasslands, the Grassland Earless Dragon is threatened by habitat loss due to urban growth, changes in fire regime and introduced plant and animal species. Zoos Victoria is committed to determining the status of the Victorian population and securing a long term future for the species.

ZOOS
VICTORIA
Fighting Extinction

Zoos Victoria is committed to Fighting Extinction

We are focused on working with partners to secure the survival of our priority species before it is too late.



With the Victorian Grassland Earless Dragon being endemic to the State there is increasing concern that the species may now be extinct. A population persisting within Victoria would not only be a survival success but would assist in the long term conservation of the species.

KEY PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

- Determine the size and location of any surviving populations of Grassland Earless Dragons in Victoria.
- Raise community awareness of the Grassland Earless Dragon throughout Victoria and engage the community to assist in the search for the species.
- Assist partners to develop captive husbandry for closely related Grassland Earless Dragons in the ACT and NSW.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- Camera surveys were conducted during the summers of 2014-2016 throughout sites in Western Victoria, with more than 2 million images collected and viewed in that time. Unfortunately no images of Grassland Earless Dragons were recorded during these surveys.
- Extensive surveys across Victoria including historical and unsurveyed suitable habitat.

THE SPECIES

As their name suggests, the Grassland Earless Dragon is found in grasslands and lack external ear openings. They are typically light brown in colour, with three thin white stripes running down their body, and a number of darker bands running across the body.

Growing to a full length of 15 cm (nose to tail) they reach maturity within a few months. These dragons are capable of breeding the year they are born and studies have indicated wild dragons may only reproduce once in their lifetime.

During winter, the dragon has been reported to spend time in torpor, however if conditions are warm enough they are capable of remaining active throughout the year.

As it is difficult to develop targeted conservation actions without species distribution information, a critical step in the conservation of this species involves surveying probable locations of dragons based on suitable habitat in Victoria. Staff at Zoos Victoria will work alongside expert ecologists and local communities to foster widespread community support for and knowledge of the dragon, leading to further survey sites that may re-ignite hope of re-discovering the species in Victoria.

THE PLAN

The following critical next steps will enable Zoos Victoria, along with our partners to move forward knowing that we are doing everything we can to prevent the extinction of this species:

Conduct surveys for extant population.	\$40,000 p.a
Assist partners to develop Grassland Earless Dragon husbandry.	\$70,000
Construct breeding facilities at Melbourne Zoo.	\$70,000
Create activations at our zoos and online that aim to increase community care and knowledge of the species and generate support for the conservation projects.	\$10,000
Total cost over five years	\$350,000

How can I help?

We are currently mobilising the community and developing survey methodology to help inform future searches for the Grassland Earless Dragon in Victoria. You can support our Wildlife Conservation Master Plan 2019-2024 by donating at:
zoo.org.au/donate

PROGRAM PARTNERS

ACT Government
act.gov.au

Arthur Rylah Institute
delwp.vic.gov.au/environment-and-wildlife/arthur-rylah-institute

Corangamite Catchment Management Authority
ccma.vic.gov.au

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
delwp.vic.gov.au

Grassland Earless Dragon National Recovery Team

Melbourne Museum
museumvictoria.com.au/melbournemuseum

Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve
tidbinbilla.act.gov.au

University of Canberra
canberra.edu.au

Wildlife Profiles