

Zoos Victoria's Fighting Extinction Species

ALPINE SHE-OAK SKINK

Cyclodomorphus praealtus

Endangered



Zoos Victoria is committed to saving the Alpine She-oak Skink. Working closely with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning we are developing conservation actions for this endangered skink who's restricted and fragmented distribution has left this species increasingly vulnerable to extinction.

Zoos Victoria is working to develop husbandry techniques for Alpine She-oak Skinks while committing to a targeted focus on improving knowledge of wild populations. Our strategy is this species only contingency plan should a wild population come under immediate risk of extinction.

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.



The mountain habitats of the Alpine She-oak Skink are so isolated that they are sometimes described as 'sky islands' – each mountain top is separated from the others by a 'sea' of lower-altitude habitat that is unsuitable for these little skinks. Such isolation means that any threat could devastate the population and make it difficult for any remaining skinks to survive. If there is a catastrophic disturbance to the skinks' alpine habitat, Zoos Victoria will be ready to implement a recovery program and ensure the survival of this endangered species.

KEY PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

- Better understand the extent of wild habitat and investigate the feasibility of establishing new wild populations.
- Better understand captive husbandry.
- Maintain wild populations across their current range.
- Raise community awareness of the Alpine She-oak Skink and the need to conserve alpine environments.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- Establishment of new long term monitoring grids.
- Continued annual monitoring.
- Collection of wild animals to investigate captive husbandry.

Alpine She-oak Skinks are being cared for and displayed at Healesville Sanctuary. Our reptile specialists are developing suitable husbandry and breeding techniques for this unique species as we continue to learn more about them.

THE SPECIES

When under threat, Alpine She-oak Skinks exhibit a snake-like defence behaviour. With slender bodies reaching up to 12cm in length, they tuck in their reduced limbs, rear their head up, hold out their tongue and flick the tip as a snake does. There is still much to learn about the life-history of the Alpine She-oak Skink but animals are thought mature at 2-3 years of age and live for 5 years. Adults give birth to 2-9 young in mid-late summer. The species hibernates over the winter.

Currently the major threats to Alpine She-oak Skinks are:

- Habitat destruction from Alpine development.
- Wildfire.
- Negative habitat impacts associated with introduced pests such as feral horses and deer.

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:

Wild monitoring of known populations.	\$160,000
Survey new habitat to better understand Victorian distribution of species, including on the Wellington Plains.	\$220,000
Analyse Alpine She-oak Skink genetic samples to determine feasibility of short-distance translocation for genetic rescue.	\$20,000
Analyse data to determine population trends.	\$5,000 p.a
Develop and implement a translocation/recovery strategy.	\$110,000
Activations at our zoos and online that aim to increase community care and knowledge of the skink and generate support for the conservation projects.	\$10,000
Total cost over five years	\$545,000

How can I help?

We are currently developing husbandry and breeding techniques and progressing field knowledge for this species, but we still need all the support we can get. Support our Wildlife Conservation Master Plan 2019-2024 by donating at: zoo.org.au/donate

PROGRAM PARTNERS

Arthur Rylah Institute
ari.vic.gov.au

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

Falls Creek
falls creek.com.au

Mt Hotham
mthotham.com.au