



The Royal Society of Victoria

Founded 1854

Promoting Science and Science Education

Patron

The Hon Alex Chernov AC QC, Governor of Victoria

President

Dr William D Birch AM BSc (Hons) PhD

ROYAL SOCIETY OF VICTORIA WANTS ACTION TO SAVE LEADBEATERS POSSUM

The Royal Society of Victoria is an independent, non-political body which has been promoting science and science education since 1854.

The Royal Society of Victoria is joining the calls for urgent action to save the State's faunal emblem, Leadbeater's Possum (*Gymnobelideus leadbeateri*), from extinction.

Australia has the worst record in the world for mammal extinctions, with 27 species recorded as becoming extinct since European settlement. Leadbeater's Possum was also thought to be extinct until it was rediscovered in 1961 in the Central Highlands of Victoria. It is listed as an endangered species through the State's Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act and is listed internationally on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Animals.

The Society strongly supports the establishment of a new national park that preserves the required habitat for this critically endangered animal. The possum lives in tall eucalypt forests, and to survive requires hollows in old trees. As well, we call for an end to forest practices that are steadily reducing remnant old growth forests in the Central Highlands. This species can only be saved by conservation measures in Victoria.

As Royal Society President, Dr Bill Birch AM states, "*This is an issue that goes to the heart of the Royal Society's role in advocating for a scientific approach to the preservation of biodiversity in Victoria. The Society was a key player in the establishment of the Wilsons Promontory National Park in the late 19th century*".

The Society urges the government to fast-track the release of the long-awaited report on the status and preservation of Leadbeater's Possum and to rapidly implement its recommendations. The Society also indicates its willingness to be involved in ongoing discussions over any proposed Central Highlands National Park so that all aspects of its scientific significance may be embraced.

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