

FRANKSTON LINE

Flora and fauna investigations

WHY DO A FLORA AND FAUNA INVESTIGATION?

We are committed to minimising the impact on flora and fauna, particularly sensitive species, as we design and construct the project and so we undertake this assessment to:

- Identify sensitive plants and animals
- Ensure we are complying, in each stage of the project, with federal and state environmental legislation
- Understand potential impacts that the project may have on sensitive species
- Develop measures to reduce potential impacts, such as adjusting the design, identifying construction “no-go zones” and implementing environmental management plans

HOW DO WE DO THESE INVESTIGATIONS?

The Level Crossing Removal Authority (LXRA) engaged a team of ecologists, with qualifications in Environmental Science, to carry out the flora and fauna assessment along the rail corridor between Centre Road, Bentleigh and Cranbourne Road, Frankston. The entire rail corridor was investigated to identify any other areas where related rail systems and infrastructure may need to be upgraded in the future (e.g. signalling equipment). The survey area also covered side roads, car parks and other areas immediately in the vicinity of the eight level crossing sites.

Prior to the site investigation, a desktop assessment was conducted which involved reviewing past ecological reports, database searches, aerial photographs and topographical maps.

For the site assessment, the ecologists walked 28km of the corridor, examining the area using binoculars, cameras and GPS enabled Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) tablets to spatially record and map scattered trees, remnant vegetation (patches of native trees and shrubs still remaining), and the location of significant flora and fauna species.

Species identification was largely completed in the field, however, some flora samples were taken for further examination.

We are undertaking a range of technical and non-technical investigations, including flora and fauna investigations.

Image above: Kananook Creek.
Photo courtesy of Chris White. AECOM

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Image above: Ecologists use a GPS enabled PDA tablet to map flora and fauna

WHAT SPECIES WERE IDENTIFIED?

A number of plant species representing six Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVC) were identified in the survey, including:

- Coast Banksia Woodland
- Damp Sands Herb Rich Woodland
- Heathy Woodland
- Swamp Scrub
- Coastal Dune Scrub
- Grassy Woodland

These plant species are listed as vulnerable, depleted or endangered under Victoria's Biodiversity Conservations Status (BCS).

The survey also recorded 48 animal species including 34 birds, one invertebrate, three mammals, two reptiles and eight fish species. No threatened species were identified as recognised by the Commonwealth Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC)

Act and the State Flora and Fauna Guarantee (FFG) Act. All native Victorian fauna is protected under the Wildlife Act.

Initial assessments also identified the potential for two rare animal species to occur – the Growling Grass Frog and Dwarf Galaxias Fish. In order to understand whether or not they are present, targeted investigations were undertaken for these two species in late February this year. The survey for Dwarf Galaxias Fish involved setting submerged traps (safe to the animal) in Mordialloc Creek, Patterson River and Kananook Creek. For the Growling Grass Frog, habitat assessments were undertaken along each waterway. The assessment determined that there is no evidence of the Growling Grass Frog or Dwarf Galaxias Fish, as these particular areas lack suitable habitats for these species.

MANAGING ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

To manage environmental impacts during the project, the LXRA will:

- Produce a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) to help control and minimise any ecological and environmental impacts during construction.
- Develop an offset strategy to address requirements under the Planning and Environmental Act for the removal of any native vegetation.
- Seek appropriate approvals as required, make necessary design adjustments and implement an action plan to reduce potential environmental impacts.

Images below, left to right: Kananook Creek. Coast Banksia Woodland, Courtesy of Chris White, AECOM. Chris White, Principal Ecologist at AECOM conducting the flora and fauna investigation.

