

Media Release

Ingrid Stitt MP

Minister for Early Childhood & Pre-Prep
Minister for Environment



Thursday, 7 September 2023

MICE TO MEET THEIR MATE AT WILSONS PROMONTORY

In a bid to save the endangered rodent species the Pookila, the Andrews Labor Government is backing a trial to release six females across Wilsons Promontory National Park.

Minister for Environment Ingrid Stitt announced the project had deployed the native animals in three locations within the park to attract local males and bolster population numbers in Gippsland.

The mice were raised at Melbourne Zoo and Moonlit Sanctuary as part of the *Victorian Pookila Conservation Breeding and Reintroduction Program*, which has bred more than 60 pups since 2022.

The Pookila is considered extinct in seven of 12 known Victorian locations, with surviving populations increasingly under threat from drought and predation by feral cats and foxes.

Further loss of genetic diversity to these fractured populations will also place the species at an even greater risk of extinction.

Pookila can be distinguished from the common house mouse by their bicoloured tail, large eyes, soft thick fur, and a lack of 'mousey' odour.

Through the Government's *Nature Fund*, \$690,000 has been invested to protect the Pookila species, along with support from Zoos Victoria, Moonlit Sanctuary, the Australasian Zoo and Aquarium Association and members of the National Pookila Recovery Team.

Through Biodiversity 2037 and a record investment of \$582 million since 2014, the Andrews Labor Government is investing more than ever in Victoria's biodiversity and environment.

Quote attributable to Minister for Environment Ingrid Stitt

"The release of endangered Pookila in Gippsland is just another action we are taking to secure the longevity of this precious species for years to come."

Quote attributable to Zoos Victoria CEO Dr Jenny Gray

"Zoos Victoria's wildlife conservation work is directly improving the genetic health and resilience of these remaining Pookila populations."

Quote attributable to Parks Victoria Chief Scientist of Conservation and Climate Action Dr Mark Norman

"Boosting Pookila numbers is an exciting step in delivering the Prom Sanctuary project, which aims to establish Wilsons Promontory as a climate refuge for native species that need our help."

Quote attributable to Moonlit Sanctuary Founder and Director Michael Johnson

"Moonlit Sanctuary's involvement in Pookila breeding exemplifies our commitment to safeguarding our planet's remarkable biodiversity."

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