

Temperate woodlands

1 Description

Western slopes of Great Dividing Ra., Victoria and New South Wales, south of Dubbo. Average annual rainfall ranges between 400 and 700 mm. Important vegetation types for birds are box and ironbark woodlands and wetlands. The region is one of the most heavily cleared areas in Australia. Sheep and cattle grazing are the major land uses. While there are numerous conservation reserves in the eastern part of the region, these mainly contain wetter, taller forest types. Smaller parks in the western part typically contain small rocky outcrops.

The region is distinguished by an inordinately high number of Near Threatened taxa. Many taxa are shared with the Subtropical Woodlands, though this area also has distinctly subtropical taxa. The region also shares several species with the Mt Lofty Ranges, but many of these taxa differ at the subspecies level.

2 IBRA Regions

Temperate slopes and plains (Victorian Midlands, New South Wales South West Slopes, Riverina), Temperate highlands (South East Highlands), Wet Subtropical Coasts (Sydney Basin).

3 Core taxa

Locally Extinct

Magpie Goose
Black Bittern
Squatter Pigeon (southern)

Endangered

Plains Wanderer
Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo (south-eastern)
Swift Parrot

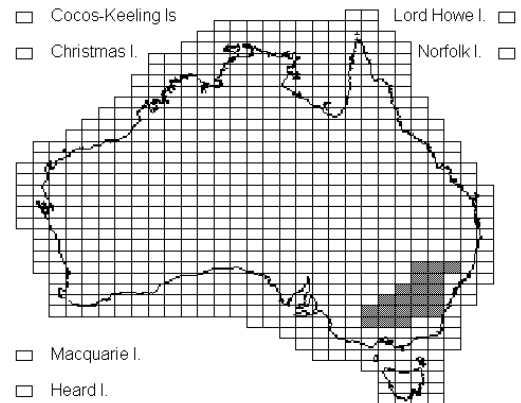
Regent Honeyeater

Vulnerable

Malleefowl
Australasian Bittern
Painted Snipe (Australian)

Near Threatened

Little Bittern (Australasian)
Grey Falcon
Australian Bustard
Bush Stone-curlew
Glossy Black-Cockatoo (eastern)
Superb Parrot
Turquoise Parrot
Barking Owl (southern)
Masked Owl (southern mainland)
White-browed Treecreeper (eastern)



Brown Treecreeper (south-eastern)

Speckled Warbler

Black-chinned Honeyeater (eastern)

Painted Honeyeater

Hooded Robin (south-eastern)

Grey-crowned Babbler (eastern)

Crested Bellbird (southern)

Diamond Firetail

4 Conservation issues

Most temperate woodland habitat has been cleared, including 85% of box-ironbark forests in Victoria and over 70% in New South Wales. Land clearance has alienated nearly all the better quality agricultural land. This is of particular consequence for the migratory Regent Honeyeater and Swift Parrot, both of which seek out large, heavily flowering eucalypts on fertile soils. Remaining woodland habitat is fragmented and continues to be degraded by removal of the larger trees for poles, posts, sleepers, sawlogs and firewood, and there is an ongoing decline in tree health. Several of the largest habitat patches are specifically gazetted for timber harvesting. Over-grazing, weed invasion, salinisation and other flow-on processes also gradually make fragments unsuitable.

Within fragments, essential habitat features that may be lost are leaf litter and sticks, and their associated invertebrates needed by Bush Stone-curlew and Grey-crowned Babbblers, hollows suitable for nesting by cockatoos, parrots, owls and treecreepers and key food plants for Beautiful Firetails. For treecreepers, and possibly babbblers and bellbirds, females dispersing from fragments to find mates are unlikely to be replaced, so many fragments are below carrying capacity.

Foxes may have exacerbated habitat loss and caused further declines in ground-dwelling taxa, such as Australian Bustard, Squatter Pigeons, Bush Stone-curlew and Turquoise Parrots. Fragmentation may also favour open-country native species like Noisy Miners

Manorina melanocephala, Pied Butcherbirds *Cracticus nigrogularis* and Pied Currawongs *Strepera graculina* which prey on smaller taxa or exclude them from their territories. Trapping of parrots and finches for the bird trade may also have exacerbated local declines.

Embedded within the woodlands are wetlands the health of which is linked to woodland management. These wetlands, many of which have been drained, degraded by overgrazing or have simply, are key habitats for bitterns and Painted Snipe.

Grasslands, essential habitat for Plains Wanderers, are also threatened by clearance for agriculture, fragmentation, degradation and, when near agricultural crops, elevated populations of foxes.

5 Recommended management

- 5.1 Protect habitat from which key taxa have been recorded regularly from clearing, monitoring compliance biennially.
- 5.2 Place all significant habitat on public land under secure conservation management, particularly those in timber reserves, transport corridors and local government land.
- 5.3 Manage at least 15% of the pre-European area of all woodland communities on public or private land for nature conservation, using incentives where necessary.
- 5.4 Undertake extension with land-holders that have suitable woodland habitat to promote sound management of remnants, encouraging greater connectivity between sub-populations.
- 5.5 Develop agreements with land-holders to maintain litter layer and fallen timber debris within wooded remnants.
- 5.6 Promote revegetation and land reclamation that recreates woodland habitat with a full complement of biodiversity.
- 5.7 Control and reduce firewood collection, promoting wood-lot development close to markets
- 5.8 Reduce grazing densities where necessary in remnant woodland and native grasslands.
- 5.9 In forests managed for timber production, maintain a buffer around nest trees used by threatened or near threatened hollow-nesting taxa.
- 5.10 Undertake long-term monitoring of core taxa.
- 5.11 Determine and rectify causes of failure of regeneration of cypress pine and casuarina woodland.
- 5.12 Maintain or establish feral predator control, where cats and/or foxes are a recognised problem.

5.13 Where appropriate, maintain a fire regime that establishes a mosaic of fire ages.

5.14 Protect, manage and rehabilitate wetlands that are important for Painted Snipe and other threatened wetland taxa.

5.15 Coordinate conservation management of threatened taxa at a regional level.

6 Organisations responsible for conservation

Environment ACT, New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service, Victorian Department of Natural Resources and Environment.

7 Other organisations involved

Birds Australia, other bird-watching societies, Environment Australia, Parks Victoria, Greening Australia, Taronga Zoo, Charles Sturt University, Latrobe University, University of New England, World Wide Fund for Nature (Australia), road transport authorities, Rural Lands Protection Boards, Trust for Nature, State Forests of New South Wales, Landcare groups, shire councils, private land-holders.

8 References

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