

Wimmera Mallee

1 Description

Mallee regions of Victoria, and south-eastern South Australia. The climate is semi-arid, with annual average rainfall varying from about 250 to 500 mm. The vegetation is predominantly mallee woodland, with heath on the deepest sands. The region contains several significant conservation reserves: Little Desert National Park, Wyperfeld National park, Murray Sunset National Park, Big Desert Wilderness and Ngarkat Conservation Park. Outside these reserves, clearance has been extensive.

The region is distinguished by a high number of mallee-dependent threatened taxa, but with some overlap with the woodland regions.

2 IBRA Regions

Temperate Slopes and Plains (Murray-Darling).

3 Core taxa

Endangered

Black-eared Miner
Western Whipbird (eastern)

Vulnerable

Malleefowl
Regent Parrot (eastern)
Mallee Emu-wren

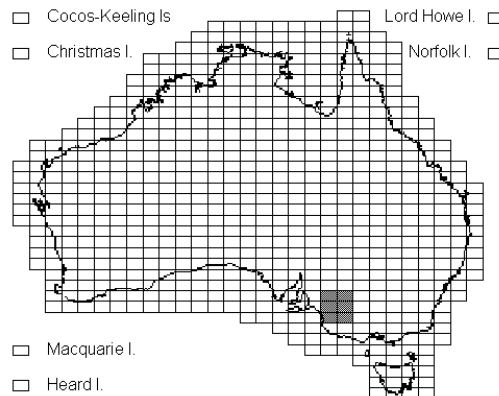
Near Threatened

Major Mitchell's Cockatoo (eastern)
White-browed Treecreeper (eastern)
Striated Grasswren (sandplain)
Slender-billed Thornbill (eastern)
Chestnut Quail-thrush (eastern)
Red-lored Whistler
Crested Bellbird (southern)

4 Conservation issues

The principal threat to mallee taxa is extensive wildfire. Many species are sensitive to fire, preferring mallee that has been unburnt for several years. Large scale fires have the potential to eliminate such species, even from large mallee blocks such as the Sunset Country or Big Desert/Ngarkat. The recent adoption of a policy of rapid fire suppression should minimise this threat.

Past clearance of mallee has caused substantial habitat loss and continuing problems associated with fragmentation. Some taxa, eg. Chestnut Quail-thrush and White-browed Treecreeper, do not persist in small fragments, while others, notably Crested Bellbird, cannot persist in even relatively large fragments. Remnant habitat tends to be suboptimal, on poor soil, degraded by grazing stock or salinisation, and is



vulnerable to fires. Fragmentation has also exposed Black-eared Miners to hybridisation with open-country Yellow-throated Miners. The fragmentation has also separated Regent Parrot feeding habitat from breeding habitat along the Murray River.

Loss of mature and dead trees along the Murray and Wimmera Rivers, as a result of logging for timber, firewood collection, ringbarking on agricultural land, salinisation and waterlogging, has reduced the area of breeding habitat available to Major Mitchell's Cockatoo and Regent Parrots, losses which are exacerbated by destructive robbing of Major Mitchell's Cockatoo nests and invasion of hollows by feral honeybees.

5 Recommended management

- 5.1 Minimise the incidence of large fires, and promote fire patchiness.
- 5.2 Prevent further clearance of mallee, and restrict clearance of potential nest trees.
- 5.3 Control and reduce firewood collection, particularly from riparian areas.
- 5.4 Support initiatives to reduce further salinisation.
- 5.5 Promote measures to minimise grain spillage along roads.
- 5.6 Undertake localised control of feral honeybees, where these are identified as significant problems.
- 5.7 Undertake long-term monitoring of core mallee species.
- 5.8 Coordinate conservation management at a regional level.

6 Organisations responsible for conservation

New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service,
South Australian Department of Environment and

Heritage, Victorian Department of Natural Resources and the Environment.

7 Other organisations involved

Birds Australia, Bird-watching societies, Museum of Victoria, Latrobe University, Adelaide Zoo, Healesville Sanctuary, Nature Conservation Society of South Australia, Friends of Wyperfeld National Park, Little Desert Lodge, Landcare groups, Greening Australia, Threatened Species Network, local government, grain-growers, fruit-growers.

8 References

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