

Plains Grassland

Threatened in the Goulburn Broken Catchment

99.5% of Plains Grasslands have been cleared. All of what remains is on private land.



Photo: Martin White

Figure 1. An example of Plains Grassland in good condition in Spring.



Photo: Debbie Colbourne

Figure 2. This is an example of Plains Grassland in good condition in late March.

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Description

Plains Grasslands occur on poorly drained heavy clay soils in areas with low annual rainfall (<400mm) on the plains, largely in the north-west of the catchment. The heavy clay soils effectively limits the establishment of trees - hence few trees are found in true grasslands.

Whilst dominated by a variety of grasses, sedges and rushes, Plains Grasslands are characterised by their rich diversity of herbs (lilies, orchids, saltbushes, native peas and daisies).

Grasslands around Echuca are typically dominated by Bristly Wallaby-grass with Spider Grass, Rigid Panic and Knotty Spear-grass. Forbs include Small Vanilla-lily, Chocolate-lily, Prickly Woodruff, Yellow Bulbine-lily, Cut-leaf Burr-daisy, Common Everlasting, Goodenias, Blue Devil, Scaly Buttons, Yam Daisy, Woolly-heads, Lamb-tails, Drumsticks, Bluebells, Berry Saltbush and Common and Slender Bluebush.

Species To Look Out For

Flora: Yellow-tongue Daisy, Bottle Bluebush, Turnip Bassia, Silky Swainson-pea and Red Swainson-pea.

Fauna: Plains Wanderer (Vc) Bush Stone-Curlew (e), Olive Legless Lizard and Plains Froglet.



Figure 3-6 . Small Vanilla-lily, Scaly Buttons, Drumstick, Bluebell.

Photos: Mary Titcumb



Figure 7. Plains-wanderer
Photo: Len Robinson c/o Viridans



Figure 8. Bush Stone-Curlew
Photo: Jim Castles



Figure 9. Olive Legless Lizard
Photo: DSE/McCann

Why Plains Grasslands are Threatened

More than 99.5% of Plains Grasslands in the Goulburn Broken Catchment have disappeared or been significantly modified since European settlement. The majority of the few remnants occur on private land. Many of the plants and animals that rely on this habitat are now also threatened, and some are extinct. Therefore, the support of private landholders is essential for the ongoing conservation of Plains Grasslands.

Current threats include, **poor timing of stock grazing and overgrazing** (causes loss of native species, hinders native plant flowering, seed set and regeneration, disturbs the soil and increases nutrient levels), **loss of ground habitat** through cultivation, pasture improvement and overgrazing, **tree planting in naturally treeless grassland areas** (introduces weeds by ripping, results in the loss of habitat, alters the structure and the trees compete with the indigenous groundlayer), **weed invasion** (threatens native plant species, the structure and viability of remnants), **increased nutrients** from fertiliser application and stock faeces and urine (favours weeds, can eliminate plants, and cause excessive exotic plant growth which can shade-out smaller species), **lack of frequent burning** (especially in stock and macropod free areas, which can otherwise become 'choked' by dominant native or exotic grasses and weeds, and can result in changes to structure and loss of species that require fire to regenerate) and **irrigation** changes the structure by eliminating native plants which require drier conditions, and can encourage species preferring wetter conditions including weeds.

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Management Tips

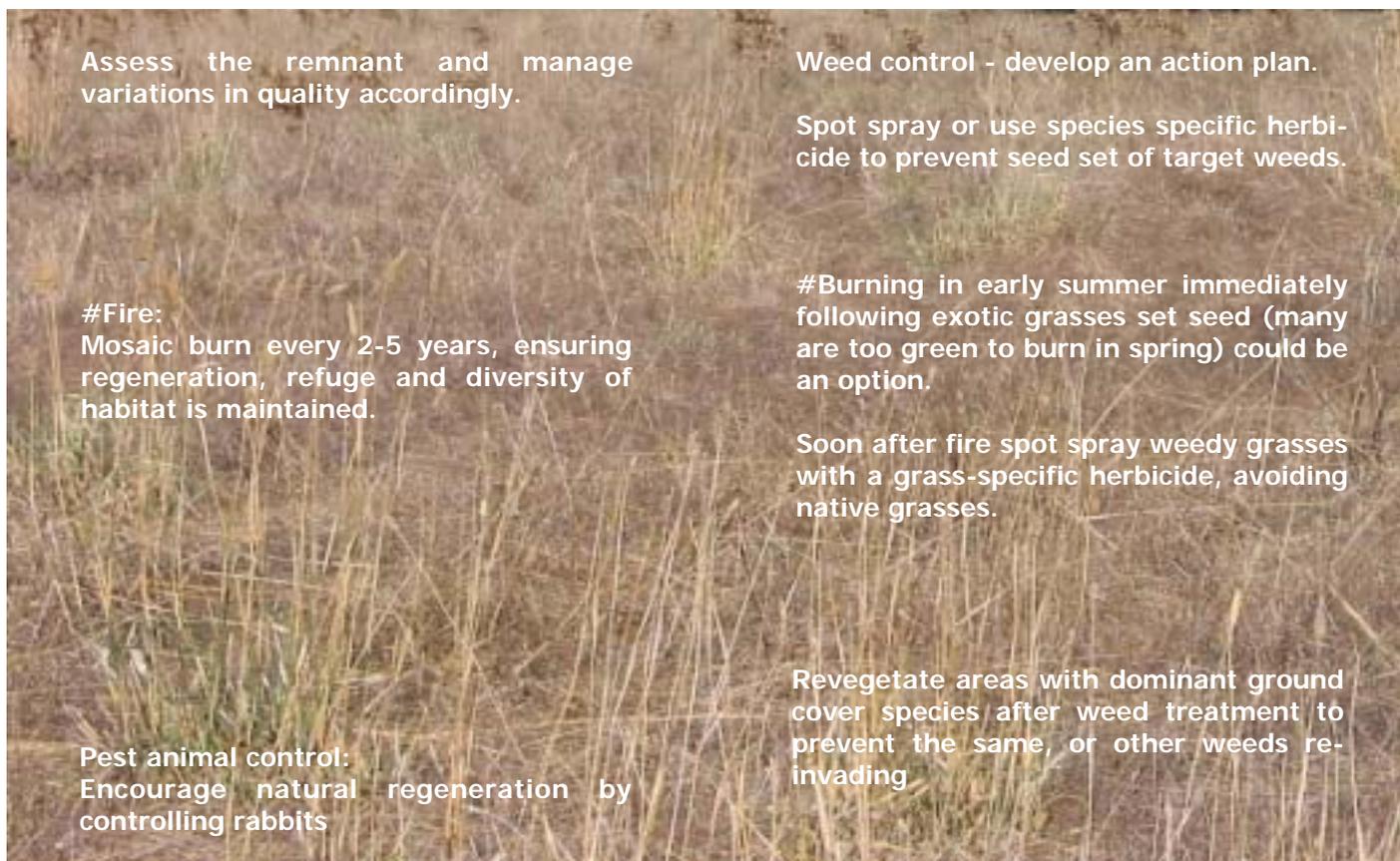


Figure 10. An example of Plains Grassland in poor condition, with Palaris and other weeds incroaching.

May require expert input in decision making and planning. See your local DSE, DPI or CMA representative for further advice.



Figure 11. An example of Plains Grassland in poor condition, with many weeds present.

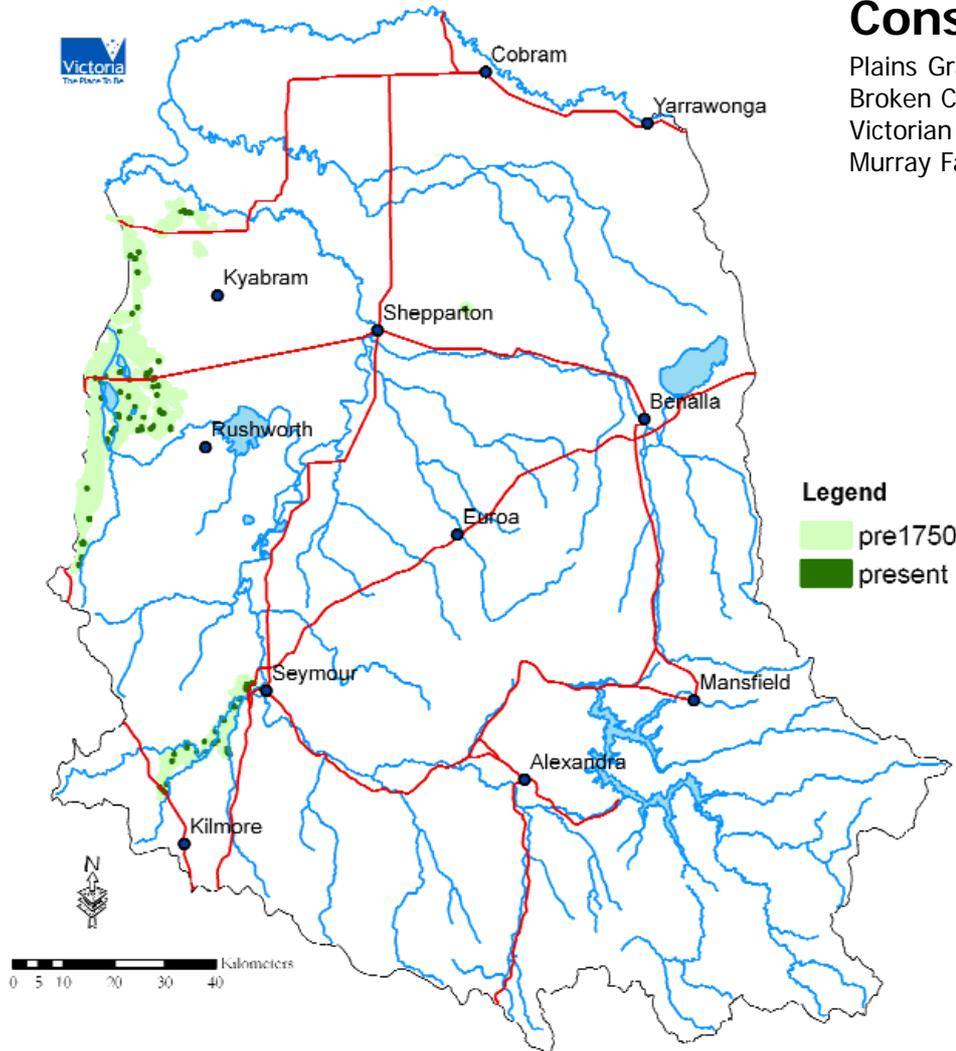


Conservation Status

Plains Grassland is **threatened** in the Goulburn Broken Catchment

Victorian Riverina bioregion : **Endangered**

Murray Fans bioregion: **Extinct**



Legend

pre1750

present

Figure 11. A representation of the pre-1750 and present day distribution of Plains Grassland and its mosaics and complexes in the Goulburn Broken Catchment. The boundaries of the vegetation have been exaggerated to allow for the small scale of the map. The map was produced from Base Data from DSE Corporate Library. The State of Victoria does not warrant the accuracy or completeness of information on this map. Any person using or relying upon such information does so on the basis that the State of Victoria shall bear no responsibility or liability whatsoever for any errors, faults, defects or omissions in the information.

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