

Plains Woodland

Endangered in the Goulburn Broken Catchment

99% of Plains Woodlands have been cleared. 63% of what remains is on private land.



Photo: Mary Titcumb

Figure 1. A healthy example of Plains Woodland at the Rutherglen Racecourse in the North East.



Photo: Mary Titcumb

Figure 2. A healthy example of Plains Woodland along a roadside in the North East. Flax lilies, Wattle Mat-rushes and saltbushes are scattered amongst the Gold-dust Wattle and Sweet Bursaria.



Photo: Sue Berwick

Figure 3. An example of Plains Woodland in good condition with some indicative and habitat features.



Photo: Mary Titcumb

Figure 4. An example of Plains Woodland in good condition. Chenopods are scattered through the native grasses.

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Description

Plains Woodland occurs on well-drained clay loam to sandy clay loams on flat or gently undulating plains at low elevations in areas with <600 mm annual rainfall.

An open woodland to 15 m tall usually dominated by Grey Box and Buloke with White Box on the eastern edge of the plains, and occasionally with Yellow Box.

This grassy, and often herb-rich, woodland is thought to have been shrubby prior to European settlement. The overall amount of plant matter (biomass) produced in the ground layer (particularly grasses) in this vegetation type tends to be less than in Plains Grassy Woodland.

Whilst many of the remnants seen today have few shrubs (due to grazing by rabbits and stock), a few sites show the range and (possibly) original density. Species include Mallee Wattle, Gold-dust Wattle, Golden Wattle, Sweet Bursaria and on drier sites Weeping Pittosporum and Emubush.

A couple of chenopods occur, including Wingless Bluebush and Frosted Goosefoot. Wallaby and Spear Grasses dominate these sites today, which may have replaced other summer growing grasses as a result of disturbance such as grazing by domestic stock. Other grasses include Windmill Grass, Kangaroo Grass, Common Wheat Grass and Grey Tussock-grass.

(Examples: Katamatite Water Reserve and Glenrowan Railway Reserve).

Species To Look Out For

Flora: Spreading Eutaxia (r), Plains Leek-orchid (eR), Buloke, Buloke Mistletoe (v), Purple Diuris (v).

Fauna: Grey-crowned Babbler (e), Bush Stone-Curlew (e), Long-nosed Bandicoot and Squirrel Glider (e).



Figure 10. Grey-crowned Babbler
Photo: Chris Tzaros



Figure 11. Bush Stone Curlew
Photo: Jim Castles

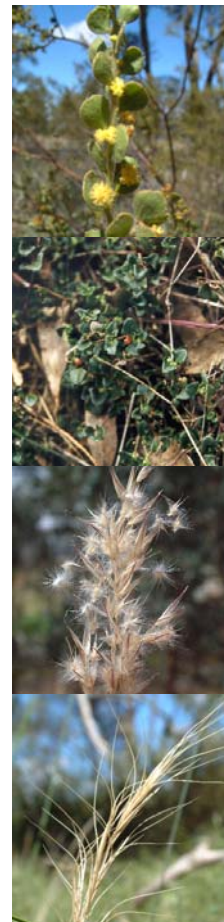


Figure 12. Squirrel Glider
Photo: Lindy Lumsden

Why Plains Woodlands are Threatened

More than 99% of Plains Woodlands in the Goulburn Broken Catchment have disappeared since European settlement. Over 63% of what remains is 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 Woodlands.

Current threats include, **poor timing of stock grazing and overgrazing** (causes loss of native species, hinders native plant regeneration, disturbs the soil and increases nutrient levels), **isolation** (restricted movement of fauna, difficult to maintain healthy gene pool), lack of native **understorey** and **ground layer** (which attracts insect eating birds helping keep the overstorey healthy, and improve soil health through fixing nitrogen), lack of natural **regeneration**, **soil disturbance** (eg. ploughing and pugging, favouring weed species), **weed invasion**, **pest animals** and loss of **tree** and **ground habitat** (through timber harvesting, tidying-up of fallen timber and firewood collection).



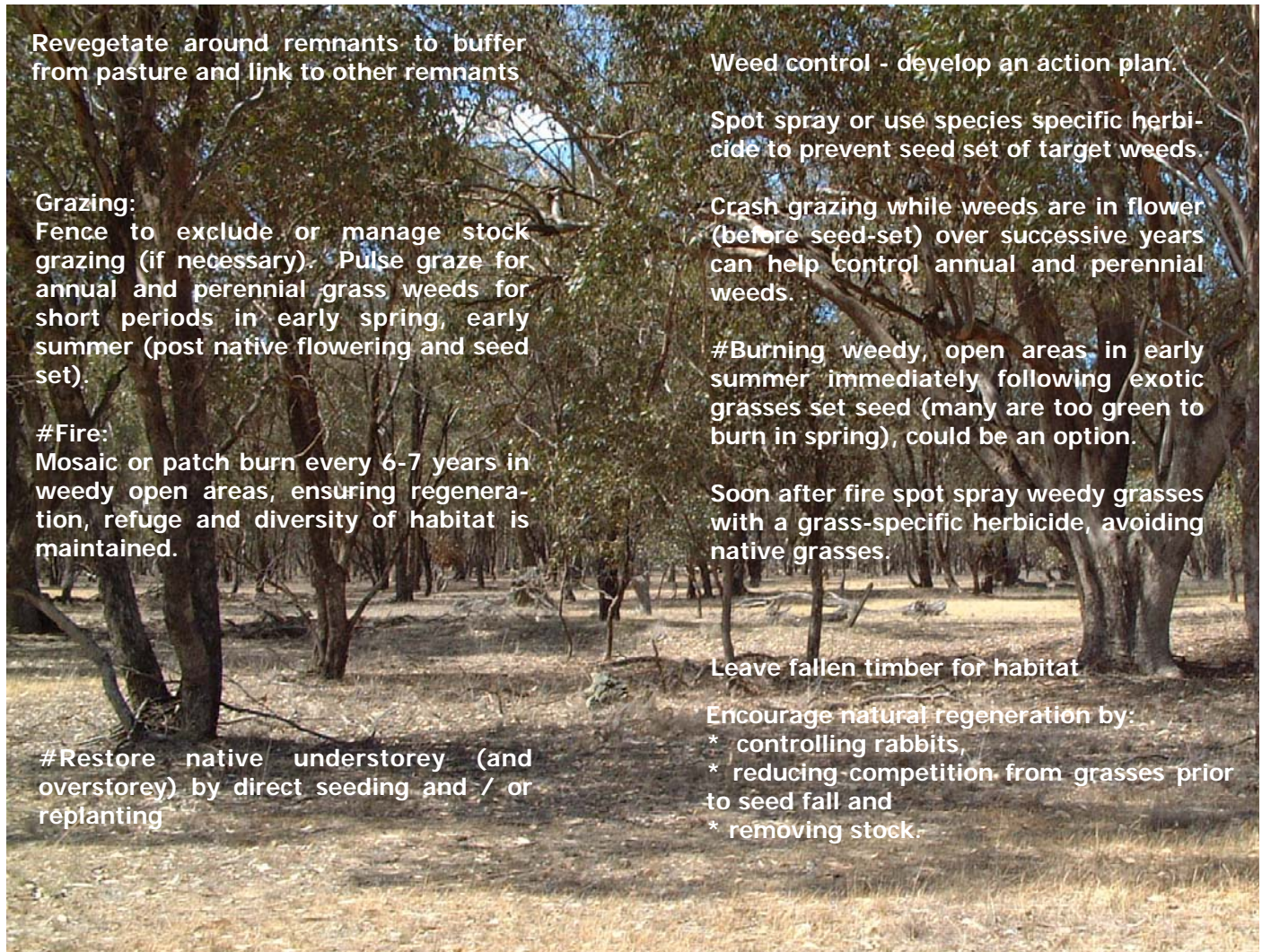
Figures 5-9. Gold-dust Wattle, Chenopod, Wallaby Grass, Common Wheat-grass

Photos: Mary Titcumb

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Management Tips



Revegetate around remnants to buffer from pasture and link to other remnants

Grazing:

Fence to exclude or manage stock grazing (if necessary). Pulse graze for annual and perennial grass weeds for short periods in early spring, early summer (post native flowering and seed set).

#Fire:

Mosaic or patch burn every 6-7 years in weedy open areas, ensuring regeneration, refuge and diversity of habitat is maintained.

#Restore native understorey (and overstorey) by direct seeding and / or replanting

Weed control - develop an action plan.

Spot spray or use species specific herbicide to prevent seed set of target weeds.

Crash grazing while weeds are in flower (before seed-set) over successive years can help control annual and perennial weeds.

#Burning weedy, open areas in early summer immediately following exotic grasses set seed (many are too green to burn in spring), could be an option.

Soon after fire spot spray weedy grasses with a grass-specific herbicide, avoiding native grasses.

Leave fallen timber for habitat

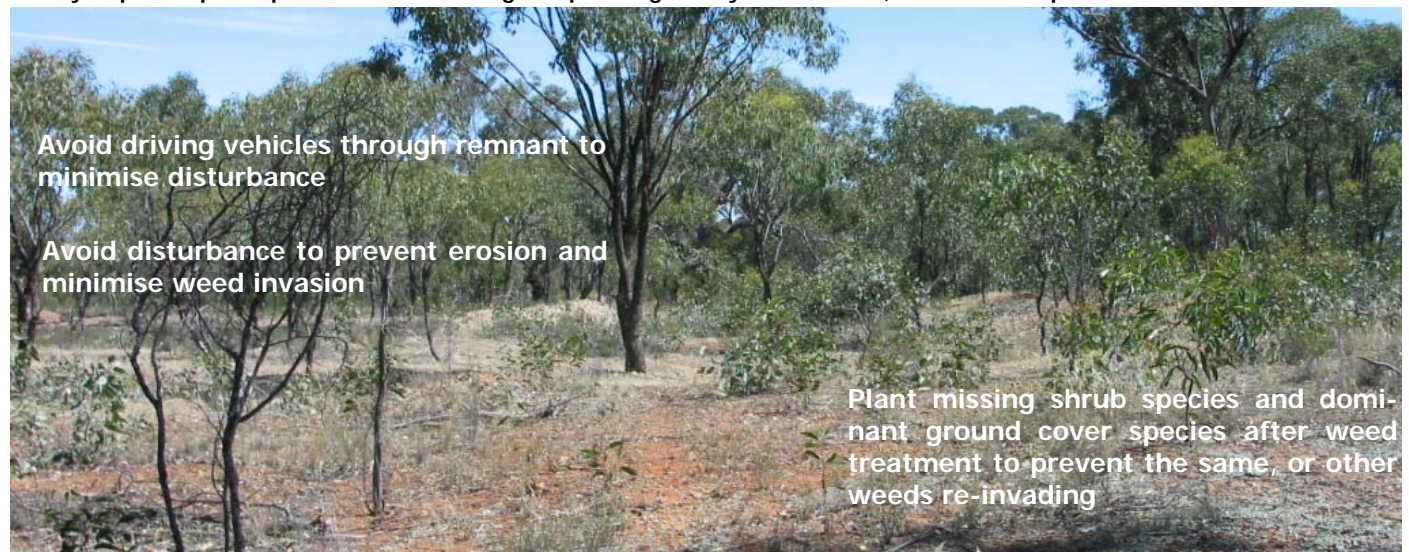
Encourage natural regeneration by:

- * controlling rabbits,
- * reducing competition from grasses prior to seed fall and
- * removing stock.

Photo: Mary Titcumb

Figure 13. An example of Plains Woodland in moderate condition. There is good native grass cover, but natural regeneration of the overstorey is lacking, as is the native shrub layer.

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



Avoid driving vehicles through remnant to minimise disturbance

Avoid disturbance to prevent erosion and minimise weed invasion

Plant missing shrub species and dominant ground cover species after weed treatment to prevent the same, or other weeds re-invading

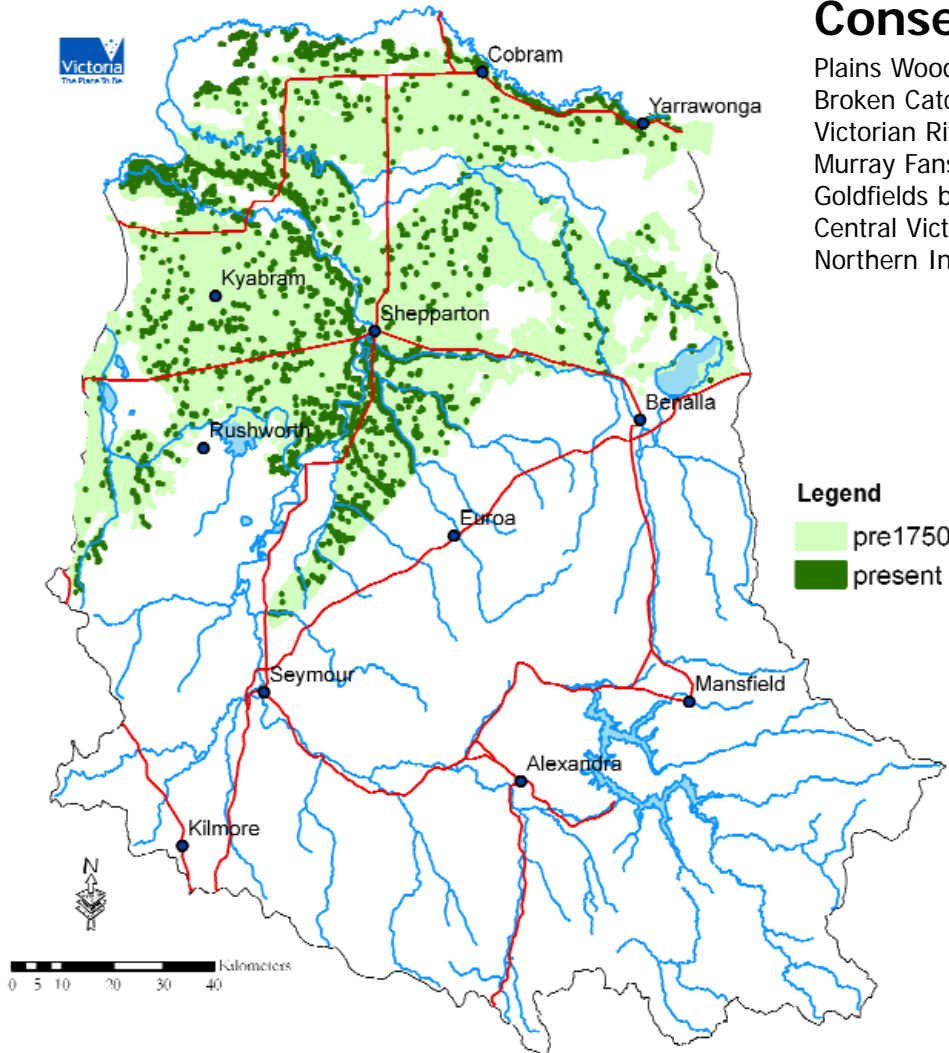
Photo: Debbie Colbourne

Figure 14. An example of Plains Woodland near Tungamah in relatively good condition, showing a good cover of native grasses, and good natural regeneration of the overstorey, but the native shrub layer is largely absent.



Conservation Status

Plains Woodland is **Endangered** in the Goulburn Broken Catchment
 Victorian Riverina bioregion : **Endangered**
 Murray Fans bioregion: **Endangered**
 Goldfields bioregion : **Endangered**
 Central Victorian Uplands bioregion: **Endangered**
 Northern Inland Slopes bioregion : **Endangered**



Legend

pre1750
 present

Figure 15. A representation of the pre-1750 and present day distribution of Plains Woodland 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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