Plains Grassland

ENDANGERED in the Goulburn Broken Catchment



Figure 1 A healthy example of Plains Grassland in the Goulburn Broken Catchment



Natural Heritage Trust A Commonwealth Government Initiative







Photo: Martin White

Plains Grassland

ENDANGERED in the Goulburn Broken Catchment Less than 1% of this vegetation remains uncleared, all of which (17ha) is on private land.



Figure 2 Distribution of Plains Grassland in the Goulburn Broken Catchment

Current Threats

- Inappropriate grazing regimes cause loss of native species (through selective grazing and trampling), hinder native plant regeneration, disturb the soil and increase nutrient levels.
- Loss of ground habitat through cultivation, pasture improvement and overgrazing threatens grasslands and associated fauna.
- 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 favours weeds, can eliminate plants, and cause excessive plant growth which can shade-out smaller species.
- Too frequent/infrequent burning can result in changes to structure and loss of species that require fire to regenerate.
- Soil disturbance encourages weeds.

information in this publication.

- Irrigation changes the structure by eliminating native plants which require drier conditions, and can encourage species preferring wetter conditions including weeds.
- Isolation of remnants restricts movement of native fauna, makes it difficult to maintain a healthy gene pool, and recolonise with native species following disturbance.
- Grasslands are enormously important for habitat diversity across the landscape.

Description

Plains Grasslands are natural grasslands that occur on heavy clay soils in areas with low annual rainfall (<400mm) on the plains, largely in the north-west of the catchment. This combination of heavy clay soils and low rainfall effectively limits the growth of trees to produce an open, grassy type of vegetation. The groundlayer contains a diverse suite of grasses, sedges, rushes, daisies, lilies, saltbushes and peas. 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, Goodenia, Blue Devil, Scaly Buttons, Yam Daisy, Woolly Heads, Lamb-tails, Drumsticks, Bluebells, Berry Saltbush and Common and Slender Bluebush.

Significant Species

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

Fauna: Plains Wanderer and Bush Stone Curlew.

Management Tips

Management which maintains and enhances the remnant vegetation / habitat, is recommended.

If the remnant is in good condition, maintain the historical management, (or possibly alter slightly), according to the points listed below.

- Fence sites to exclude grazing, particularly in spring and early summer to allow, flowering and seed set of native plants. Retain access for controlled grazing to manage weeds where necessary.
- Revegetate around remnants to buffer from pasture and link to other remnants.
- Develop and implement a plan to control weeds and pest animals.
- Maintain natural drainage.
- Burn small areas every 2-5 years.
- Monitor your site and adapt management practices as required (help is available to assist and set up monitoring).

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