# Grassy Dry / Heathy Dry Forest

VULNERABLE in the Goulburn Broken Catchment



Photo: Sue Berwick

Figure 1 A healthy example of Grassy Dry Forest with important habitat and diagnostic features noted





## <sup>110</sup> Grassy Dry / Heathy Dry Forest

### VULNERABLE in the Goulburn Broken Catchment

51% of this vegetation type remains uncleared, 38% (26,717ha) of which is on private land.

#### Description

Grassy Dry and Heathy Dry Forests occur on steep hills, generally with very shallow soil, at elevations at 230-900m and an annual rainfall of 500-1000mm. These are typically open forests of Red Stringybark and Long-leaved Box at lower altitudes and Broad-leaf Peppermint and Brittle Gum at higher altitudes. The understorey is highly dependent on aspect and therefore moisture: shrubs such as Beard Heath, Cat's Claw Grevillea, Austral Grass-tree, Daphne Heath, Grey Guineaflower, Urn Heath, Ploughshare Wattle, Hairy Geebung and Small-leaf Parrot-pea and Silver-top Wallaby-grass occur on drier north-west slopes, and a grassy understorey occurs on more protected south-east slopes with species such as Silver-top Wallaby-grass, Wallaby-grasses, Grey Tussockgrass, Plume Grass and Common Wheat-grass.

#### Current Threats

- Inappropriate grazing regimes cause loss of native species, hinder native plant regeneration, distrub the soil and increase nutrient levels.
- Inappropriate fire regimes (too frequent/ infrequent fire) can hinder shrub regeneration leading to eventual loss of species, and changes the structure of the remnant.
- Loss of tree and ground habitat (through timber harvesting, "tidying-up" of fallen sticks, and firewood collection), threatens the associated native fauna.
- Weed invasion, particularly by St. Johns Wort and English Broom, compete with native species.
- Pest animals defoliate vegetation, disturb the soil and threaten native fauna as predators and by competing for food.
- Isolation of remnants makes it difficult to maintain a healthy gene pool and to recolonise with native species following disturbance, and restricts the movement of native fauna.
- Lack of native understorey and groundlayer plants, which: attract insect eating birds, helping keep the overstorey healthy; and improve soil health through fixing nitrogen.
- Lack of natural regeneration of plants threatens the viability of the remnant.



Figure 2. Distribution of Grassy Dry and Heathy Dry Forests in the North East

#### Significant Species

Flora: Grey Rice-flower and Tick Indigo.

Fauna: Bandy Bandy, Barking Owl, Tuan, Powerful Owl, Yellow-footed Antechinus, Tree Goanna and Woodland Blind Snake.

#### Management Tips

Management which maintains and enhances the remnant vegetation / habitat, including:

- Fence sites to exclude grazing, at least during spring and early summer, to allow flowering and seed set of native plants.
- Develop and implement a plan to control weeds and pest animals.
- Encourage natural regeneration by controlling rabbits, reducing competition with grasses prior to seed fall and removing stock until seedlings are well established.
- Plant understorey for remnants with no native shrubs or ground layer.
- Revegetate around remnants to buffer from pasture and link to other remnants.
- Retain dead & hollow-bearing trees (for sites without, erect nest boxes) and leave fallen timber and branches.
- Monitor your site and adapt management practices as required (help is available to assist and set up monitoring).

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