

Ecosystem decline (extinction enquiry)

Preserving native vegetation: End native vegetation clearing on private and public land.

End woodchipping and intensive forestry and clearfelling in native forests, which being done in Leadbeater's Possum Habitat and the habitat of gliders, owls and forest dependant animals. In drier forests in the box and Ironbark forests, such as Rushworth Forest, logging is taking place in the habitat of rare Brush-tailed Phascogales, Swift Parrot, Regent Honeyeater and other species that are rare or becoming rare such as Tree Goanna.

Degrading activities such as cultivation, on private or leased land should be discouraged if it is relatively good quality native grassland that is now no more than lightly grazed.

Grassland projects started but still incomplete should be finished urgently so degradation can be halted and restoration and management commenced. Other intact or important grasslands that might still be overlooked need to be identified and brought into the conservation system.

Good quality habitat in private hands should be protected with the correct protocols and encouragement in place, or be purchased for the state conservation systems.

Protecting native vegetation and wildlife: Feral animals are having a disastrous effect on native vegetation and dependant wildlife. Goats are a big problem in some parks and bushland, especially in the mallee causing denuding of vegetation and loss of wildlife such native mice and pygmy possums. In high country horses are grazing and trampling the habitat of rare Broad-toothed Rat. Deer graze forest areas and selectively browse rainforest plants, herbs, seedlings, and degrade the habitat in general.

Foxes and feral cats need to be controlled especially where rare small mammals are present. Control of feral animals needs to be constant and increased from current levels.

Prescribed burning in native forests, woodland and grassland should be consistent with ecological requirements and natural history of the vegetation type or near assets that need protecting, such as towns. There are more fires now than ever so maybe effective and quick suppression of fire, with water bombers should be considered a priority, as an alternative to some current practices.

The more frequent fires are favouring more fire tolerant and flammable vegetation.

Weeds are present in varying amounts in native vegetation and pose varying impacts. Constant identification and removal is required. Sufficient funding is needed on a constant basis to deal with this problem, prioritising an approach in parks and reserves in the best condition, rarest vegetation class, or most at risk and working towards poorer areas.

Restoring and expanding native vegetation: Supporting connection of fragmented bushland and restoration of degraded lands, such as heathy and grassy woodlands will be very beneficial to nature conservation. Priority should be acquiring, protecting and restoring native grasslands. River, riparian and wetland protection and restoration will benefit many species. One is the Platypus which is in decline. The Platypus has decline precipitously in the Wimmera River system. Rakali (Water Rat) and native fish will also benefit. It must be remembered that once destroyed, a natural system of any type cannot be fully restored, so preservation of what is still in good condition now is highest priority.

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