



Woodland Bird Habitat Restoration Handbook

A guide for small properties
in the Bungendore region



United for Nature



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We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we work and the places in which we live. We pay respect to Ancestors and Elders, past, present and emerging. We recognise the unique cultural and spiritual relationship and celebrate the contributions of First Nations peoples to Australia.

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Written by Jed Pearson & Elyssa Castles
Illustrations by Karen Williams
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Photo by Jed Pearson

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Introduction

Bungendore's Grassy Woodlands include iconic Endangered Ecological Communities (EECs) that are home to many species of woodland birds. Once widespread throughout Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria, Grassy Woodlands have been extensively cleared for agriculture and modified for livestock grazing. Only small remnants that have escaped these impacts remain in near-original condition. Nationally, a quarter of woodland bird species are now 'threatened', and another quarter of species are described as 'declining species', which means that their numbers have dropped sharply in the last 20 years. These species are at risk of becoming threatened soon without our help.

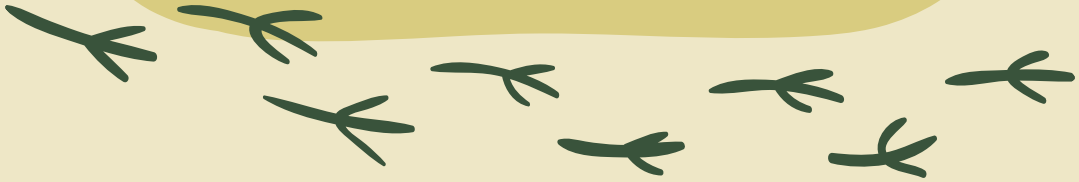


Photo by Janelle Friend

This resource was put together by the Molonglo Conservation Group as part of a landscape-species conservation project pertaining to Scarlet Robin, Flame Robin, Speckled Warbler and Dusky Woodswallow and White Box-Yellow Box-Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodlands.



Scarlet Robin, *Petroica boodang*

Photo by Jed Pearson



Flame Robin, *Petroica phoenicea*

Photo by Jed Pearson



Speckled Warbler, *Chthonicola sagittata*

Photo by Con B



Dusky Woodswallow, *Artamus cyanopterus*

Photo by Rob Parnell

Restoring habitat for woodland bird species can be a long and arduous task and can take many years. Especially in areas with historically high levels of land clearing, the following threats all feature in degraded woodland bird habitat:

- Missing or under-represented habitat structural layers
- Habitat fragmentation
- Removal of woody debris and rocky outcrops (or 'cleaned paddocks')
- Invasive weeds, animal and pest species
- Erosion and riparian degradation



Photo by Elyssa Castles

Although sometimes daunting, great progress can be made restoring woodland bird habitat if the following 'rules of thumb' are followed:

- Have a plan and keep it simple!
- Don't bite off more than you can chew – a slow and steady approach is best
- Observe before you act
- Use what you have, retain your natural assets!
- Restore and maintain your most intact natural areas first
- Prioritise pests and weeds; you can't get them all!



Structural Layers

Habitat is defined as where a plant or animal lives. Grassy Woodland habitat is divided into three structural layers: the canopy (or overstorey), mid-storey (shrub-layer), and the ground-layer (consisting of herbaceous plants). Various animal species have adapted to use large trees, shrubs, grasses and other herbaceous plants, as well as rocks, fallen logs and fallen leaves as shelter and sources of food. Protecting all three vegetation layers is important for biodiversity. Each vegetation layer provides food and habitat for different groups of species.

Canopy



Mid-storey

Ground-layer

Canopy

Tree canopies provide shelter for birds and animals by offering protection high up. Dense foliage provides cover for and provides food for insects that, in turn, provide a food source. Most canopy trees also provide pollen, nectar or fruit. Large old eucalypts provide hollows and forks for birds and animals to make their nests. Eucalypts generally start forming hollows when older than fifty years old, and only develop large hollows suitable for large animals (like owls) when they are much older than that (>150 years).



Mid-storey

The mid-storey is made up of shrubs and includes the trunk and bark found in the lower parts of large canopy trees. Shrubs provide a refuge from predators for smaller birds and provide pollen, nectar and fruits that native animals eat. Bark on the trunk of eucalypts provide a home for many insects and spiders, which are also eaten by birds and other animals.



Ground-layer

In Grassy Woodlands, the vast majority of plant diversity is found in the ground-layer. This diversity supports a wealth of insect life. Grasses and other herbaceous plants provide cover for small birds and animals, produce seeds that are eaten by many species and flowers that attract pollinating insects. Fallen logs, fallen leaves and rocks also play a vital role, providing habitat for many birds, mammals, reptiles and insects.

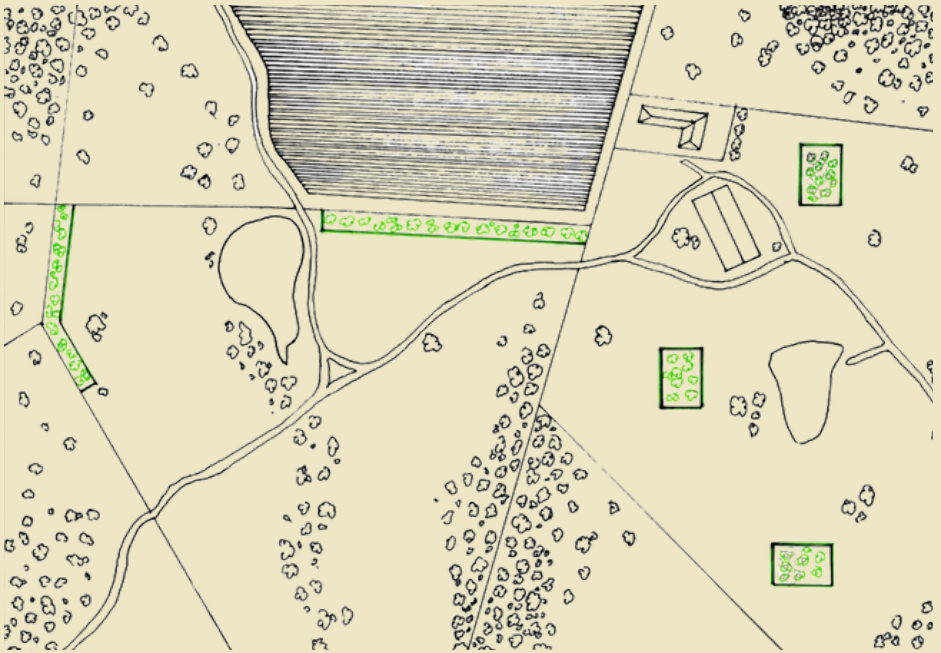


Habitat fragmentation & connectivity



A major threat to woodland birds in the Bungendore region is habitat fragmentation. Clearing of Grassy Woodland to make way for grazing and cropping land has caused the previously intact woodland to become fragmented and isolated, leaving populations smaller and vulnerable to chance events. Smaller woodland birds, such as the Scarlet Robin, need large patches of woodland, as well as connections between patches to survive. Larger birds, such as owls or cockatoos do not need close connection between patches as do smaller species. They do require stepping stones (such as big old paddock trees) to move across the landscape.

Planting for habitat connectivity can be an effective way to improve woodland bird habitat. Fenced wildlife corridors can be planted to connect patches of intact woodland at a shorter distance. For longer distances, larger old growth paddock trees can be fenced off and planted with wattles and mid-layer shrubs. Smaller planted enclosures can be built to provide 'stepping stones' of habitat across the landscape.



Example of planted corridors and steppingstone enclosures.

Planting for Woodland Birds

Knowing what to plant for woodland birds is easy once you identify which vegetation layers are lacking in the landscape. Locally indigenous species should always be sourced for revegetation projects. Small woodland birds need densely bushy, spiny or thorny vegetation to escape predation from the larger native and introduced bird species.



Photo by Jed Pearson

Planting list for the region

Table Key

1. Nesting resource- H= hollows, DT= dense and/or thorny
2. Woodland- Box-Gum Grassy Woodland
3. Communities- R= riparian, SG= Snow Gum Woodland, DF= Dry Forest
4. Plants that are easily sourced from local nurseries and are suitable for planting in bushland rehabilitation projects (i.e., these will establish relatively quickly without too much aftercare).

Common Name	Scientific Name	Use for Woodland Birds			
		Nesting Resource (1)	Woodland (2)	Community (3)	Suitable (4)
Canopy Trees					
Silver Wattle	<i>Acacia dealbata</i>	DT	x	SG	✓
Green Wattle	<i>Acacia mearmsii</i>	DT	x	DF	✓
Blackwood	<i>Acacia melanoxylon</i>	DT		SG, DF	✓
Drooping She-oak	<i>Allocasuarina verticillata</i>	DT		DF	✓
Black Gum	<i>Eucalyptus aggregata</i>	H		SG	✓
Apple Box	<i>Eucalyptus bridgesiana</i>	H	x	DF	✓
Broad-leaved Peppermint	<i>Eucalyptus dives</i>	H		SG, DF	✓
Red Stringybark	<i>Eucalyptus macrorrhyncha</i>	H		DF	
Brittle Gum	<i>Eucalyptus mannifera</i>	H	x	DF	✓
Yellow Box	<i>Eucalyptus melliodora</i>	H	x	DF	✓
Snow Gum	<i>Eucalyptus pauciflora</i>	H		SG	✓
Red Box	<i>Eucalyptus polyanthemus</i>	H		DF	✓
Candlebark	<i>Eucalyptus rubida</i>	H	x	SG	✓
Ribbon Gum	<i>Eucalyptus viminalis</i>	H		R, SG	✓
Cherry Ballart	<i>Exocarpos cupressiformis</i>	DT	x	SG, DF	

Common Name	Scientific Name	Use for Woodland Birds			
Mid-storey shrubs and climbers		Nesting Resource (1)	Woodland (2)	Community (3)	Suitable (4)
Early Wattle	<i>Acacia genistifolia</i>	DT	x	DF	
Red-stemmed Wattle	<i>Acacia rubida</i>	DT	x	DF	✓
Silver Banksia	<i>Banksia marginata</i>	DT		SG, DF	✓
Daphne Heath	<i>Brachyloma daphnoides</i>		x	DF	
Australia Blackthorn	<i>Bursaria spinosa</i>	DT	x	SG, DF	✓
River Bottlebrush	<i>Callistemon sieberi</i>	DT		R	✓
Cauliflower-bush	<i>Cassinia longifolia</i>	DT	x	SG, DF	✓
Small-leaved Clematis	<i>Clematis leptophylla</i>	DT	x	DF	✓
Leafy Bitterpea	<i>Daviesia mimosoides</i>			DF	✓
Narrow-leaved Hopbush	<i>Dodonaea viscosa</i>	DT	x	DF	✓
Nodding Saltbush	<i>Einadia nutans</i>	DT	x	DF	✓
Twining Glycine	<i>Glycine clandestina</i>		x	DF	
False Sarsaparilla	<i>Hardenbergia violacea</i>			DF	✓
Grey Guinea-flower	<i>Hibbertia obtusifolia</i>		x	DF	✓
Austral Indigo	<i>Indigofera australis</i>			DF	✓
Burgan	<i>Kunzea ericoides</i>	DT	x	R, SG, DF	✓
Violet Kunzea	<i>Kunzea parvifolia</i>	DT		DF	✓
Woolly Teatree	<i>Leptospermum lanigerum</i>	DT		SG	✓
Swamp Paperbark	<i>Melaleuca parvistaminea</i>	DT		R, SG, DF	✓
Urn Heath	<i>Melichrus urceolatus</i>		x	SG, DF	
Native Raspberry	<i>Rubus parviflora</i>	DT	x	SG, DF	✓
Mountain Kangaroo-apple	<i>Solanum linearifolium</i>	DT		DF	✓

Common Name	Scientific Name	Use for Woodland Birds			
Ground-layer grasses, rushes and sedges		Nesting Resource (1)	Woodland (2)	Community (3)	Suitable (4)
Swamp Wallaby-grass	<i>Amphibromus nervosus</i>			R	
Common Wheatgrass	<i>Anthosachne scabra</i>		x	SG, DF	
Purple Wire-grass	<i>Aristida ramosa</i>		x	DF	
Tall Speargrass	<i>Austrostipa bigeniculata</i>		x	SG, DF	✓
Brushtail Speargrass	<i>Austrostipa densiflora</i>		x	DF	
Corkscrew Grass	<i>Austrostipa scabra</i>		x	SG, DF	
Redleg Grass	<i>Bothriochloa macra</i>		x	SG, DF	
Tussock Sedge	<i>Carex appressa</i>	DT		R	✓
Short-haired Plume-grass	<i>Dichelacne micrantha</i>		x	SG, DF	
Common Spikerush	<i>Eleocharis acuta</i>			R	
Rush species	<i>Juncus spp.</i>		x	R, SG DF	✓
Wattle Matrush	<i>Lomandra filiformis</i>		x	SG, DF	
Spiny-headed Matrush	<i>Lomandra longifolia</i>	DT		R, SG, DF	✓
Weeping Grass	<i>Microlaena stipoides</i>		x	SG, DF	
Common Reed	<i>Phragmites australis</i>	DT		R	
River Tussock	<i>Poa labillardierei</i>	DT	x	R, SG, DF	✓
Snow Grass	<i>Poa sieberiana</i>		x	SG, DF	
Red-anthered Wallaby-grass	<i>Rytidosperma pallidum</i>	DT		DF	
Wallaby-grass species	<i>Rytidosperma spp.</i>		x	SG, DF	
Wild Sorghum	<i>Sorghum leiocladum</i>		x	SG, DF	
Kangaroo Grass	<i>Themeda triandra</i>		x	SG, DF	✓
Cumbungi	<i>Typha domingensis</i>	DT		R	

Common Name	Scientific Name	Use for Woodland Birds			
Ground-layer wildflowers (forbs, lilies and ferns)		Nesting Resource (1)	Woodland (2)	Community (3)	Suitable (4)
Bidgee-widgee	<i>Acaena novae-zelandiae</i>			SG, DF	
Austral Bugle	<i>Ajuga australis</i>		x	SG, DF	
Common Woodruff	<i>Aperula conferta</i>		x	SG, DF	
Chocolate-lily species	<i>Arthropodium spp.</i>		x	SG, DF	
Bulbine Lily	<i>Bulbine bulbosa</i>		x	SG, DF	
Lemon Beautyheads	<i>Calocephalus citreus</i>		x	SG	
Mauve Burr-daisy	<i>Calotis glandulosa</i>			SG, DF	✓
Rock Fern	<i>Cheilanthes sieberi</i>		x	SG, DF	
Common Everlasting	<i>Chrysocephalum apiculatum</i>		x	SG, DF	
Clustered Everlasting	<i>Chrysocephalum semipapposum</i>	DT	x	SG, DF	✓
Pale Everlasting	<i>Coronidium gunnianum</i>		x	SG	
Variable Billy-buttons	<i>Craspedia variabilis</i>		x	SG	
Southern Tick-trefoil	<i>Desmodium varians</i>		x	SG, DF	
Black-anthered Flax-lily	<i>Dianella revoluta</i>	DT		DF	✓
Blue Devil	<i>Eryngium ovinum</i>		x	SG	
Native geranium species	<i>Geranium spp.</i>		x	SG, DF	
Vanilla Glycine	<i>Glycine tabacina</i>		x	SG, DF	
Common Raspwort	<i>Gonocarpus tetragynus</i>			DF	
Ivy Goodenia	<i>Goodenia hederacea</i>			DF	
Swamp Raspwort	<i>Haloragis heterophylla</i>		x	R, SG, DF	
Scaly Buttons	<i>Leptorhynchos squamatus</i>		x	SG	
Hoary Sunray	<i>Leucochrysum albicans</i>		x	SG, DF	

Common Name	Scientific Name	Use for Woodland Birds			
Ground-layer wildflowers (forbs, lilies and ferns)		Nesting Resource (1)	Woodland (2)	Community (3)	Suitable (4)
Variable Plantain	<i>Plantago varia</i>		x	SG, DF	
Bracken Fern	<i>Pteridium esculentum</i>	DT		SG, DF	
Australian Buttercup	<i>Ranunculus lappaceus</i>		x	R, SG, DF	
Swamp Dock	<i>Rumex brownii</i>		x	SG	
Creamy Candles	<i>Stackhousia monogyna</i>		x	SG, DF	
Digger's Speedwell	<i>Veronica perfoliata</i>			DF	✓
Sticky Everlasting	<i>Xerochrysum viscosum</i>		x	DF	✓



Photos by Elyssa Castles



Photo by Erna Llenore

Woody debris

Woody debris, leaf-litter and rocky outcrops are just as important in environmental restoration as they provide a plethora of habitat opportunities for insects, reptiles and small mammals. This habitat increases biodiversity and improves food sources for birds.



Photo by Elyssa Castles

Hollows

Old growth tree hollows are important for bird habitat. Naturally formed hollows are essential for roosting and nesting for many bird species. Hollows also provide refuge from predators and weather. Removal of living or dead hollow-bearing trees displaces species that depend on them.



Photo by Jed Pearson



Photo by Ross McConchie

Weeds in the Bungendore region

Weeds are a common management concern when dealing with woodland bird habitat restoration. Tackling weeds can seem daunting, but there are a few simple things to consider when implementing weed management on your property.



Start in the less infested areas and work your way incrementally towards the larger infestations. Prioritise weeds in the most naturally intact areas and work toward more degraded areas.



Some areas are now so degraded with weeds that they are now all that's left to provide shelter for woodland birds. Removing large infestations of weeds too quickly can be detrimental to vulnerable species using these weedy species as refugia.



Removing larger infestations at a gradual rate and replacing the removed weeds as you go will leave habitat to be used while natives have time to recover or plantings grow.



Start upstream and work your way downstream when removing weeds along creeks and waterways.



Prioritise weeds by species – Which weeds are worse or harder to control if let go?

Priority weeds

African Lovegrass, *Eragrostis curvula*

African Lovegrass is a perennial grass introduced from southern Africa sometime before 1900. It thrives in acidic, sandy soil with a low nutrient content. It is found all across NSW. A Declared Weed of National Significance (WONS).

Description – Grows in tussocks up to 1.2m. Leaves are dark green to blue-green, 3mm wide with rolled edges. Stems are erect, slender, and sometimes bent at the nodes. Flowers are greyish blue to purple when young but mature to a straw colour. Seeds cluster at the end of the stems, are about 1mm long and are present from summer to late autumn.

Mode of dispersal – Each seed head produces between 300 to 100 seeds. It is spread mostly by vehicles, other machinery, and stock, but can also be spread short distances by wind or water.

Lookalikes – Browns Lovegrass (native), River Tussock (native).



Left: African Lovegrass florescent (photo by NSW Weedwise)

Right: Full plant (Photo by (NSW Weedwise)

Chilean Needle Grass, *Nassella neesiana*

Chilean Needle Grass is a perennial grass, introduced to Glen Innes NSW sometime around 1940. Colonises bare ground and poor, disturbed soils. Can survive fire, heavy grazing, or drought. A Weed of National Significance.

Description – Grows in tussocks, up to 40cm high. Leaves are flat, 1 to 5mm wide and coarse. The leaves have characteristic 'railway track' veins on the upper surface. Seeds are pale brown when mature, 8 to 10 mm long. The awn is 6 to 9 cm long, twisted when dry. It is difficult to pull off the seed. The sharp awn is surrounded by a corona of small teeth where it joins the seed.

Mode of dispersal – The seeds are spread by vehicles, other machinery and live-stock. Seeds are attached to wool or fur and can stay on an animal for weeks. They can be spread by heavy rain, but not by wind.

Lookalikes - Very similar to some species of spargrass, *Austrostipa* spp. Can also be confused with other *Nassella* species, such as Serrated Tussock and Mexican Feather Grass.



Top: Chilean Needle Grass (Photos by NSW Weedwise)

Bottom Left: The hairy ligule of Chilean Needlegrass (Photo by Tamanian Gov DNRE)

Bottom Right: The hairy corona of Chilean Needlegrass seed (Photo by NSW Weedwise)

Serrated Tussock, *Nassella trichotoma*

Serrated Tussock is a perennial tussock grass from South America. It most likely arrived in Australia in the early 1900s and was first recorded in Yass, NSW. Hence it's often referred to as Yass Tussock. A Weed of National Significance.

Description – Serrated Tussock grows in upright tussocks up to 45cm high. Leaves are upright, stiff, very narrow, and tightly rolled. They are serrated, which can be felt when running your fingers up the leaf blade. Its colour changes throughout the seasons, starting as a light green with brown tips in spring, a purple tinge in early summer, dark green in late summer (when other grasses have turned brown), to a pale straw yellow in winter (sometime described as 'bleached-blondie surfies'). A distinctive ligule; rounded, white, membranous and hairless. Seeds are brown, hard and small (1.5mm). Possesses a small awn, less than 25mm long.

Mode of dispersal – Mainly spread by wind, but also by water and vehicles, other machinery and stock. Mature seeds can be spread up to 10km by wind, and have been found to spread up to 60km down the Macquarie River.

Lookalikes – Can be confused with native speargrasses, *Austrostipa* spp, River Tussock, Snow Grass, and sometimes wallaby grasses.



Left: Serrated Tussock seeds (Photo by Molonglo Conservation Group)

Right: Serrated Tussock infestation (Photo by NSW Weedwise)

Blackberry, *Rubus* spp.

Blackberry is a perennial woody weed and has been in Australia since the 1840s. It was brought by Europeans as a source of fruit and for hedging. It is estimated Blackberry covers over 8.5 million hectares of land and costs over \$100 million annually in control and production loss. A Weed of National Significance.

Description – A woody, semi-deciduous scrambling bramble. It has arching, tangled canes, that form thickets to several metres high. It is thorny and produces the familiar dark coloured fruits. Leaves are dark green on top and lighter on the underside, with shallow fissures. Arranged in a palmate fashion, each leaf has 3 to 5 leaflets.

Mode of dispersal – Seeds are dispersed by mammals and birds through their droppings. It also spreads vegetatively, with canes, either attached or separated from the plant, able to root on contact with the soil.

Lookalikes – Easily confused with Native Raspberry (*Rubus parvifolius*). Native Raspberry has a pinnate leaf arrangement; the leaflets arranged like a feather or fern.



Left: Blackberry palmate leaf arrangement (Left) vs Native Raspberry pinnate leaf arrangement (Right) (Photo by Jed Pearson)
Right: Blackberry bramble (Photo Jed Pearson)

St John's Wort, *Hypericum perforatum*

St John's Wort is a perennial forb from Eurasia and Africa. It was brought to Australia in 1875 as an ornamental plant. It is toxic to stock and can out compete native plants. It is a Declared Pest Plant.

Description – A herbaceous plant with a woody base, growing up to 1m. Leaves are dark green on top, lighter on the underside, 5 to 20mm long. Leaves are dotted with prominent oil glands that can be seen if a leaf is held up to the light. Flowers are bright yellow, star shaped, with 5 petals and bundles of long stamens up to 20mm long. Fruit is a capsule, brown and sticky, about 8mm long.

Mode of dispersal – Each plant can produce up to 30,000 seeds per year. Sticky seed capsules can stick to wool or fur and seeds can be spread through the digestive tracts of animals. It can also be dispersed short distances by wind. It is spread by vehicles and other machinery.

Lookalikes – Can be confused with Small St John's Wort (*Hypericum gramineum*), a native. As its name suggest, Small St John's Wort only reaches up to 30cm. Its leaves are stem-clasping. Flower possesses far fewer stamens, which are smaller and less pronounced.



Left: Native St John's Wort (Left) vs invasive St John's Wort (Right) (Photo by Jed Pearson)

Right: St John's Wort infestation (Photo by Jed Pearson)

Bungendore/Braidwood Region Weed Control Calander

Control Method/Season

Common name	Summer					Autumn					Winter					Spring											
	Hand pull	Die	Cut (No chemicals)	Grazing	Compare to the pasture	Cut and post	Drill and fill	Spray	Biological	Hand pull	Die	Cut (No chemicals)	Grazing	Compare to the pasture	Cut and post	Drill and fill	Spray	Biological	Hand pull	Die	Cut (No chemicals)	Grazing	Compare to the pasture	Cut and post	Drill and fill	Spray	Biological
African Boxthorn																											
African lovegrass																											
Blackberry																											
Broom (Scotch & Montpellier)																											
Bathurst/No onogra Burrs																											
Chilean Needle Grass																											
False acacia/Black locust																											
Fireweed																											
Gorse																											
Hawthorn																											
Horehound																											
Paterson curse/Vipers bugloss																											
Pine (Radiata & Monterey)																											
Polars (White & Lombardy)																											
Privet																											
Serrated tussock																											
St John's wort																											
Sweet briar																											
Thistles (Scotch, Slender, Saffron)																											
Tree of heaven																											
Willows (Crack & Black)																											

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Preserving habitat for woodland bird species in South Eastern New South Wales is of paramount importance to ensuring the long-term survival and ecological balance of our natural environment. Woodland birds play a vital role in maintaining biodiversity, pollination, seed dispersal, and pest control, contributing to the overall health of ecosystems. However, rampant urbanization, land clearing, and habitat fragmentation have significantly impacted their populations, leading to declining numbers and even local extinctions. By recognizing the value of these species and taking proactive measures to protect and restore their habitats, we can safeguard the delicate balance of nature, promote biodiversity, and secure a sustainable future for both the avian inhabitants and the broader ecosystem in South Eastern New South Wales.



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