



**ACT**  
Government

# ACT SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

## ANNUAL REPORT 2017-18

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# BACKGROUND

This report outlines the activities of the ACT Scientific Committee (SC) for the period 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018.

The SC was established under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014* (the Act) which commenced on 11 June 2015.

The Minister for the Environment and Heritage (the Minister) appoints the SC members. The SC replaced the Flora and Fauna Committee (FFC). The FFC was established on 12 January 1995 following commencement of amendments to the *Nature Conservation Act 1980* on 11 October 1994.

The SC had four scheduled meetings during the reporting period. A schedule of meeting dates and member attendance is at **Attachment A**.

## 1.1 FUNCTIONS

The SC has specific responsibilities to assess the conservation status of nominated threatened native species ecological communities in the ACT and key threatening processes, and provides advice to the Minister about assessments and listings made by other jurisdictions under the Common Assessment Method<sup>1</sup>. The SC makes recommendations to the Minister about listing as threatened, species and ecological communities according to the degree of threat; and listing of key threatening processes. The SC also provides expert, scientific and objective advice to the Minister and the Conservator of Flora and Fauna (the Conservator) in relation to nature conservation issues in the ACT region.

Specific responsibilities of the SC under the amended *Nature Conservation Act 2014* include:

- The Minister must consult with the SC in developing list Criteria for:
  - > Threatened Native Species (s 65)
  - > Threatened Ecological Communities (s 71)
- Key Threatening Processes (s 78)
  - > Protected Native Species (s 113 (3))
- The SC or the Conservator may seek to have the Criteria reviewed if the Criteria are not adequately identifying items eligible to be listed as threatened, or there are changes to the international or national standards. (ss 66, 72, 79, 114)
- The SC may receive, reject or make a listing nomination and must carry out a listing assessment of the nominated item against the Criteria for:
  - > Threatened Native Species and Ecological Communities (ss 81-85)
  - > Key Threatening Processes (ss 79B-79F)

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<sup>1</sup> The [Common Assessment Method](#) is a consistent approach to the assessment and listing of nationally threatened species across the Australian jurisdictions. It is based on the best practice standard developed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), as used to create the Red List of Threatened Species, with some amendments to suit the Australian context.

- The Minister must consult with the SC before including or transferring a relevant item in a list. A relevant item being a nationally threatened item that is a Commonwealth or State listed item for which an ACT nomination and assessment is not required (s 90A)
- The SC must prepare a Conservation Advice for a nominated item proposed for listing. The Conservation Advice must be consistent with any Conservation Advice guidelines prepared by the Minister. The Conservation Advice must include the outcome of the listing assessment and the criteria met and must be given to the Minister within 15 months of the commencement of the assessment process (s 90D). The Conservation Advice informs the threatened species and ecological communities listing decisions made by the Minister
- The SC may review a Conservation Advice on its own initiative or at the Conservator's request and may make recommendations to the Conservator about the advice. (s 90F)
- The Minister must seek advice from the SC in deciding whether an Action Plan needs to be prepared for a relevant species (s 100A):
  - a. a critically endangered species
  - b. an endangered species
  - c. a vulnerable species
  - d. a regionally threatened species
  - e. a regionally conservation dependent species
- The Conservator must consult with the SC on the preparation of:
  - > Draft Nature Conservation Strategy(s 50)
  - > Draft Action Plans (s 102)
  - > Draft Native Species Conservation Plans (s 118)
- The SC must review Action Plans (s 108(5)) every 10 years after the plan commences or at any other time at the Conservator's request. The SC may make recommendations to the Conservator, including that a plan is no longer needed for a species (s 108 (7))
- The SC may be asked to review Native Species Conservation Plans and make recommendations (s 125) to the Conservator
- The Conservator must consult with the SC about priorities and appropriate methods for monitoring in preparation of the biennial Biodiversity Research and Monitoring Program (BRAMP) (s 25(2))
- The Conservator must consult the SC in preparing any Conservator guidelines about how the Conservator is to exercise the Conservator's functions (s 23(2))
- The SC must, each financial year, give the Minister an annual report about the activities of the committee during the year and make this report publically accessible (s 33)

## 1.2 MEMBERSHIP

The Act specifies that the SC shall consist of seven members with expertise in ecology and biological diversity, conservation science and management. A range of disciplines are represented so that collectively the SC can address a variety of issues with a high degree of competence. Members are appointed by the Minister on a part-time basis. Membership during the reporting period is detailed below. In July 2015 seven members were appointed to the Committee for a three year term.

More information about SC members is provided at **Attachment B**.

## 1.3 OBSERVERS

Representatives from the ACT Natural Resource Management Advisory Committee (NRMAC) were invited to attend SC meetings as observers. Their attendance facilitates communication between the two committees. Representation from the ACT NRMAC rotates around the members and during 2017–18, Dr Erik Doerr, Dr David Freudenberger and Dr Lyn Hinds represented that committee at SC meetings. Also one member of the SC (Dr Jasmyn Lynch) is a member of the Natural Resource Management Council (NRMC) which assists with communication between these two committees.

## 1.4 SECRETARY

Senior Manager, Nature Conservation Policy, Ms Heather Tomlinson, was appointed Secretary to the SC in June 2015. Ms Tomlinson had served as Secretary to the FFC from February 2012.

Ms Linden Chalmers, policy officer within the ACT Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, provided administrative support for the SC.

POSITION	NAME	ORGANISATION
Chair:	Distinguished Professor Arthur Georges	University of Canberra, Institute for Applied Ecology
Deputy Chair:	Honorary Professor Penny Olsen	Australian National University, Research School of Biology
Other members:	Associate Professor Mark Lintermans	University of Canberra, Institute for Applied Ecology
	Assistant Professor Jasmyn Lynch	University of Canberra, Institute for Applied Ecology
	Dr Margaret Kitchin	Conservation Research, ACT Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate
	Dr Barry Richardson	CSIRO, National Research Collections Australia
	Ms Liz Dovey	Australian National University, PhD scholar, Fenner School of Environment and Society

# HIGHLIGHTS OF COMMITTEE BUSINESS

## 2.1 ASSESSMENT OF NOMINATIONS

The SC received a nomination for the Loss of Native Hollow-bearing Trees as a Key Threatening Process during the previous reporting period and assessment of that nomination progressed throughout 2017–18 with the SC expanding the scope to Loss of Mature Native Trees (including hollow-bearing trees) and Lack of Recruitment. A recommendation and Conservation Advice will be progressed to the Minister in the next period.

The SC made a nomination for the Eastern Bettong as Regionally Conservation Dependent during the reporting period and it was peer reviewed by Professor Adrian Manning from the Australian National University (ANU). The SC released the nomination for public comment for the period 27 October 2017 to 8 December 2017, however, received no submissions. The SC has assessed the Eastern Bettong against the criteria for the Regionally Conservation Dependent category in the Threatened Native Species List. A recommendation and Conservation Advice will be progressed to the Minister in the next period.

The SC nominated the Unnatural Fragmentation of Habitats as a Key Threatening Process during the reporting period. The SC released the nomination for public comment for the period 27 April 2017 to 8 June 2017 and received 4 submissions. Assessment of that nomination continues into the next period.

## 2.2 THREATENED LISTINGS

During the reporting period there were no new listings of threatened species, ecological communities or key threatening processes.

As part of the National Reform for Threatened Species and Ecological Species Listings, which aims to align the ACT *Nature Conservation Act 2014* (NC Act) with that of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth) (EPBC Act), the SC assessed

- 17 species, currently listed under the EPBC Act, as eligible to be listed under the NC Act in the same category that they are listed under EPBC Act.
- five species, currently listed under the EPBC Act at a higher threat category than the NC Act, as eligible to be transferred to a higher category of threat under the NC Act. In part, this is because the NC Act expanded the categories to include the new category of Critically Endangered. The SC assessment was based on the EPBC Act assessment and conservation advice.

Recommendations have been prepared and will be progressed to the Minister in the next reporting period.

The current list of threatened native species and ecological communities is at **Attachment C**.



## 2.3 ACTION PLANS

The Minister decides if an action plan is required when a threatened native species, ecological community or key threatening process is listed. The Conservator is then responsible for preparing the action plan, detailing conservation issues and proposed conservation measures for the species/community/process. The SC provides advice to the Conservator on whether the proposed action plan adequately addresses the conservation requirements of the species/community concerned. The Conservator consults the SC on draft action plans prior to their mandatory release for public comment and briefs the SC on the progress of action plans. The SC reviews action plans every ten years and may make recommendations to the Conservator, including that a plan may no longer be needed for a species.

The SC finalised advice to the ACT Government on the ACT Native Grassland Conservation Strategy and Action Plans which involved a full revision of Action Plan No 28. Vision Splendid of Grassy Plains Extended ACT Lowland Native Grassland Conservation Strategy. The document, ACT Native Grassland Conservation Strategy and Action Plans, was subsequently finalised and released 8 December 2017 and includes action plans for:

- Natural Temperate Grassland Ecological Community
- Grassland Earless Dragon (*Tympanocryptis pinguicolla*)
- Golden Sun Moth (*Synemon plana*)
- Striped Legless Lizard (*Delma impar*)
- Perunga Grasshopper (*Perunga orachea*)
- Button Wrinklewort (*Rutidosis leptorrhynchoides*)
- Ginninderra Peppercress (*Lepidium ginninderrense*)
- Baeuerlen's Gentian (*Gentiana baeuerlenii*)

The SC finalised advice to the ACT Government on the ACT Aquatic and Riparian Conservation Strategy and Action Plans which involved a full revision of Action Plan 29 Ribbons of Life ACT Aquatic Species and Riparian Zone Conservation Strategy. The draft strategy and action plans were released for public comment 12 January 2018 to 11 March 2018. The document, ACT Aquatic and Riparian Conservation Strategy and Action Plans, is due to be finalised in the next reporting period and will include action plans for:

- Tuggeranong Lignum (*Muehlenbeckia tuggeranong*)
- Two-spined Blackfish (*Gadopsis bispinosus*)
- Trout Cod (*Maccullochella macquariensis*)
- Macquarie Perch (*Macquaria australasica*)
- Silver Perch (*Bidyanus bidyanus*)
- Murray River Crayfish (*Euastacus armatus*)
- Murumbidgee Bossiaea (*Bossiaea grayii*)

The SC finalised their ten-year review of the Action Plan 27 ACT Lowland Woodland Conservation Strategy in December 2017 that included action plan requirements for:

- Yellow Box – Red Gum Grassy Woodland Ecological Community
- Superb Parrot (*Polytelis swainsonii*)
- Swift Parrot (*Lathamus discolor*)
- Painted Honeyeater (*Grantiella picta*)
- Regent Honeyeater (*Anthochaera phrygia*)
- Brown Treecreeper (*Climacteris picumnus*)
- Hooded Robin (*Melanodryas cucullata*)
- Varied Sittella (*Daphoenositta chrysoptera*)
- White-winged Triller (*Lalage sueurii*)
- Tarengo Leek Orchid (*Prasophyllum petilum*)
- Small Purple Pea (*Swainsona recta*)

The new draft ACT Woodland Conservation Strategy and Action Plans is due to be completed in the next reporting period. In this period the SC provided advice on the new draft action plans (due to be released for public comment in the next reporting period) for:

- Tarengo Leek Orchid (*Prasophyllum petilum*)
- Superb Parrot (*Polytelis swainsonii*)

The SC finalised their ten-year review of the Spotted-tailed Quoll (*Dasyurus maculatus*) – a vulnerable species Action Plan No. 30 in December 2017 and provided advice on the new draft Spotted-tailed Quoll Action Plan in March 2018 which is due to be released for public comment in the next reporting period.

The SC has also provided advice to the ACT Government in this reporting period on the Migratory Species Action Plan that was finalised and released 23 February 2018.

## 2.4 ADVICE ON ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

The SC is advised on the progress of action plan implementation every five years as reported by the Conservator to the Minister. This provides the SC with a good opportunity to be updated on the progress of an action plan and assist their determination as to whether reassessment of a species may be required prior to their 10 year review of the action plan. During the reporting period the following implementation reports were provided to the SC:

- Northern Corroboree Frog (*Pseudophryne pengilleyi*) - December 2017
- Little Eagle (*Hieraaetus morphnoides*) - June 2018

## 2.5 LIAISON WITH NSW, COMMONWEALTH AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS ON REGIONAL ISSUES

The SC reviews national listings under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). During the reporting period, no listed species were considered relevant to the ACT for listing purposes.

The SC exchanges information with the NSW Scientific Committee and the NSW Fisheries Scientific Committee on a regular basis. Amongst other things, the ACT provides information on ACT listings and copies of ACT action plans. NSW in turn provides information on determinations made under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* and the *Fisheries Management Act 1994*. The SC routinely assesses the determinations made in NSW with the view to identifying any species, communities and threatening processes that warrant consideration from an ACT and region perspective, and if relevant, provides advice to the NSW Scientific Committee and the NSW Fisheries Scientific Committee on their proposed recommendations. While no listings were of significant relevance to be prioritised for listing in the ACT at this stage the SC supported the preliminary determination of Habitat Destruction by Feral Horses as a Key Threatening Process in NSW.

## 2.6 ADVICE TO ACT GOVERNMENT AGENCIES DURING DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW OF POLICY, STRATEGIES AND LEGISLATION

With part of the SC's charter being to provide advice on nature conservation issues generally, the SC provided comment and advice on ACT Government documents and other matters referred to it by the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate and other ACT Government agencies.

The Committee provided advice to the ACT Government and agencies on the following:

- Conservator Translocation Guidelines
- Draft ACT Cat Plan
- Protected Native Species Criteria and Processes
- Single Operational List priorities
- Preparation of Conservation Advices for species which are recommended for transfer of category
- Revision of the Fisheries Act
- Protected Native Species List – Potential candidates for Rare invertebrate species
- Habitat destruction by Feral Horses – Preliminary determination by the NSW Scientific Committee to list as a Key Threatening Process

## 2.7 SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE STRATEGIC PLAN

The SC undertook activities in line with the outputs of the 2015–2018 Strategic Plan.

# ATTACHMENT A

## SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS AND ATTENDANCE

MEMBER	MEETING 5 6 SEPTEMBER 2017	MEETING 6 13 DECEMBER 2017	MEETING 7 7 MARCH 2018	MEETING 8 6 JUNE 2018
Arthur Georges	✓	✓	✓	✓
Penny Olsen		✓	✓	
Mark Lintermans	✓	✓		✓
Margaret Kitchin	✓	✓		✓
Barry Richardson	✓	✓	✓	✓
Jasmyn Lynch	✓		✓	✓
Liz Dovey	✓	✓	✓	✓
NRMAC Observer				
Erik Doerr			✓	✓
Lyn Hinds	✓			
David Freudenberger		✓		

## OUT OF SESSION CONSULTATIONS

There were no out of session meetings in the 2017–18, however, the Committee provided significant out of session guidance throughout the year in relation to the Committee business outlined in section 2.

# ATTACHMENT B

## MEMBER PROFILES

### CHAIRPERSON

Name: Professor Arthur Georges

Expertise: Conservation biology of native Australian species, the ecology, evolution and systematics of Australian reptiles and amphibians, temperature-dependent sex determination.

Position: Professor in Applied Ecology, Institute for Applied Ecology, University of Canberra

Professor Georges is committed to sound fundamental science with a keen interest in its application in natural resource management. He has a strong commitment to bringing about realistic win-win situations where development and conservation come into conflict. Professor Georges has extensive experience and knowledge of the biology and conservation of Australia's reptile and amphibian species. In addition to his work as the Chair of the Scientific Committee, Professor Georges has contributed his expertise to the Australian Biodiversity Information Facility Committee, ARC Environmental Futures Network (Steering Committee), ACT Natural Resource Management Advisory Committee and the IUCN/SSC Committee on Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles (Steering Committee).

### DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON

Name: Honorary Professor Penny Olsen

Expertise: Birds, conservation biology

Position: Honorary Professor, Division of Ecology and Evolution, Australian National University

Dr Olsen is a research scientist with a particular expertise in raptors. Her experience and interests are broad, ranging from wildlife management to behavioural ecology. She has prepared a number of national and state recovery plans, is a long-time consultant to the Australian Government Department of the Environment and Heritage's Environment Australia's Norfolk Island owl recovery program and works as an occasional consultant on other matters of national and local environmental interest. Dr Olsen is a member of Birdlife Australia's Threatened Species Committee, tasked with the preparation of The Action Plan for Australian Birds, which informs the Australian government and feeds directly into the IUCN Red List. Dr Olsen has published a number of research papers, books and popular articles on a diversity of subjects including conservation, threatened species and pest management.

## OTHER MEMBERS

**Name:** Dr Margaret Kitchin

**Expertise:** Fire ecology, native vegetation

**Position:** Senior Manager, Conservation Research, EPSDD, ACT Government

Dr Kitchin has extensive expertise in fire ecology, particularly in relation to the impact of fire on native Australian vegetation. She has been responsible for the establishment of the post 2003 vegetation monitoring program, working on the original Lower Cotter Catchment Plan of Management and revegetation strategy, input and mapping for the ACT Vegetation Communities project, and coordinating ecological advice for the Conservation and Land Management bushfire operational plan. In her current role Dr Kitchin is the manager of the EPSDD Conservation Research unit.

**Name:** Dr Barry Richardson

**Expertise:** Endangerment theory, conservation genetics, conservation policy, mammals and invertebrates.

**Position:** Honorary Research Fellow (CSIRO, National Research Collections Australia)

Dr Richardson is a researcher with a broad background including research in endangerment theory, conservation genetics and conservation policy. He has experience in environmental research/taxonomic revisions in mammal, pest mammals, freshwater fish, pelagic and benthic chordates, terrestrial gastropods, insect communities, waste water management, spiders and red listing procedures. He is currently an Honorary Research Fellow (CSIRO, National Research Collections Australia). Dr Richardson is the author and co-author of over 100 publications and has supervised over 30 Honours, Masters and PhD students.

**Name:** Assistant Professor Jasmyn Lynch

**Expertise:** Conservation biology, plant ecology, rare and threatened plant species, recovery planning and botanical survey work.

**Position:** Assistant Professor in Environmental Management, University of Canberra

Assistant Professor Lynch is a conservation ecologist with expertise in research on rare and threatened species; biodiversity patterns and processes; vegetation, climate and geomorphology interactions; wetland assessments and management; and ecological and threatening process frameworks. She has research experience from the genetic scale, through species autoecology, regional ecology, global patterns of diversity, to the application of science to conservation policy and environmental management. Assistant Professor Lynch has over 27 years experience on environmental issues, having worked with the Australian, Tasmanian, Queensland and Western Australian governments, the University of Queensland, the University of Tasmania and Indigenous representatives of Cape York Peninsula.

**Name:** Associate Professor Mark Lintermans

**Expertise:** Ecology and management of aquatic systems, fish, waterbirds and wetlands

**Position:** Associate Professor of Freshwater Fisheries Ecology and Management, University of Canberra

Associate Professor Lintermans has over 30 years' experience in the ecology and management of freshwater ecosystems. He led the aquatic ecology research and management program in the ACT Government for 16 years, working predominantly on freshwater fish ecology and management. Associate Professor Lintermans sits on national recovery teams for Trout cod, Murray cod and Macquarie perch and he also convenes the Threatened Fishes Committee of the Australian Society for Fish Biology, is the Chair of the NSW Fisheries Scientific Committee and was Australian and New Zealand Region Chair of the IUCN Freshwater Fish Specialist Group from 2013–16. Associate Professor Lintermans has also worked on wetlands, particularly on migratory waterbirds at Jerrabomberra Wetlands. He has published widely on fish ecology, conservation and management.

Name: Ms Liz Dovey

Expertise: Conservation science and management, climate change science and impacts, threatened species (particularly mammals) and threatening processes (particularly invasive species).

Position: PhD scholar at the Fenner School of Environment and Society, Australian National University.

Ms Dovey is a conservation scientist who has worked in diverse conservation roles at state, national and international levels of government over the past 40 years. This has allowed her to develop a broad appreciation of science and management challenges from an on-ground perspective to the international arena. She has produced many publications relating to conservation. She has been involved in the assessment, documentation and planning of threatened species and communities, including leading the development of Action Plans. She was also responsible for administering national threatened species legislation. Her most recent experience includes working and studying in the climate change science and impacts field, giving her a nuanced understanding of the interactions of climate change with other pre-existing threatening processes and likely conservation consequences.

# ATTACHMENT C

## LISTED THREATENED NATIVE SPECIES AND ECOLOGICAL COMMUNITIES

### ENDANGERED SPECIES

SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	DATE OF LISTING
<i>Gentiana baeuerlenii</i>	a subalpine herb	15 Apr 1996
<i>Prasophyllum petilum</i>	a leek orchid	15 Apr 1996
<i>Rutidosia leptorrhynchoides</i>	Button Wrinklewort	15 Apr 1996
<i>Swainsona recta</i>	Small Purple Pea	15 Apr 1996
<i>Synemon plana</i>	Golden Sun Moth	15 Apr 1996
<i>Tympanocryptis pinguicollis</i>	Grassland Earless Dragon	15 Apr 1996
<i>Macquaria australasica</i>	Macquarie Perch	6 Jan 1997
<i>Maccullochella macquariensis</i>	Trout Cod	6 Jan 1997
<i>Petrogale penicillata</i>	Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby	6 Jan 1997
<i>Anthochaera phrygia</i>	Regent Honeyeater	30 May 1997
<i>Pseudomys fumeus</i>	Smoky Mouse	12 Jan 1998
<i>Muehlenbeckia tuggeranong</i>	Tuggeranong Lignum	19 Aug 1998
<i>Lepidium ginninderrense</i>	Ginninderra Peppergrass	26 Oct 2001
<i>Bidyanus bidyanus</i>	Silver Perch	26 Oct 2001
<i>Pseudophryne pengilleyi</i>	Northern Corroboree Frog	4 Sept 2003
<i>Arachnorchis actensis</i>	Canberra Spider Orchid	11 April 2005
<i>Corunastylis ectopa</i>	Brindabella Midge Orchid	11 April 2005
<i>Bossiaea grayi</i>	A shrub	30 January 2012



## VULNERABLE SPECIES

SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	DATE OF LISTING
<i>Delma impar</i>	Striped Legless Lizard	15 Apr 1996
<i>Gadopsis bispinosus</i>	Two-spined Blackfish	6 Jan 1997
<i>Euastacus armatus</i>	Murray River Crayfish	6 Jan 1997
<i>Perunga ochracea</i>	Perunga Grasshopper	30 May 1997
<i>Melanodryas cucullata</i>	Hooded Robin	30 May 1997
<i>Lathamus discolor</i>	Swift Parrot	30 May 1997
<i>Polytelis swainsonii</i>	Superb Parrot	30 May 1997
<i>Climacteris picumnus</i>	Brown Treecreeper	30 May 1997
<i>Grantiella picta</i>	Painted Honeyeater	12 Jan 1998
<i>Dasyurus maculatus</i>	Spotted-tailed Quoll	4 Sept 2003
<i>Daphoenositta chrysoptera</i>	Varied Sittella	8 Dec 2003
<i>Lalage sueurii</i>	White-winged Triller	8 Dec 2003
<i>Hieraetus morphnoides</i>	Little Eagle	22 Feb 2008
<i>Aprasia parapulchella</i>	Pink-tailed Worm-lizard	27 March 2008
<i>Calyptorhynchus lathamii</i>	Glossy Black-cockatoo	17 August 2010
<i>Petroica boodang</i>	Scarlet Robin	12 May 2015

## ENDANGERED ECOLOGICAL COMMUNITIES

COMMUNITY NAME	DESCRIPTION	DATE OF LISTING
Natural Temperate Grassland	A naturally occurring grassland of the temperate zone, dominated by native perennial tussock grasses, with associated native herbs and native fauna.	15 Apr 1996
Yellow Box/Red Gum Grassy Woodland	A naturally occurring woodland of the temperate zone, in which Yellow Box co-occurs with Blakely's Red Gum. It includes the species rich understorey of native tussock grasses, herbs and scattered shrubs, together with a large number of native animal species.	30 May 1997

