



integrating wildlife

CONSERVATION AND FARM MANAGEMENT

What you can do

There are many ways in which wildlife conservation can be integrated with farm management. Conserving existing native vegetation and planting local native species, not only protects native animals, it can benefit a farms health and productivity. This note is a basic overview of some environmentally friendly farm management practices. Many of the points covered are more fully explained in other notes in this series.

Retaining and protecting remnant vegetation increases biodiversity (the diversity of all living plants and animals) on your property and is cheaper and less time consuming than replanting. To maintain remnant bushland and native trees:

- leave native vegetation along rivers, streams, roadsides and between properties and patches of bushland. These corridors of vegetation provide refuges and essential habitat areas for native wildlife. Corridors of vegetation also contribute to a farm's productivity by minimising problems associated with erosion and soil loss.
- minimise disturbance (eg mowing and grazing) of remnant bushland, especially when native ground plants are flowering and setting seed. This will maintain biodiversity and restrict the spread of weeds.
- control weeds as soon as possible after they invade a natural area (prior to flowering and seedset). Weeds can change the structure and composition of native bushland by replacing local native species as they compete for nutrients, light and water. A weed can be any species of plant that is not native to your local area.
- avoid soil compaction by not moving heavy machinery and livestock about in native vegetation, (especially during wet conditions). Excessive or too frequent trampling by hooved animals, vehicles and/or people can compact soil reducing productivity and the establishment of new plants. This effect varies for different soil types.
- avoid draining of wetland areas and diverting or channelling watercourses. Allow them to flood and dry naturally, as native vegetation and wildlife will benefit from a natural flood regime. In wetland areas, floods rejuvenate the soil and create temporary habitat and breeding sites for waterbirds, tadpoles and fish.
- fence remnant bushland, isolated trees in paddocks, stream banks and rocky areas to exclude livestock and to encourage natural regeneration.

To encourage wildlife on your property:

- provide healthy bushland with a wide variety of local native trees, shrubs and understorey species. This will attract native wildlife that, in turn, will help control farm pest species.
- preserve mature and standing dead trees — especially trees which have hollows — as they provide valuable nesting, perching and roosting sites for native fauna. Old remnant trees also help maintain the character of the natural landscape of a property. (Note no. 5 — *Natural Tree Hollows — essential for wildlife* provides more detail).
- construct a 'wildlife dam' that has an island, large surface area, variety of depths and gently sloping bank. Fence off the wildlife dam to allow only limited stock access. Planting a buffer around the wildlife dam will provide shelter and habitat for wildlife and assist in stabilising the banks.
- leave river snags, submerged logs, branches and litter in place as habitat for fish and frogs.
- avoid creating barriers that restrict wildlife movement. Place wombat gates in fence lines to allow access without damage and place fish ladders beside dams if the dam is located on a natural watercourse.
- keep your pets in at night — this will help safeguard your pets as well as native wildlife.



To minimise erosion problems by creating and/or protecting wildlife habitat:

- allow leaf litter, fallen logs and branches to accumulate in all habitat areas, including in and around farm dams. Do not clean these areas as they provide wildlife with food and shelter; release important nutrients into the soil; prevent soil erosion; and retain soil moisture. Minimise mowing and grazing in bushland areas, particularly when ground plants are flowering and setting seed.
- keep sensitive areas (such as steep slopes) covered in natural vegetation. Plant local native trees, shrubs and grasses on slopes and along watercourses. Stream banks are best surrounded by a buffer of natural vegetation (at least 20 metres wide is recommended). Farm productivity will be enhanced if the problems associated with soil loss and erosion are minimised.

To protect your property from wildfire, wind, cold and heat whilst still providing and/or maintaining wildlife habitat:

- consult with local authorities and carefully plan where and when controlled burning should take place. A controlled burn at a frequency and intensity similar to the natural regime may help in maintaining healthy bushland.
- in areas away from the homestead and farm buildings that need wildfire protection, allow the natural debris to accumulate on the ground such as fallen logs and branches, tree stumps, rocks and leaf litter. These areas provide habitat for wildlife as well as controlling erosion and returning nutrients to the soil.
- clear firebreaks inside fencelines where road reserves adjacent to the property contain native vegetation.

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Compiled by Rachele Carritt
Illustration: Lyn Skillings
Formerly produced by NSW NPWS
as Land for Wildlife Note 6.

- strategically plant windbreaks of local native plant species ('shelterbelts') to protect crops, pastures, livestock and farm buildings while providing refuge for native wildlife (see Note no. 7 "*Native Shelterbelts — benefits for wildlife*").

To control pest species without harming wildlife

- use pesticides and fertilisers wisely — away from natural bushland, habitat areas and waterways. Pesticides and insecticides can kill native plants as well as very small organisms. Fertilisers raise the nutrient level thus encouraging invasion by exotic species.
- consult relevant authorities about implementing a pest control program for introduced animals that threaten native wildlife and domestic animals. Further details can be obtained from NSW Agriculture office, a Rural Lands Protection Board office or a NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service office. Many introduced pest species such as foxes, dogs and cats are a major threat to wildlife as they compete for resources (food, shelter, nest sites) and prey on many native and domestic species. Further information on fox control is contained in Note No. 4 *Fox control in wildlife habitat*.

To avoid disturbing native habitat for timber needs:

- plant a woodlot of fast growing native species for timber and firewood (eg casuarinas and wattles). Harvest selectively by taking a range of species and age classes and avoid trees with hollows. This will ensure that the woodlot is economically viable over many years as well as encouraging a variety native wildlife to the area.

To enable informed planning and management of your farm for integrating wildlife conservation

- record a list of all plant and animal species on your property and the habitat in which they occur. This is a useful record as to what is on your property, whether native, exotic, a common, rare or threatened species.

Conservation Management Notes are published by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, for the Conservation Partners Program.

The Conservation Partners Program aims to encourage and assist landholders who have formed or wish to form partnerships with the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service to look after wildlife and habitat, native vegetation and cultural heritage.

