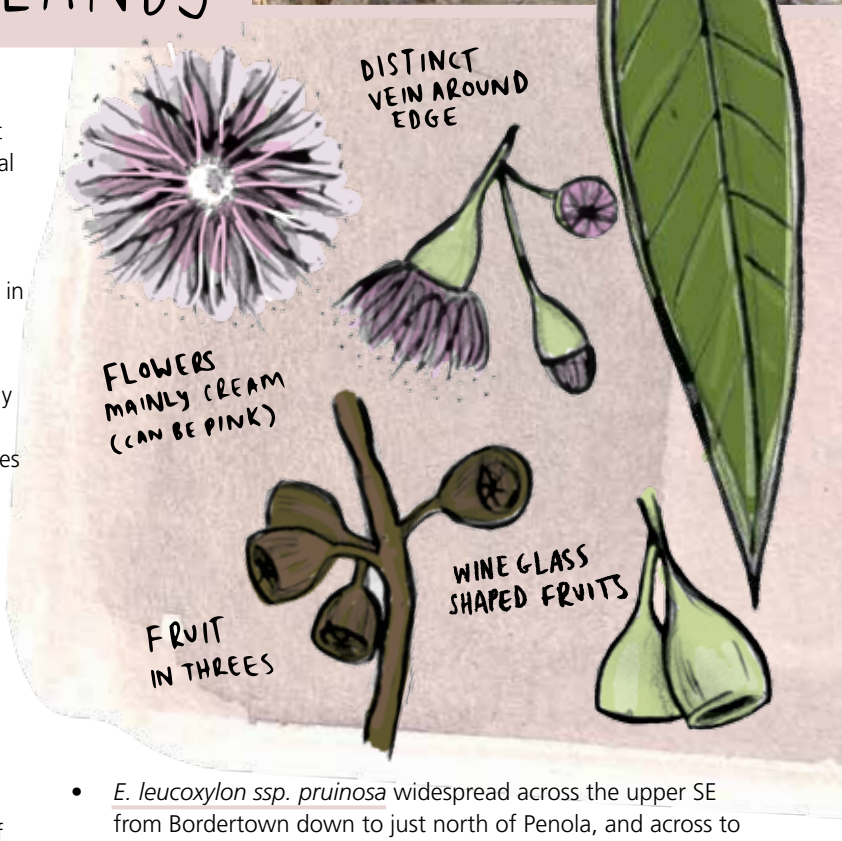
SA BLUE GUM WOODLANDS

What does it look like?

The various SA Blue Gums (*Eucalyptus leucoxylon*) of the South East are a long-lived gum that can reach a height of 25-30 metres in ideal conditions. The tree is commonly known as Blue Gum in SA due to its sometimes bluish foliage, and as Yellow Gum in Victoria due to its hard yellowish wood, traditionally prized for posts, poles and firewood. It has large blossoms, buds and fruit. The blossoms range in colour from deep pink to cream.

Blue Gums vary from poorly formed trees in dense low scrub, to tall trees in open grassy woodlands. Blue Gum woodland is an extremely variable vegetation community that can range from head-height, dense coastal scrub, through to tall open grassy woodland, with trees greater than 25 metres in height or trees over seasonal wetlands.



Where is it found?

Historically these woodlands covered extensive areas of the South East, and are currently considered widespread across the Upper South East. They were more often present on fertile flats suited to agriculture and easily cleared, so they are now largely evident as scattered trees in paddocks.

There are four sub-species of Blue Gum occurring in the South East region:

- *E. leucoxylon ssp. leucoxylon* occurring just south and west of Naracoorte, across to Kingston SE. A large area (approximately 600 hectares) is conserved in Big Heath Conservation Park;
- *E. leucoxylon ssp. pruinosa* widespread across the upper SE from Bordertown down to just north of Penola, and across to Kingston SE, with the largest conserved area being in Bangham Conservation Park; approximately 200 hectares;
- *E. leucoxylon ssp. stephaniae* similar range to *E. leucoxylon ssp.* pruinosa) but occurs further north into Ngarkat Conservation Park and west to the coast; and
- *E. leucoxylon ssp. megalocarpa* present along the coast from Robe to Port MacDonnell, and inland as far as Naracoorte and is a popular ornamental tree due to its large bright pink blossoms and small stature (not shown on map)

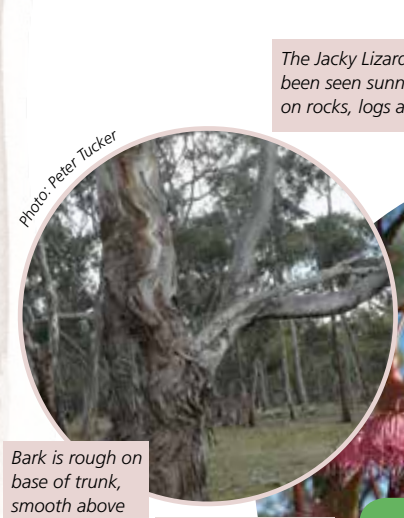


Photo: Peter Tucker

Bark is rough on base of trunk, smooth above

The Jacky Lizard can often been seen sunning themselves on rocks, logs and branches.

Blossom and leaves

Australian Government
Natural Resources South East

Importance

This woodland has been noticeably cleared and is now only at 10% of its original cover. Although it appears plentiful, most intact woodlands are small, and all other areas are typically degraded, signifying its need for conservation.

Blue Gum woodland is a particularly productive habitat for native fauna and can provide abundant flowers for migratory birds and native wildlife, and roosting/refuge habitat for reptiles, invertebrates, birds and nectar-feeding or grazing mammals.

Other species that can be found in the Blue Gum woodland include

Plants

- Elegant Spider-orchid *Caladenia formosa*
- Jumping-jack Wattle *Acacia enterocarpa*
- Clover Glycine *Glycine latrobeana*
- Silver Daisy-bush *Olearia pannosa ssp. pannosa*
- Mallee Bitter-pea *Daviesia benthamii*

Thysanotus juncifolius - Branching Fringe-lily

Invertebrates

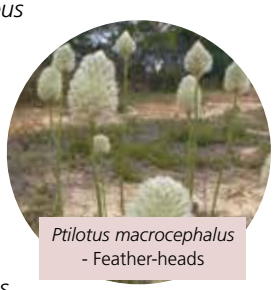
- Golden Sun-moth *Synemon plana*
- Little Buloke Cicada *Pauropsalta sp. aff. Nodicosta*

Mammals

- Squirrel Glider *Petaurus norfolcensis*
- Red-necked Wallaby *Macropus rufogriseus*

Reptiles

- Jacky Lizard *Amphibolurus muricatus*
- Smooth Frog *Geocrinia laevis*



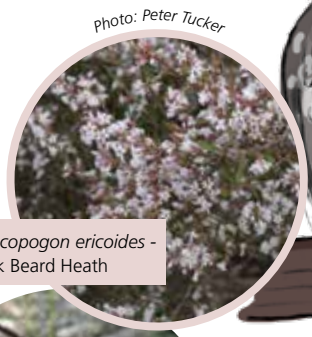
Ptilotus macrocephalus - Feather-heads

Birds

- Bush stone-curlew *Burhinus grallarius*
- Jacky Winter *Microeca facinans*
- Hooded Robin *Melanodryas cucullata*
- Brown Tree-creeper *Climacteris picumnus*
- Restless Flycatcher *Myiagra inquieta*
- Painted Button-quail *Turnix varius*
- Black-chinned Honeyeater *Melithreptus gularis*
- White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina papuensis*
- Barking Owl *Ninox connivens*

photo: Peter Tucker

Barking Owls have a very characteristic call – listen our for a remarkably doglike "woof-woof"!



Leucopogon ericoides - Pink Beard Heath

Caladenia formosa - Elegant Spider Orchid

Patersonia occidentalis - Purple Flag

Threats

Grazing pressure: Young trees and saplings are palatable to stock. Grazing these woodlands prevents natural regeneration and alters the habitat.

Disconnected remnants: remnants are fragmented and often reduced to patches of scattered trees or isolated paddock trees. This restricts successful seed dispersal and pollination, and safe passage for wildlife.

Weed invasion: Invasive woody weeds such as Olives, Italian Buckthorn, and non-local acacias such as Coastal Wattle, Cootamundra Wattle and the Golden Wreath Wattle can take over the midstorey of these woodlands, drastically changing the structure of the vegetation. Weeds such as Phalaris, Perennial Veldt grass and Bridal Creeper out-compete native plants, suppressing their growth and natural regeneration.

Changing water regimes: artificial drainage and irrigation has reduced suitable areas for woodlands to exist and added stress to aging paddock trees.

Restoration Action

Protecting stands of Blue Gum is one of the most constructive things you can do as a landholder, especially if some native plants exist underneath. But individual trees in paddocks should not be dismissed; they are important stepping-stones for wildlife to move across cleared landscapes and should be incorporated into your project plan.

Controlled grazing

Management of stock is a particularly important step in protecting these woodlands to encourage natural regeneration. Fencing to control and/or remove grazing for lengthy periods will start this process. Once grazing pressure has been removed, a focus on the control of pasture grasses and weeds may be necessary.

Link remnants

Where possible, link existing woodlands or revegetate to connect groups of scattered trees. Revegetate by planting seedlings and secure guarding from herbivores followed by several years of weed control and watering to get them established.

Weed control

Reducing weed cover will allow more native plants to flourish. Numerous weed species are known to dominate some remnant woodlands, including exotic woody weeds and other invasive natives. Seek advice on weed control practices.

Modify water regimes

Improving the water regime in your woodland, especially those which still contain wetlands, would greatly benefit the trees and assist recovery to the understorey.

Farmers have shown that conserving biodiversity and native vegetation on their farms supports sustainable agriculture.

Further Advice

Contact Natural Resources South East on 8735 7177 to supply a list of regional revegetation contractors, consultants and specialists to advise on your project.