

# GREY BOX GRASSY WOODLANDS

## What does it look like?

Grey Box (*Eucalyptus microcarpa*) is a long-lived, single trunked tree with blunt ended, olive green leaves and white flowers (in March –May). Its bark is grey with white patches and is fibrous and flaky with a characteristic ‘box’ pattern on the lower part of the trunk. The upper branches are smooth with the bark shed in strips. The best way of identifying this tree is by looking at the number and shape of the fruits (nuts).

In a Grey Box woodland, the Grey Box is the dominant tree with native grasses and sedges growing underneath.

## Where is it found?

Grey Box Woodlands occur on fertile, poorly drained clayey, shrink-swell (gilgai) soils on gently undulating plains. They are often subject to seasonal flooding. The largest remaining areas of Grey Box Woodland in the region are around Bordertown, Mundulla, Custon and Frances. These are the same areas where the larger remaining stands of Buloke (*Allocasuarina leuhmannii*) are found.

Remnant Grey Box stands can be found on roadside/rail reserves, on private property and in small reserves e.g. Custon Conservation Park.

## Importance

Grey Box Grassy Woodlands occur on productive farming land and as a result have been substantially cleared. It currently occupies less than 3 percent of the area it once did and is Nationally listed as an Endangered community.

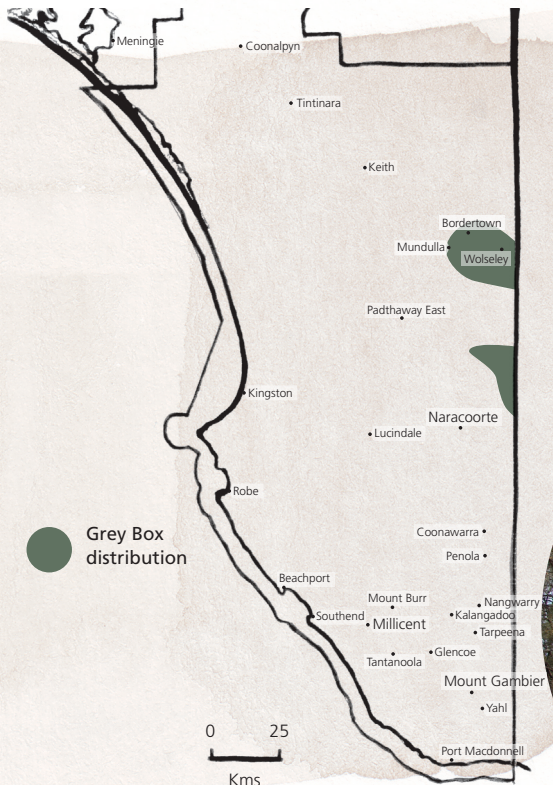
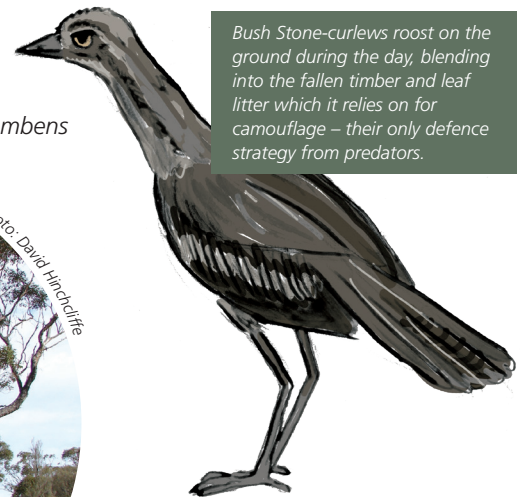


These grassy woodlands provide valuable habitat for many native plant and animal species such as the rare Bush Stone-curlew.

Other species that can be found in Grey Box woodlands include

### Plants

- Hairy-tails *Ptilotus erubescens*
- Lambs-tails *Ptilotus exaltatus* var. *semilanatus*
- Leafy Templetonia *Templetonia stenophylla*
- Silver Daisy-bush *Olearia pannosa* ssp. *pannosa*
- Broughton Pea *Swainsona procumbens*



## Mammals

- Sugar Glider *Petaurus breviceps*

## Reptiles & frogs

- Brown Toadlet *Pseudophryne bibronii*
- Striped Legless-lizard *Delma impar*

## Birds

- Bush stone-curlew *Burhinus grallarius*
- Brown Treecreeper  
*Climacteris picumnus*
- Chestnut-rumped Thornbill  
*Acanthiza uropygialis*
- Southern Whiteface  
*Aphelocephala leucopsis*



*Vittadinia sp.* -  
New Holland Daisy



Photo: Peter Tucker  
*Swainsona procumbens* -  
Broughton Pea

## Threats

Grey Box Grassy woodlands have been greatly reduced in range and often exist in less than ideal situations, where various processes can degrade them.

**Grazing:** over-grazing by livestock and other animals reduces tree health, prevents regeneration, and alters habitat structure.

**Weeds:** weeds out-compete native plants, prevent natural regeneration and change habitat structure.

**Fragmentation and disconnected remnants:** small and isolated patches, including paddock trees, are susceptible to external influences such as invasion by weeds. It makes it difficult for native wildlife to move between patches, or find large enough patches in which they can survive.

## Restoration Action

With so little of this woodland remaining, securing and managing Grey Box woodlands and individual paddock trees is of vital importance. Even small areas and individual trees in paddocks are important as they provide stepping-stones for wildlife to move across cleared landscapes.

### Controlled grazing

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

### Weed control

Active management of weed cover will allow more native plants to persist. European Olive, Bridal Creeper, African Boxthorn and Phalaris are common to these woodlands.

### Firewood collection

Fallen timber is a feature of this landscape and is particularly important for the Bush Stone-curlew, which rely on it for cover. It should not be removed unless it becomes a management issue.

### Link remnants

Where possible, link remnant areas and revegetate to connect stands of scattered trees. Tubestock can be used successfully however they are highly palatable and will need to be protected using robust tree guards. Best results are achieved when seedlings are watered to assist establishment, and weed control undertaken for several years.

Stubble burning causes significant damage and even death to paddock trees, so establishment of fire-breaks around standing vegetation is essential.

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

## Further Advice

Contact Limestone Coast Landscape Board on (08) 8735 1204 to supply a list of regional revegetation contractors, consultants and specialists to advise on your project.



Bark is grey with white patches and has a characteristic 'box' pattern



Sugar Gliders chew on the trunks of trees to encourage the sap that they feed on to flow out – look out for their characteristic shield shaped chewings.



*Lobelia pratioides* -  
Poison Lobelia