

WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S Great Western Woodlands

A Global Treasure in Our Backyard



Our Vision

Recognition, protection and integrated management for one of Australia's great natural areas through the involvement of local communities and stakeholders and for the benefit of people, nature and future generations.





Introduction

The Great Western Woodlands has been recognised as the largest and most intact temperate woodland remaining on Earth - 16 million hectares of natural ecosystems. This area can be sustainably managed while also securing the future of communities and industry in the region. The challenge is worth it, because the Great Western Woodlands has immense ecological, economic and heritage value.

The Woodlands are home to an amazing variety of native flora and fauna with 20% of all Australia's plant species, 30% of Australia's eucalypt species, and dozens of rare and threatened animals such as Chuditch, Malleefowl, Woylies and Red-tailed Phascogales. Australia has the highest rate of mammal extinctions in the world and, nationally, bird numbers are declining rapidly - especially woodland birds. The Great Western Woodlands is one large intact area where we can still retain a functioning environment with most of its species still present, or able to be reintroduced.

The Traditional Owners whose lands cover the Great Western Woodlands have one of the longest continuous connections to Country of any culture on Earth. Their rights as Indigenous people require recognition and their involvement in ownership and management of the area is crucial.

Mining is a major regional industry and will continue to be a feature of the Woodlands. The Great Western Woodlands includes the southern section of WA's Goldfields, which has supported mining for over 100 years. While some 40,000 West Australians live & work in the shires and towns in and around the Woodlands, there are currently few opportunities for people to participate in the management of this amazing area.

The Great Western Woodlands have a new role in Australia's future. Scientists from the Australian National University recently calculated the amount of carbon stored in the vegetation and soils of the area as 950 million tonnes – equivalent to more than six times Australia's total greenhouse gas emissions in 2008! This carbon store can be significantly increased through better fire management, and is incredibly important as Australia attempts to curb damaging carbon emissions.



Where do we start?

Doing nothing is no longer an option: getting improved fire management alone is an important driver for change. The Great Western Woodlands Collaboration is seeking a single, integrated regional management approach, driven by stakeholders, to provide the most efficient and effective management for the woodlands as a whole.

This process commenced in 2009 with the creation by the WA government of a Great Western Woodlands Stakeholder Reference Group. This group, convened from broad interests in the area, included representation from mining, pastoral and tourism sectors, local and State government, Traditional Owners and conservation groups. A Biodiversity and Cultural Conservation Strategy has been drafted by the Department of Environment & Conservation with input from this group.

Current land tenure in the Great Western Woodlands

Land Tenure	Hectares	Proportion of GWW land area
Unallocated Crown Land ('UCL')	9,769,361	61.1%
Pastoral Leases	3,265,976	20.4%
Conservation reserves	2,072,557	13%
Other Crown reserves	385,352	2.4%
Former pastoral lease (now UCL) managed by DEC	317,673	2.0%
Private land	~160,000	~1%

This breakdown shows that almost two thirds of the Woodlands is 'orphan country' - Unallocated Crown Land which is legally the responsibility of several arms of government but in effect has no status or proper care.

Threats to the nature of the Woodlands

It is very timely that the national and global significance of the Woodlands has begun to receive recognition. Because few comprehensive surveys have been undertaken, 'new' species are often found when researchers venture into the area. Recent wildlife surveys found 19 types of rare and threatened animals in just one part of the woodlands. Disturbingly, current knowledge indicates that 11 mammal species are gone from the Great Western Woodlands, or are in decline.

The most significant threats to the health and diversity of this region are:

- The increasing number of large scale, high intensity wildfires which prevent the woodland trees from reaching their full maturity
- Increasing spread of feral animals (e.g., feral dogs, cats, foxes, camels, donkeys, goats and rabbits)

- Invasive weeds, some of which can displace native plants, or alter fire behaviour
- Habitat fragmentation through the cumulative impacts of major infrastructure developments such as roads, powerlines and pipelines which can, if not carefully planned, make fire, feral animal and weed problems harder to manage.



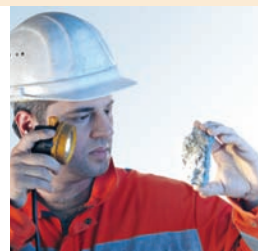
Objectives of the Great Western Woodlands Collaboration

The Great Western Woodlands Collaboration – an alliance of four conservation organisations - is working with the communities and stakeholders of the Woodlands to have this area protected, managed and promoted in a way that:

- Recognises and manages the area as a single entity (or landscape), not as fragmented, separate parts
- Provides substantial financial & human resources for ongoing management
- Supports ongoing, well managed, economic and recreational land uses
- Ensures the rights of Traditional Owners are respected, with a high level of engagement in ownership, management and protection of culture and heritage
- Highlights the area's status as a very special, diverse and beautiful Australian landscape
- Maximises local community leadership and involvement.

How can we achieve this?

- Through the development of a regional management structure involving all participating stakeholders and underpinned by strong, positive, long term working relationships.
- Through a Government commitment to statutory recognition, protection and management of the outstanding values of the Great Western Woodlands.
- Through development of a comprehensive management plan which provides the scientific basis for future management and sets out a range of land use zones which provide 'security of purpose' for a mix of land uses including conservation, mining, recreation and Indigenous.



The Great Western Woodlands is a continental priority for the conservation of biodiversity and large, intact landscapes.

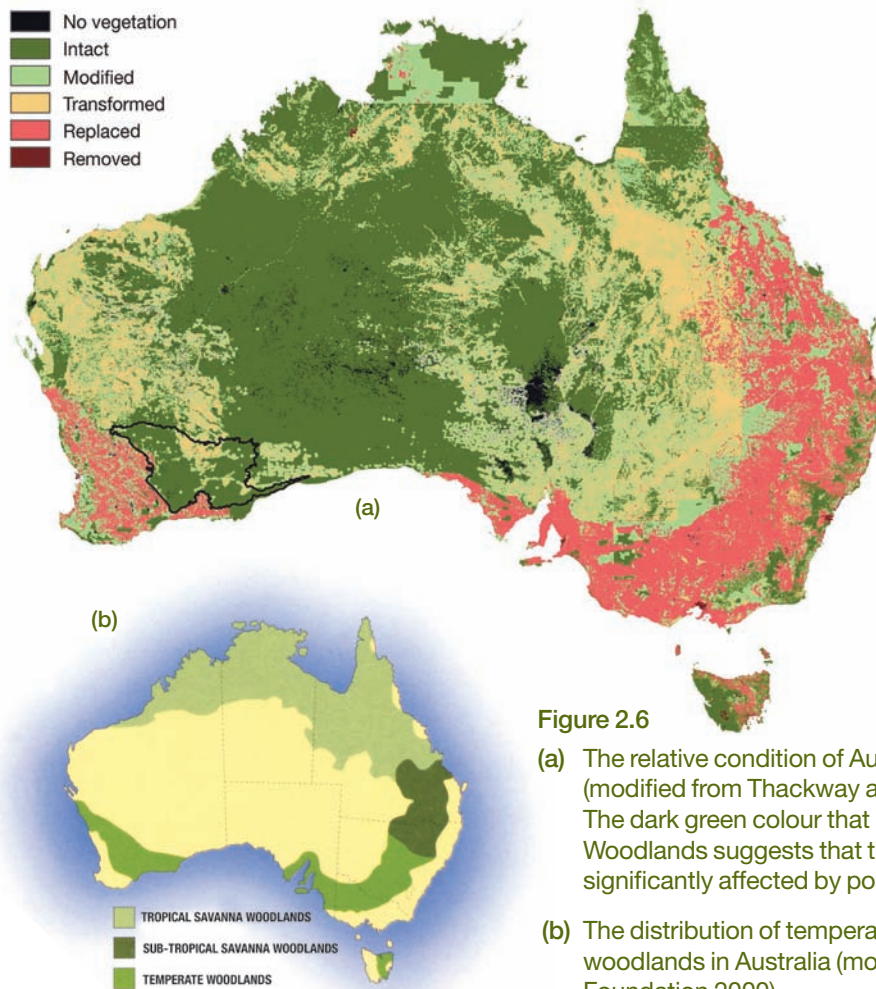


Figure 2.6

- (a) The relative condition of Australia's vegetation (modified from Thackway and Lesslie 2006). The dark green colour that predominates in the Great Western Woodlands suggests that the vegetation has not been significantly affected by post-European land use change.
- (b) The distribution of temperate, sub-tropical and tropical woodlands in Australia (modified from Australia Conservation Foundation 2000).

For a general overview of the GWW and regular updates, go to:
www.wilderness.org.au/gww

For the report “*The Extraordinary Nature of The Great Western Woodlands*” go to:
www.wilderness.org.au/campaigns/great-western-woodland/files/the-great-western-woodlands-report.pdf

For a summary of the Australian National University (ANU) Green Carbon report, go to:
www.wilderness.org.au/pdf/the-great-western-woodlands-report.pdf

Want to know more?

You can contact us at: (08) 6460 4936

The Great Western Woodlands Collaboration



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