



# Swamp Scrub

threatened species in our backyard

November 2008

## What is Swamp Scrub?

Swamp Scrub is a distinct ecosystem formed by an assemblage of plants growing together to form a vegetation community.

- Woolly Tea Tree is the dominant species often forming a dense, impenetrable thicket. Other signature Swamp Scrub species include; Scented Paperbark, Tall Saw Sedge and Tassel Sedge.
- Swamp Scrub grows on wet, swampy sites, near springs, along rivers and in damp gullies and wetlands in Southern Victoria and South Australia.
- The understorey is dense and includes large sedges and many small plants including grasses, herbs, mosses and lichens. Common species include Ivy-leaf violet, Shiny Bog-Sedge and Streaked Arrow Grass.
- Swamp Scrub usually looks blue/grey, making it easy to recognise from a distance.



Woolly Tea Tree

## Why is Swamp Scrub important?



Native Violet

Swamp scrub provides many services including:

- healthy fish habitat
- preventing erosion and soil loss into waterways
- filtering excess nutrients
- improving water quality for human and stock use
- Habitat for useful pollinators and native predators, including birds, that eat farm pests such as Cockchafer Beetle larvae
- Shade, windbreaks and shelter for stock and pastures
- Habitat for native wildlife including several threatened species
- Only known habitat for three threatened orchid species

Only five percent of the Swamp Scrub present at European settlement remains in Victoria. Like all native vegetation Swamp Scrub is important to help buffer the region against a changing climate and to ensure the long term viability of our farms and landscape.



Left: Swamp Scrub on the  
Curdies River and a Swamp  
Antechinus

## threatened species in our backyard

### What lives in Swamp Scrub?

Many native animals live in or use Swamp Scrub. Many of these are rare or threatened, including the Swamp Antechinus, Ground Parrot, Southern Emu Wren, Orange Bellied Parrot, Growling Grass Frog, Swamp Skink and Yarra Pigmy Perch. These and Eels, Spiny Crayfish, possums and a variety of birds all depend on Swamp Scrub in some way.

By looking after Swamp Scrub we are protecting vital habitat for many species. We want to make sure the plants, birds and other animals we encounter will still be visited by future generations.

Swamp Scrub not been extensively studied and contains several un-named plant species. Who knows what wonderful new products, foods or medicines could be discovered.



Swamp Skink



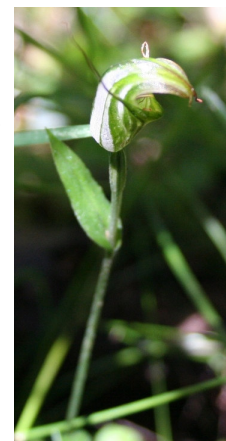
Late Helmet Orchid

### Native Orchids

Native orchids, including at least three threatened species grow in Swamp Scrub. These orchids need specific conditions to grow and reproduce. Swamp Scrub provides the right combination of soil moisture, specific soil fungus and light. Because orchids are so sensitive they are an indicator of a healthy system.

The Late Helmet Orchid grows only in Swamp Scrub. These beautiful, tiny plants have a flower that is just 15mm long. We know of only six places in the world where this species grows. Including four spots here in South West Victoria.

The Swamp Greenhood Orchid and the Small Sickie Greenhood Orchid also grow in swamp scrub. They can grow to 30cm tall and both produce a single white flower with green stripes.



Swamp Greenhood

In recent years there has been a huge effort put in to managing threatened orchids. Research into orchid biology, pollinations and genetics is being done by DSE and other agencies. Hands on management includes pollinating small populations by hand, weed control and growing some orchids in laboratories and planting them back into the wild. Volunteers play a crucial role in threatened species conservation and orchid conservation in particular.

### How you can help

If you have Swamp Scrub on your property we might be able to provide funding and assistance to help you manage it. This could include fencing to manage stock access or controlling weeds. We are also interested in surveying Swamp Scrub sites, even degraded sites or sites that are already fenced, so please contact us for more information.

**For more information contact: Laura Weedon: Threatened Species Officer  
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