

## Site 13. The Basin Scout Hall Reserve

Land surrounding the Scout Hall at the corner of Forest Rd and Church St, The Basin. Melway ref. 65 G8.

### Site Significance Level: *Regional*

- The vegetation belongs to the regionally vulnerable Ecological Vegetation Class, Grassy Forest, but the remnant is rather small and substantially modified;
- The site is part of a network of sites of varying sizes that effectively expand the habitat for flora and fauna in the Dandenong Ranges National Park, which is good for the organisms and good for the amenity of the neighbourhood.

**Aerial photograph and plan:** See page 69, which covers this site and Site 14.

### Boundaries

The site comprises Lots 17 and 18 of LP8116, which are jointly occupied by the scout hall (2,405 m<sup>2</sup>).

**Land use & tenure:** Council reserve, occupied by the scout hall. The site and most of the other land in the triangle north of Church St are zoned Public Park and Recreation Zone.

### Site description

The site is located in the commercial and civic centre of The Basin. It includes a scout hall and a small, unsurfaced car park. It is on gently sloping land near the base of the north-facing spur of Chandlers Hill in the Dandenong Ranges, at elevations of 160-166 m. The soil comprises loam over clay subsoil, derived from decay of the underlying Mt Evelyn rhyodacite formation (part of the Mt Dandenong volcanic flows).

The land supports a fair to good cover of remnant trees, with patchy understorey whose condition varies according to the history of clearing, mowing etc. and consequent weed infestations. A few indigenous shrubs have been planted along the northern boundary.

Because of this site and many other properties like it in the neighbourhood (particularly within Site 14), the neighbourhood enjoys a very rich birdlife for an urban area, as well as other native fauna. This adds to the amenity of the area.

The site was included within Site 139 in the report of sites of significance by Water Ecoscience (1998), based on its 'natural landscape values'.

### Relationship to other land

Residential properties in the surrounding area support a fair to good cover of remnant trees and some indigenous understorey vegetation, particularly in Site 14. There are also native trees in the civic area just north of the scout hall and the adjoining fire station. Most nearby roadsides, including Mountain Hwy, also retain some native tree cover and occasional patches of native understorey. The density of remnant trees in the area no doubt facilitates movement of native birds, insects and pollen between the scout hall reserve and the larger nearby areas of habitat, including the Dandenong Ranges National Park (600m away), the forested land adjoining the park (Site 18) and Wicks Reserve (Site 15, 300m to the east). This is evidenced by the abundance of Australian King-parrots, which are regarded as an uncommon species in the region generally (Land Conservation Council 1991).

**Bioregion:** Highlands Southern Fall

### Habitat type

Grassy Forest (EVC 128, **regionally Vulnerable**), approximately 750 m<sup>2</sup> in fair ecological condition (rating C) and 750 m<sup>2</sup> in poor ecological condition (rating D), plus approximately 500 m<sup>2</sup> of eucalypt canopy extending over adjoining nature strips and roads. 25 indigenous plant species recorded, and likely to support additional seasonal species.

**Canopy trees:** A fair to good cover of *Eucalyptus macrorhyncha* up to 30m tall (mainly 50-80 years old), with some *E. goniocalyx* and *E. obliqua*. Moderate foliage dieback is apparent.

**Lower trees:** Includes a number of specimens of *Exocarpos cupressiformis*, with some *Acacia melanoxylon*.

**Shrubs:** Sparse shrub layer, including some *Acacia pycnantha*, *Bursaria spinosa* and *Cassinia aculeata*.

**Vines:** Absent, except for some *Billardiera mutabilis*.

**Ferns:** Scarce *Pteridium esculentum*.

**Ground flora:** Dominated by a good cover of indigenous grasses in the least disturbed areas, particularly *Rytidosperma pallidum* and *Rytidosperma penicillatum*. Orchids and lilies potentially occur in some locations.

## Plant species

The following plant species were observed by Mr Rik Brown in April 2002. The column headed 'Risk' indicates the indigenous species' risk of extinction in Knox as follows: 'C'=Critically Endangered; 'E'=Endangered; and 'V'=Vulnerable. At least ten additional naturally occurring indigenous species would be expected in other seasons.

Risk	Indigenous Species	Risk	Indigenous Species
	<i>Acacia dealbata</i>	V	<i>Exocarpos cupressiformis</i>
V	<i>Acacia melanoxylon</i>		<i>Gonocarpus tetragynus</i>
E	<i>Acacia myrtifolia</i>		<i>Leptospermum continentale</i>
E	<i>Acacia pycnantha</i>		<i>Lomandra filiformis</i>
V	<i>Acrotriche prostrata</i>		<i>Microlaena stipoides</i>
	<i>Austrostipa rudis</i>	C	<i>Olearia ramulosa</i> (probably planted)
	<i>Billardiera mutabilis</i>	V	<i>Platylobium formosum</i>
	<i>Bursaria spinosa</i>		<i>Poa morrisii</i>
	<i>Cassinia aculeata</i>		<i>Pteridium esculentum</i>
	<i>Dianella admixta</i>	V	<i>Pultenaea gunnii</i>
	<i>Eucalyptus goniocalyx</i>		<i>Rytidosperma pallidum</i>
E	<i>Eucalyptus macrorhyncha</i>		<i>Rytidosperma penicillatum</i>
V	<i>Eucalyptus obliqua</i>		<i>Themeda triandra</i>
Introduced Species			
	<i>Acacia elata</i>		<i>Crocsmia × crocosmiiflora</i>
	<i>Agapanthus praecox</i>		<i>Prunus cerasifera</i>
	<i>Briza maxima</i>		<i>Cytisus scoparius</i>
	<i>Cotoneaster pannosus</i>		<i>Genista monspessulana</i>
			<i>Pittosporum undulatum</i>
			<i>Tradescantia fluminensis</i>

## Fauna of special significance

The regionally uncommon Australian King-parrot is fairly abundant in this neighbourhood. Various other uncommon or rare forest birds that occur within the nearby Dandenong Ranges National Park and Wicks Reserve are likely to visit here.

## Fauna habitat features

Remnant vegetation, and particularly the mature trees, provide some habitat for forest birds in combination with remnant trees scattered throughout the surrounding area. The understorey supports native insects and no doubt skinks, but the site is too small to provide much habitat on its own. The presence of native vegetation in the surrounding neighbourhood is vital for this site to function as fauna habitat of any note.

## Significance ratings

### Regionally Threatened Ecological Vegetation Class

According to the criteria of 'Victoria's Native Vegetation Management – A Framework for Action' (NRE 2002a), remnants of a regionally vulnerable EVC (including Grassy Forest) have a conservation significance rating of Medium to Very High, depending on their habitat score (Volume 1, Section 2.4.4). The vegetation around the scout hall would probably have a habitat score below 0.3, if it were to be measured, and this would put the conservation significance as Medium under the Framework. As a consequence, the significance criteria of Amos (2004) confer at least **Regional** significance on the site as a whole. If a more detailed site inspection in accordance with the Framework were to show that the most significant part of the Grassy Forest has a habitat score of at least 0.3 (which seems unlikely), the same criteria would give a State significance rating. On the other hand, if the vegetation becomes any more degraded, it will cease to qualify as a 'remnant patch' and its significance will then be 'None' by the standard criteria.

### Locally threatened plant species

Most of the locally threatened plant species listed above have viable populations (in combination with surrounding vegetation), thereby meeting criterion 3.1.5 for a site of **Local** significance.

## Threats

- Invasion by environmental weeds. The weed species rated as 'Serious' on this site according to the criteria of Section 2.4.3 of Volume 1 are: Large Quaking-grass (*Briza maxima*); English Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*); Cape Broom (*Genista monspessulana*); and Wandering Jew (*Tradescantia albiflora*).
- The effects of habitat fragmentation. Ecological viability is threatened by edge effects and the relatively small extent of remnant vegetation.
- Physical disturbances to remnant understorey vegetation through mowing, clearing, fire prevention and vehicle access.

- Loss or decline of plant species that are present in dangerously small numbers, due to inbreeding, poor reproductive success or elimination by incidents such as digging by dogs;

**Management issues**

- Selective weed control should occur, focusing on the serious infestations just mentioned. Intensive control of exotic grasses and creepers will be required to restore areas supporting remnant ground layer vegetation.
- Clearly delineate and/or fence areas supporting remnant understorey vegetation to prevent disturbances.
- Remnant vegetation within the site could be substantially enhanced with appropriate management to prevent disturbances and control weeds. Ecological burning is likely to be ineffective in the short-term because of the small area of remnant understorey and potential for spread of fire-adapted weeds.
- Fire prevention requirements could be adequately addressed through weed control.

**Administration matters**

- This site is suited to inclusion under the proposed ESO2 overlay because it is of at least Regional significance under current criteria and it contains a viable remnant of a regionally threatened EVC. Note that the overlay is not proposed to affect maintenance of the facilities on the land;
- The land is zoned 'Public Park & Recreation Zone' and is presently covered by Vegetation Protection Overlay 3;
- Council should make the significance of the site known to its users and to those who manage its vegetation.

**Information sources used in this assessment**

- Fieldwork undertaken during this study by Rik Brown (11/4/02), including compilation of lists of indigenous and introduced plant species, incidental fauna observations and vegetation mapping/descriptions according to the procedures discussed in Section 2.4 of Volume 1;
- Satellite imagery of the district and aerial photography from February 2001, April 2003 and February 2007;
- The Department of Sustainability & Environment's BioMaps of the area;
- Maps of geology and topography produced by agencies of the Victorian government.