

# Preface



Green and golden bell frog.

This book is a celebration of Australia's temperate lowland woodlands, in particular those of the South West Slopes and adjacent regions of southern New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory.

While Australians have had some 30–40 years of 'environmental awakening,' it is probably true to say that there are some types of vegetation rich in beautiful flora and fauna that have remained largely unknown to most people. Woodlands are a classic example.

Woodlands are home to many extraordinary plants and animals and they sometimes support more species of groups (birds, for example) than better-known forest habitats. In this book we highlight some of the diverse plants and animals that characterise these subtle but fascinating environments. We first describe where woodlands have come from; the various components of the vegetation that together make a woodland; and explore future management challenges. The middle chapters deal more fully with each component of the woodland, working from the canopy (the tree crowns) down, through the understorey, and the ground layers, to the lowest lying parts of a landscape – wetlands, rivers and creeks. The final chapters discuss how wider landscape perspectives are important in shaping our approaches to woodland management and conservation. In each chapter we illustrate many key topics in woodland biology with spectacular images. The photo captions explain important aspects of woodland ecology as well as elements of woodland management and conservation.

We hope that this book may foster a greater appreciation and understanding of the importance of Australia's temperate woodlands. There is an urgent need to better manage and conserve what we still have as a key part of the nation's natural heritage. We aim to communicate the beauty and diversity of woodlands in words and images to a wide audience of scientific colleagues, people on the land and others with interests in managing country. It is vital that woodlands are managed sustainably and conserved. Through better understanding and better land practices, as well as further research, we can ensure that not only the production of commodities such as wool, meat and wheat can continue, but also that country can maintain the range of native plants and animals that has existed there for millions of years. Although temperate woodlands suffer major problems, there are many positive things that can be done and these are summarised on page 132.

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June 2005