

Chapter 1

Australia's woodland heritage

It was once possible to walk from Melbourne to Sydney through almost continuous woodland. A traveller in the early nineteenth century passing through this part of south-eastern Australia would have encountered an astonishing diversity of woodland types including: grey box woodlands, black box woodlands, white box woodlands, and woodlands with mixtures of tree species such as yellow box and Blakely's red gum. In the wetter areas along creeks and streams, our traveller would have encountered magnificent stands of river red gum.

RIGHT: Grassy woodlands – a once typical scene in temperate Australia. The large, relatively open spaces between trees are one of the classic features that helps distinguish woodlands from forests.

LEFT: Woodlands dominated by white box once extended from north-eastern Victoria to southern Queensland. They also occurred in western Victoria and the southern Flinders Ranges. White box woodlands most often occurred on the flatter, more productive parts of landscape and have been extensively cleared. Less than one per cent of their former cover remains. Most of the few remaining patches are tiny – less than one hectare.

