

Chapter 3

The canopy

Canopy trees are the most obvious component of temperate woodlands. Both living and dead canopy trees in woodlands play important roles – for a variety of plants, for a wide range of animals, and for temperate woodland ecosystems in general. Enormous numbers of native invertebrates such as beetles, native bees and wasps are strongly associated with the canopies of woodland trees – even when the woodland is highly degraded and consists of just a single isolated paddock tree. The trunks and bark layers of canopy trees provide important habitats for insects and spiders, supporting different species from those found in the crown. Indeed, the invertebrate populations of canopies and tree trunks can be extraor-

RIGHT: The canopies of woodland trees are complex structures of trunks, interwoven branches, leaves and mistletoe clumps which provide a wide range of different kinds of places for birds, possums, gliders and other animals to feed, shelter, and find mates.

LEFT: Tree canopies can be used as nesting sites, places to find food, and a pathway for animals to move between different parts of a tree. The importance of tree canopies for many animal species is increasingly being recognised by biologists around the world – large numbers of previously undescribed species, particularly insects, are being found when canopies are systematically surveyed.

