

## Chapter 5

# The ground layer

The ground layer comprises logs, fallen branches, leaf litter, piles of rocks and boulders, natural cracks in the soil and groundcover plants (including native grasses, orchids and native daisies). It provides critical habitats for many small mammals, birds, reptiles and frogs. In forest environments, 20 per cent of all animal species rely on dead wood in fallen logs or standing trees. Fallen logs are just as important in woodland environments. The importance of log and other ground layer habitats is highlighted when they are lost – species such as the diamond firetail, common dunnart and yellow-footed antechinus become rare or are lost altogether from farms.

RIGHT: Fallen timber is valuable habitat for reptiles, especially when it occurs with partially buried rocks.



LEFT: The ground layer can be one of the most diverse layers in a woodland. Sometimes it is dominated by a single species such as this carpet of 'billy buttons' in a stand of brittle gum/long-leaved box. Many early European explorers commented on the park-like appearance of woodlands that made it easy for them to ride their horses during their expeditions.