

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

Restoring woodland understoreys

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Grassy White Box woodlands are one of Australia's most endangered ecosystems. Most remnants are small and degraded, and the ground vegetation is usually dominated by introduced weeds. The aim of this project is to develop practical methods to help landholders and managers to restore the understorey of degraded woodlands. (2008-2012)

Funding New Environmental Trust, Murray CMA, Future Farm Industries CRC, Sugar Australia, NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water.

Researchers Assoc. Professor Ian Lunt (CSU), Dr Suzanne Prober (CSIRO) and Ian Cole (CSU, DECCW NSW)

Objectives

In 2008, we established a large experiment at two travelling stock reserves near Albury, with support from the Murray CMA and the Hume Livestock Health and Pest Authority. The field trials had two specific aims: (1) to see how different activities affected existing native and exotic plants, (2) to compare methods for establishing native grasses in degraded remnants, and (3) to see how well different native grass species resisted invasion by exotic weeds.

Methods

Seeds of four native grass species have been sown, and different plots have been irrigated, burnt and grazed each year. We also reduced available nutrient levels in some plots by adding sugar (kindly donated by Sugar Australia).

The trials have been subject to the vicissitudes of life on the land, with severe drought, a wildfire (which burnt all of the plots and destroyed our irrigation system at one site) and record-breaking, summer rains. We are

still collecting data from the trial, and comparing how well the different treatments worked under variable weather conditions.

Outputs

We have presented interim results at a field day, and at seminars and conferences. In September 2010, the project was filmed for the ABC's TV science show, *Catalyst*. This show was aired on July 7, 2011.

<http://www.abc.net.au/catalyst/stories/3263957.htm>



Ian Cole burns one of the experimental plots

Outcomes

While we await final outcomes, the project has raised the profile of endangered woodlands and the need for their restoration, through lots of publicity in regional media and project newsletters. We look forward to providing final results in coming years.

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