

Chapter 2

How a temperate woodland works

At the simplest level, a woodland consists of an overstorey (the canopy trees), an understorey, and a ground layer. However, woodlands are complex vegetation communities that vary in structure and plant species composition in many different ways. Woodlands also change over time. The drivers of woodland tree spacing are climate, topography, soil type, and disturbance. Each of these can interact strongly with each other. These significant variations in temperate woodlands give rise to the huge diversity of plant and animal life found there.

RIGHT: Woodlands with several layers of vegetation – such as this area of box-ironbark – typically support many more species of birds and other animals than woodlands that have no understorey or regrowth tree layers. Multiple layers of vegetation provide more places for more species to nest, find food and seek shelter from predators and inclement weather.



LEFT: This white box woodland has extensive ground cover, a mid-storey layer of young regenerating trees and an overstorey of more mature trees.