

A DECADE OF RESEARCH AND MANAGEMENT INSIGHTS IN AUSTRALIA'S TEMPERATE WOODLANDS

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Introduction

For much of the past 50 years, tall wet eucalypt forests and rainforests have been the focus of many of Australia's ecological researchers and environmental policy makers. Over the past 10–20 years, however, there has been a shift in emphasis away from wet forests toward the ecology, management and conservation of Australia's temperate woodland environments and the biota they support. Concurrently there has been a body of work about ecologically sustainable agriculture and its integration with other environmental values like the conservation of woodland biota and the preservation of native grassland ecosystems. Arising from this change in focus were seminal books on landscape change and habitat fragmentation (e.g. Saunders *et al.* 1987; Saunders and Hobbs 1991) and a decade ago a book was published including specifically targeted research and management of temperate woodlands (Hobbs and Yates 2000). Since these earlier contributions, there has been considerable new research on temperate woodlands as well as major changes in natural resource management practice and policy. How far have we come in that time? What can we say that is new and important? What are the key knowledge gaps that need to be closed?

This book is, in part, an attempt to answer these (and other) questions by presenting some of the latest thinking in temperate woodland ecology, woodland management, and woodland policy. It is a compilation of opinion pieces by leading thinkers in temperate woodland ecology, management practice and policy making. Some have worked a long time in temperate woodlands whereas others have more recently joined the woodland scientific or policy fraternities. There are authors from universities, State and Federal Government agencies, regional catchment management bodies, non-government organisations and private landholders. The scope of the presentations is as broad as the range of organisations represented by the authors. Indeed, the chapters in the book cover work completed or ongoing in all of the nation's major jurisdictions, except the Northern Territory (where there is no temperate woodland). The map on the next page shows the location of the work that features in different chapters. There are also national overview chapters from a number of authors. The book includes contributions from plant ecologists, animal ecologists, natural resource managers and policy makers. Some chapter authors have chosen a single species focus whereas others concentrate on particular