5

SCATTERED PADDOCK TREES: THE LIVING DEAD OR LIFELINE TO THE FUTURE?

Adrian D. Manning and Joern Fischer

'There are those that are standing, living and breathing, but as dead as is the litter, since they have no reproductive future. They are the living dead.' (Janzen 1986, p. 307)

1. Much remnant tree cover in productive areas occurs as scattered paddock trees.
2. Scattered trees are rapidly disappearing.
3. False assumptions are commonly made about scattered trees, and these underpin their neglect.
4. Scattered trees provide valuable ecosystem functions at the local scale.
5. Scattered trees provide valuable ecosystem functions at the landscape scale.
6. Scattered trees provide valuable ecological continuity through time.
7. We need to review existing policy settings critically to reflect current science.
8. We need to improve conditions for natural tree regeneration.
9. We need to plant and direct-seed scattered trees where natural regeneration is unlikely.

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to examine the value of scattered paddock trees that often remain as a result of the land conversion process. Our central argument is that it is important to focus research, management, and policy initiatives not only on relatively intact woodland patches, but also on scattered paddock trees. We summarise our reasons for this argument in nine lessons. The first three lessons address practical and conceptual issues concerning the plight of scattered paddock trees. The next three summarise key ecological functions provided by scattered trees. The last three lessons point towards important management and policy priorities for the future.

The lessons we summarise in this chapter arise from our collective experience working in woodland ecosystems over the last 10 years (see map on next page). We have worked on a wide range of issues during that time, including paddock trees, their regeneration, and their habitat value for native reptiles, birds, mammals and ground-dwelling invertebrates.