Herb-rich Foothill Forest
Threatened in the Goulburn Broken Catchment

36% of Herb-rich Foothill Forests have been cleared. 21% of what remains is on private land.

Figure 1. An example of Herb-rich Foothill Forest, in moderately healthy condition.

Figure 2. An example of the Herb-rich Foothill Forest after fire.

Figure 3. An example of the Herb-rich Foothill Forest in moderate condition.

Figure 4. An example of the ground layer in a Herb-rich Foothill Forest. Pennywort, Kidney-weed, Native Geranium, Wattle Matrush, Handsome flat-pea, Common Woodrush and Tussock grass can be seen.
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Description
This medium to tall open forest (25m to 30m tall) occupies easterly and southerly aspects mainly on lower slopes and in gullies. It occurs on relatively fertile, moderately well-drained soils on an extremely wide range of geological types and in areas of moderate to high rainfall at elevations from 200-1200m.

The overstorey commonly consists of Narrow-leaf Peppermint and Candlebark.

The small tree layer of Silver Wattle occurs over a sparse to dense shrub layer including Prickly Currant-bush, Handsome Flat-pea, Hop Bitter-pea and Pink Bells.

The understorey contains a high cover and diversity of herbs and grasses in the ground layer, such as Kidney-weed, Pennywort, Mat-rush, Austral Bear's-ears, Mountain Clematis, Weeping Grass, Common Tussock-grass, Common Hedgehog-grass and Common Wheat-grass. Austral Bracken may tend to dominate following frequent disturbance, particularly by fire and grazing.

Species to Look Out For
Flora: Blackwood, Common Heath, Dusty Daisy-bush.
Fauna: Greater Glider, Southern Boobook, Tawny Frogmouth, Superb Lyrebird, Mountain Dragon.

Why Herb-rich Foothill Forests are Threatened
Many species rely on these forests and the ecological services this forest type provide more broadly to the environment. More than 36% of Herb-rich Foothill Forests in the Goulburn Broken Catchment have disappeared since European settlement. Of the balance 21% remains on private land. The support of private landholders is important for the ongoing conservation of Herb-rich Foothill Forests.

Current threats include, inappropriate fire regimes (frequency, season of burn and intensity - cause loss of species and change the structure of remnants), soil disturbance (eg. ploughing and pugging, favouring weed species), weed invasion (particularly Blackberry and other woody and broad-leaf weeds), pest animals, loss of tree and ground habitat (through timber harvesting, tidying-up of fallen timber and firewood collection), poor timing of stock grazing and overgrazing (causes loss of native species, invasion of weeds, hinders native plant regeneration, disturbs the soil and increases nutrient levels) and lack of native understorey and ground layer (which attract insect eating birds helping keep the overstorey healthy, and improve soil health through fixing nitrogen).
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Management Tips

Weed control - develop plan for action:
Woody weed control (including Blackberry)
Control small isolated infestations first.

Blackberry control: advice is available from DPI on specifically how to deal with dense blackberry infestations.

Control foxes to limit woody weeds.

Burning weedy, open areas in autumn, could be an option (perhaps too risky at other times of the year for landholders).

Soon after fire spot spray weedy grasses with species specific herbicide, avoiding native grasses.

Minimise disturbance to prevent erosion and minimise weed invasion

Avoid driving vehicles through remnant to minimise disturbance

Leave fallen timber for habitat

Revegetate around remnants to buffer from introduced pasture and link to other remnants

Restoring the native understorey will help keep existing trees healthy, improve nutrient cycling and provide habitat for a greater range of species.

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Conservation Status

Herb-rich Foothill Forest is threatened in the Goulburn Broken Catchment.

Victorian Riverina bioregion: Vulnerable
Central Victorian Uplands bioregion: Depleted
Highlands - Southern Fall bioregion: Least Concern
Highlands - Northern Fall bioregion: Least Concern
Victorian Alps bioregion: Least Concern

References:
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Acknowledgments:
This project was a partnership between the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority and Department of Sustainability and Environment, and funded by NAP: Australian Governments and local communities working together to prevent, repair and manage rising salinity and declining water quality across Australia. Thanks to comments from Alison Oates, Biodiversity & Natural Resource Division, DSE and Glen Johnson, Water and Biodiversity Team, North East DSE; Jenni Nunan, GIS team, DSE, Benalla for producing the maps; for feedback and comments from the Biodiversity Team in the Goulburn Broken and NorthEast, DSE; the DPI LINKS officers and CMOs, the GBCMA waterways and vegetation officers and to all who contributed photographs and support.

Compiled by: Mary Titcumb, Department of Sustainability and Environment
For further information about this publication, contact:
Department of Sustainability and Environment or Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority
Benalla (03) 5761 1611
© The State of Victoria, Department of Sustainability and Environment, May 2005.
ISBN 1-920742-11-5
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Figure 14. A representation of the pre-1750 and present day distribution of Herb-rich Foothill Forest and its mosaics and complexes in the Goulburn Broken Catchment. The boundaries of the vegetation have been exaggerated to allow for the small scale of the map. The map was produced from Base Data from DSE Corporate Library. The State of Victoria does not warrant the accuracy or completeness of information on this map. Any person using or relying upon such information does so on the basis that the State of Victoria shall bear no responsibility or liability whatsoever for any errors, faults, defects or omissions in the information.