Bega or Candelo Dry Grass Forests/Lowland Grassy Woodland

This roadside remnant has few trees, but a high diversity of native groundcover species and few weeds so it would qualify as an EEC

Description

Bega and Candelo Dry Grass Forests are two very similar vegetation communities listed as Endangered Ecological Communities under the *Threatened Species Conservation Act* in NSW and in the process of being re-listed under the *TSC Act* as a single community, Lowland Grassy Woodland. They are still being assessed (in 2006) for national listing under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* as a single community, Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Grassland of the South East Corner Bioregion.

Both EECs are likely to have originally had widely spaced trees and an open grassy understorey, with patches of shrubs and smaller trees such as wattles. Aboriginal land management practices such as burning and digging to extract edible tubers, and browsing and digging by native fauna such as bandicoots, potoroos, rat-kangaroos and wallabies probably had an influence on the original vegetation structure. After European settlement these influences were replaced by clearing, cultivation, rabbits, grazing by livestock and different fire regimes.

Present day remnants can vary in structure and species composition because of past and current management differences between sites. The most characteristic trees are forest red gum or rough-barked apple, with white stringybark and coast grey box occurring less often. Candelo Dry Grass Forest may also include yellow box, snow gum or broad-leaved peppermint and rarely Maiden's or blue gum. There may be a small tree layer including black or hickory wattle and occasionally black sheoak, or a shrub layer including blackthorn, various dogwoods (*Cassinia* and *Ozothamnus* species) and the leafless shrub *Jacksonia scoparia.* Where there are old paddock trees present but shrub and groundcover layers are absent or substantially replaced with exotic species then the EEC would not be regarded as being present.

Both communities carry a high proportion of their species diversity in the grasses and herbs of the groundcover layer. Many more indicator species are likely to be found in spring (for herbs) or summer (for grasses) than in the cooler part of the year. More species will also be detectable in a wet season than during dry conditions. Therefore, more than one survey may be required to determine what plants are present. A grassy groundcover may include any of kangaroo grass, poa tussock, weeping grass and paddock lovegrass and various herbs including *Dichondra repens, Hydrocotyle laxiflora, Desmodium varians, Hypericum gramineum, Glycine clandestina, Glycine tabacina* and mulga or rock fern, *Cheilanthes sieberi*. A great variety of additional grasses and herbs may be present in high quality remnants. Some remnants may consist of nothing more than this grassy groundcover, but these would need to be in quite good condition to be regarded as belonging to one of these EECs. Typical locations for such secondary grassland remnants are on sites with very little grazing history where trees have been removed, such as cemeteries and some roadsides.

Location in the Landscape

These EECs formerly occupied much of the lower parts of the landscape on rolling hills of the coastal river valleys in the South East Corner bioregion (south from Batemans Bay), mostly on soils derived from granite and granodiorite or other relatively fertile soils derived from volcanic rock. Former strongholds include the Bega and Cobargo valleys and the Moruya area with smaller patches at Belowra, in the upper Towamba Valley, and a few locations on the coast (Coila, Bingie Bingie, Tanja and Goalen Head).They have been cleared or substantially modified by farming, and no unmodified examples remain to show us what they might have looked like prior to European settlement. Remnants are confined to private property or small public reserves such as Travelling Stock Reserves, cemeteries and roadsides.

Some indicator species for both

Bega or Candelo Dry Grass Forest/Lowland Grassy Woodland

Bursaria spinosa
Blackthorn

Jacksonia scoparia
Dogwood

Rubus parvifolius
Small-leaved bramble

Cheilanthes sieberi
Rock or Mulga fern

Themeda Australis
Kangaroo grass

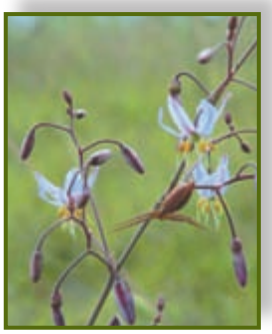
Bothriochloa macra
Red grass

Sorghum leiocladum
Native sorghum

Tricoryne elatior
Yellow rush lily

Desmodium varians fruits
Slender tick-trefoil fruits

Glycine tabacina leaves
Vanilla glycine



Dianella longifolia
Blue flax lily

Hypericum gramineum
Native St. John's wort

Dichondra repens
Kidney weed

Hydrocotyle laxiflora
Stinking pennywort

Scleranthus fasciculatus
Knawel

Wahlenbergia communis
Tufted bluebell

Calotis lappulacea
Yellow burr-daisy

Chrysocephalum apiculatum
Yellow buttons

Chrysocephalum semipapposum
Clustered everlasting

Zornia dyctiocarpa
Zornia

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