

Gondwana Link groups have developed a plan for the section of Gondwana Link between the Fitzgerald River and Stirling Range National Parks, or what we call the Fitz-Stirling section. This identifies several targets for protection and restoration, each of which is described in a separate leaflet in this series. A short summary of the plan is also available.

These targets are not the only systems or species that are important in this landscape, but by concentrating on the chosen targets we believe we can most effectively improve the ecological health of the Fitz-Stirling area.

Our 6 targets are:

- creeks
- proteaceous rich communities
- tammar & black-gloved wallabies
- mallet and moort woodlands
- **flat-topped yate woodlands**
- freshwater systems



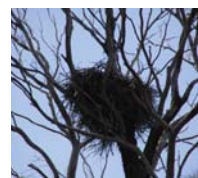
Flat topped yate. Photo A Keesing .

WHAT ARE FLAT-TOPPED YATE WOODLANDS?

Flat-topped yates, the most common large tree in the Fitz-Stirling region, are a well recognised feature of this landscape. They have their lower trunk and branches covered by dark, shaggy, curling bark from which the white branches emerge. The canopy of leaves tend to create a flat top, hence their name.

Flat-topped yates occur in three very different parts of the landscape: lining creeks and river valleys; in swamps; and in the rich soil of the uplands. The understorey and groundcover species associated with yate vary according to their landscape position.

Flat-topped yate woodland provides shelter and food for many animals and yates are the main hollow providing trees in this landscape. A wide variety of animals, including possums, bats, Carnaby's Cockatoos, owls, tree martins and geckos, use these hollows, as well as their cracks and crevices. Their fallen timber provides shelter for small mammals, skinks and snakes. Their flowers provide an important nectar source for many honeyeaters, parrots, lorikeets and also silvereyes, especially during the autumn food gap.



Owlet Nightjars are one of the many animals that use the hollows in yates. Photo: Mark Godfrey, TNC.

Yate flowers are an important nectar and pollen source for birds, animals and insects. Photo A Keesing

WHY IS FLAT-TOPPED YATE A CONSERVATION TARGET?



An example of yate in low-lying land that is seasonally flooded. Photo A Keesing.

Flat-topped yate woodlands are a useful barometer of the health of this landscape, particularly hydrological health. They are an important provider of hollows and autumn-winter nectar and by protecting yate woodlands, we are also addressing those related species, such as Carnaby's Cockatoo, that use these woodlands for nesting, feeding or shelter. Strategies to protect or restore yate woodlands should also benefit other components of the landscape, including the creeks and wetlands and their catchments.

THREATS



The yates along this creek have died, possibly due to changes in the hydrological health of the area.
Photo: Chinch Gryniowicz

There are a number of threats to the health of yate woodlands, and many woodlands are affected by a combination of these. They include:

- Changes to hydrology, including rising saline water tables
- A prolonged series of dry years
- Fire
- Insect attack such as lerps (possibly triggered by some wider ecological imbalance)
- Weed invasion
- Isolation and fragmentation

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

Large scale plantings of perennial species, particularly in recharge areas of catchments, help to lower unnaturally high water tables and allow yate communities to be re-established on suitable sites. Creeks and low lying landscapes can be fenced to reduce stock access, and areas adjacent to creeks revegetated with yates and their associated understorey species to restore functional woodlands. Yate swamps should be fenced at the outermost extent of flood levels to allow for natural re-establishment. Understorey plants can be re-established in upland yate systems through hand broadcast, direct seeding, and brush mulching. Burning off remnant woodlands should always be minimised.

WHAT IS HAPPENING THROUGH GONDWANA LINK

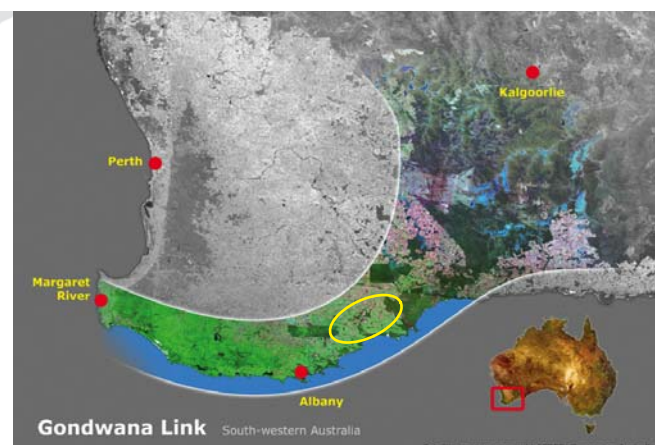
We are surveying and monitoring the different types of yate woodlands to try and build a better understanding of the condition of the remaining patches and the most immediate threats to them. We are including yates and associated understorey species in the restoration taking place on properties owned by Greening Australia and Bush Heritage Australia and in other revegetation projects with landowners in the area. Yates are also an important part of the plantings for sequestration of carbon.



Photo: A Keesing

Gondwana Link is one of the most ambitious ecological programs in Australia. A wide range of groups are collaborating to protect, manage and restore bushland in a 1000 kilometre-long pathway, from the wet forests of Australia's south west corner to the woodlands and mallee bordering the Nullarbor plain.

Fitz-Stirling section of Gondwana Link sits between the Stirling Range and Fitzgerald River National Parks.



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