

AS humans we are very successful at causing local extinctions of plants and animals. This is a trend that all *Land for Wildlifers* are working hard to change, but just how effective are we? Often working as an individual is not enough, we need to work within whole landscapes to effect a change. Have a look through the following levels of action, at what level are you or your catchment group working?

1 Doing nothing

If things continue as they are, then biodiversity loss and landscape productivity will inevitably continue to decline at an ever increasing rate. The impact of current threats will worsen, and new threats will emerge. For most people this is unacceptable.

2 Ensuring that the current threats to plants and animals do not get worse

If we stop further land clearing and avoid introducing any new diseases, weeds or damaging fauna, there will be no new threats to plants and animals. This is probably harder than it sounds with our need for increased farm productivity.

3 Slowing the decline of biodiversity

Here, the needs of specific plants and animals are not taken into consideration when planning management actions.

Actions at this level include revegetating or encouraging natural regeneration in bushland remnants and connecting the remnants with strips of trees and shrubs often planted in areas of low agricultural productivity, eg saline creeklines.

Within our farming systems we can remove some of the landscape pressures, eg using water where it falls, minimising herbicide and fertiliser drift, controlling some of the major weeds and feral animals and preventing stubble fires from entering bushland.

Most of these actions favour common and widespread species,

REVEGETATION

ARE WE WORKING FOR NATURE?

by Brett Beecham and Avril Baxter

and do little for species at greatest risk. The decline still continues, but at a slower rate.

4 Taking positive steps to conserve specific elements of biodiversity

This approach targets the needs of a few species, often those considered rare or threatened, or of special interest.

Actions involve very specific tasks such as preserving seeds in a seed bank, or undertaking intensive site specific management tasks such as hand weeding or spot spraying around a rare plant.

The specific needs of the target plant or animal are used to identify important habitat remnants, or design corridors to encourage movement between remnants.

Tasks at the landscape level could include diverting saline water to preserve a freshwater lake.

5 Taking positive steps to conserve all natural populations in an area

The needs of many species are considered in this approach. To simplify the task, a series of "umbrella" or "focal" species are selected that are identified as being at greatest risk to each threat operating in an area.

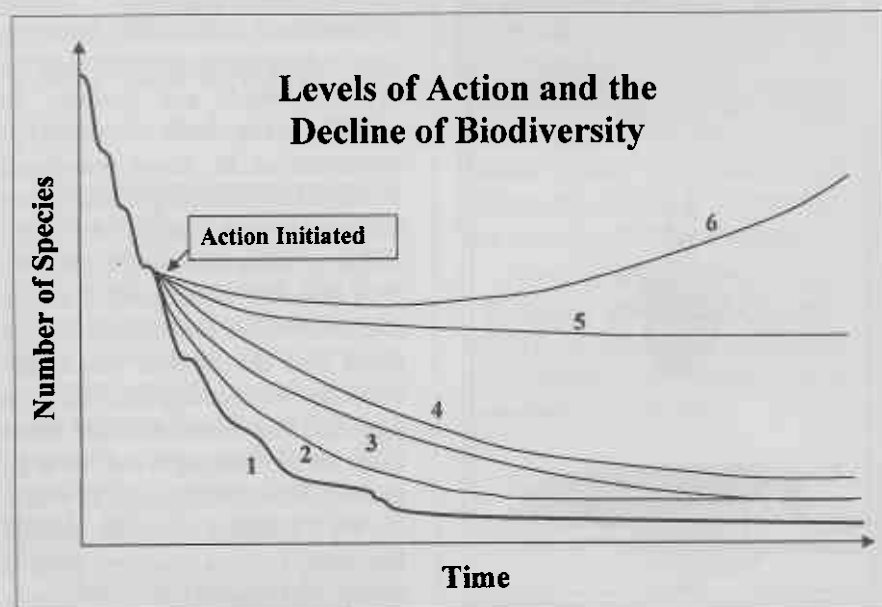
Threats such as altered fire regimes or lack of habitat are managed to a level that meets the needs of the focal species. All other species that are at less risk also then benefit from this management approach.

Threats require action at a landscape scale, and include revegetation to create additional habitat and corridors, long-term and widespread control of feral animals and major weeds, adopting fire management regimes and agricultural practices which minimise adverse affects on the environment.

Further research work is needed to identify the "focal" species for different areas. The ultimate objective is to create viable populations of all species in an area.

6 Reconstructing landscapes and their natural flora and fauna

The next step is to undertake large scale reconstructions of scarce habitat types, interconnect all



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remnant habitat areas with purpose-designed fauna movement and habitat corridors, eliminate feral plants and animals from the landscape and reintroduce flora and fauna that are locally extinct.

The challenge is there for the taking – can we aim just a little bit higher - from 3 to 4, for example?

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