

Maintaining important habitat features

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Hollows

Trees, dead and alive, with hollows are a habitat requirement for many of our native animals. It is thought that around 17 percent of birds, 42 percent of mammals and 28 percent of reptiles in south eastern Australia use hollows (Gibbens and Lindenmayer, 1997). They include possums, gliders, microbats, parrots, owls, ducks, rosellas, kingfishers as well as many species of snakes, frogs and skinks.

Hollow formation occurs mainly in eucalyptus species such as gums and box trees. River Red gums (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*), commonly found on cotton farms, are a well know producer of hollows.

Generally small hollows suitable for small animals like eastern pygmy-possums take about 100 years to form. Hollows suitable for larger animals like brushtail possums and owls take over 200 years to form. Therefore removal of trees with hollows from the landscape can have profound impacts on the survival of many species.

What should I do on my farm?

- Maintain a range of old hollow-bearing trees, including dead ones. It is best to leave at least five per hectare.
- In areas where trees with hollows are limited, erect nesting boxes
- Encourage regeneration to ensure so the next generation of hollow bearing trees

Logs

Logs on the ground provide habitat and food for many species. Frogs, reptiles and small mammals use

logs for shelter and for food foraging. Logs provide a source of food for invertebrate decomposers who are important to the recycling of plant nutrients.

What should I do on my farm?

- Resist the temptation to remove old fallen logs and rocks. If you need to move them, leave them in piles, don't burn them.
- Place old building material (eg timber or corrugated iron) on the ground in woodlands and grasslands to provide artificial habitat.
- The removal of dead wood and dead trees is a key threatening process for much of our biodiversity.
- Leave standing and fallen dead trees in or around waterholes (natural and artificial) to provide erosion control, perches for waterbirds, nesting sites and habitat for fish and other aquatic animals.

References & further reading

- NSW NPWS, Conservation Management Note 5 - 1999, *Natural tree hollows, essential for wildlife*
- Gibbons, P. and Lindenmayer, D.B. 1997, *Conserving Hollow-dependent Fauna in timber-production Forests*, Environmental Series Monograph Series No.3, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, Sydney
- *Pest and beneficials in Australian Cotton Landscapes* – Sustainable landscapes chapter www.cottoninfo.com.au/publications/pests-and-beneficials-australian-cotton-landscapes
- *Removal of dead wood and dead trees* www.environment.nsw.gov.au/determinations/lossofhollowtreesktp.htm

