

Finding Animals amongst the Weeds: An Audit System for Animal-Weed Relationships

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Australian landscapes have undergone rapid change over the last two centuries. The continent has been transformed as native vegetation has been cleared. Consequently, animals have lost vital ecological resources that were once plentiful. Recent studies have highlighted the diverse ways in which introduced plants are incorporated within the contemporary ecologies of native animals. In many cases, weeds fulfill an 'ecological void' by providing similar 'habitat' resources to the absent native vegetation. Current weed management strategies, however, often fail to acknowledge these animal-weed relationships. This 'oversight' potentially jeopardizes current conservation efforts.

The attached papers aim to address the current weed management deficiency through the development of a generic weed management audit that enables managers to systematically account for animal-weed interactions. From a thorough literature review known animal-weed relationships are summarised and key interactions identified. Suitable methods for identifying animals and their behaviours in the field are also discussed. These issues are then applied to formulate an audit system. The broader aim of the audit is to empower managers to undertake weed management decisions on a local scale whilst accounting for broader ecological processes.

These papers stem from research I undertook in 2000 as part of my Honours research at Flinders University of South Australia. My thesis is entitled *Finding Animals Amongst the Weeds: An Audit System for Animal-Weed Relationships*. Access to my thesis, which provides an in depth literature review and the entire animal-weed audit, is available through the Flinders University library. Please contact Susan Lawrie for any further information through the email address above.