

The ecology of fuel reduction burning

Fire is an essential part of maintaining the health of the bush. Most dry bush types respond well to the careful and appropriate application of fire. Determining the extent and frequency of burning for any patch of bush is a major part of the planning for a fuel reduction burn. Considerations include time since the last fire (fire interval), threatened species, health and regeneration of eucalypts and other plants, and cultural values.



Left: A recently burned patch of silver peppermint (Eucalyptus tenuiramis). This type of bush burns quite readily and appropriate burning will help maintain plant regeneration and ecosystem health.

The fire starts off the process of regrowth and renewal, with some species taking advantage of the space and lack of competition. New food resources (green pick, seeds) support the recovery of the animal populations. Many animal species, and especially many birds, will use the burned areas for foraging and return to unburned areas for hiding from predators and as breeding habitat.



Fuel Reduction Program

Unburned versus recently burned



- The already established number of hollows in trees and logs can limit habitat for birds and animals
- Understorey shrub cover provides breeding habitat and refuge from predators but is difficult for some species to forage in
- Intact grass and heath cover can suppress some species and inhibit seed germination
- Thick layer of leaves and fine fuels (litter) with litter-dependent species
- Moderate to high fuel loads may result in a high intensity bushfire
- New hollows are created from fallen branches, old hollows enlarged and heavy downed wood creates new habitat
- New food resources emerge - fresh regrowth, seeds, short-lived plants, insects and small animals
- Open understorey and ground layers; easy to spot food resources (plants, insects, other animals)
- Bare areas allow plants and animals to reestablish
- Low fuel loads reduce the potential intensity of a bushfire, making it much more likely for animals and plants to survive

For more information, visit www.fire.tas.gov.au

or call the Fuel Reduction Unit on **1800 000 699** or fru@fire.tas.gov.au