

# Brigalow Belt bioregion – a biodiversity jewel



Brigalow habitat © Craig Eddie

## What is brigalow?

The term 'brigalow' is used simultaneously to refer to; the tree *Acacia harpophylla*; an ecological community dominated by this tree and often found in conjunction with other species such as *belah*, *wilga* and *false sandalwood*; and a broader region where this species and ecological community are present.

## The Brigalow Belt bioregion

The Brigalow Belt bioregion is a large and complex area covering 36,400 000ha. The region is thus recognised by the Australian Government as a biodiversity hotspot.

This hotspot contains some of the most threatened wildlife in the world, including populations of the endangered bridled nail-tail wallaby and the only remaining wild population of the endangered northern hairy-nosed wombat. The area contains important habitat for rare and threatened species including the, glossy black-cockatoo, bullock jewel butterfly, brigalow scaly-foot, red goshawk, little pied bat, golden-tailed geckos and threatened community of semi evergreen vine thickets. Sadly, there are already plants and animals that once lived in the Brigalow Belt that we have lost forever such as the Darling Downs hopping-mouse and paradise parrot.

Eighty percent of the bioregion lies within Queensland, the remainder lies within New South Wales. The bioregion stretches up north to Townsville in Queensland extending south of Dubbo in central-western New South Wales. The bioregion is divided into Brigalow Belt North and Brigalow Belt South.

## What are the characteristics of the Brigalow Belt in Queensland

The bioregion is characterised by the brigalow tree *Acacia harpophylla*, a wattle tree with silvery foliage that grows as forests or woodlands on clay soils. The canopy is usually 10-15m in height, and brigalow is the dominant tree species. However large areas of the bioregion are dominated by other communities

## What is a bioregion?

Bioregions are relatively large land areas containing natural ecological communities with characteristic flora, fauna, and environmental conditions, and are bounded by natural rather than artificial borders.

including eucalypt and cypress pine forests and woodlands, grasslands and other *Acacia* dominated ecosystems.

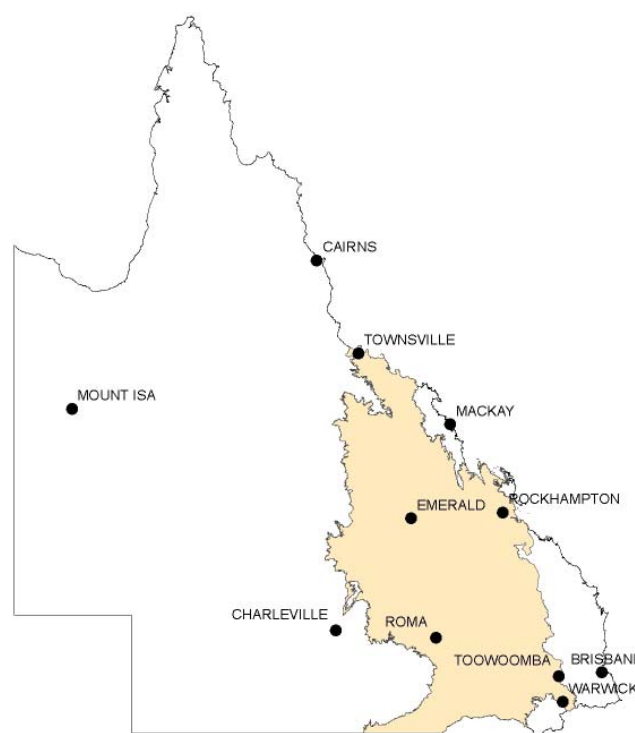
Along the eastern boundary of the Brigalow Belt are scattered patches of semi-evergreen vine thickets with bright green canopy species that are highly visible among the more silvery brigalow communities. These patches are a dry adapted form of rainforest, relics of a much wetter past.

## What are the issues?

Nature conservation in the region has received increasing attention because of the rapid and extensive loss of habitat that has occurred. Since World War II the Brigalow Belt bioregion has become a major agricultural and pastoral area. Broad-scale clearing for agriculture and unsustainable grazing has fragmented the original vegetation in the past, particularly on lowland areas.

Biodiversity hotspots are areas that support significant biodiversity values threatened with destruction.

Map 1. Queensland Brigalow Belt Bioregion





Brigalow habitat © Alison Goodland

### What are the issues? continued...

Weeds such as parthenium have invaded many areas and replaced native ground layer plants. Inappropriate fire regimes and predation by feral animals, in particular pigs, cats and foxes, pose additional threats to local biodiversity.

The bioregion occupies an area nearly 20 percent of Queensland. Despite the threat to so many species only approximately 3.6 percent of the region is in protected areas. Of the 163 regional ecosystems identified in the Brigalow Belt in Queensland by plant ecologists, 33 are classified as endangered and 32 as being of concern.

### How you can help

- Protect remnant bush in your community or on your land to help provide habitat for all our native species.
- Support local efforts to conserve threatened species in your area by joining a local organisation such as a Landcare or catchment group, natural history or a 'friends of' group or by volunteering for Green Corps or the Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers.
- Participate in special events, information nights, tree planting days and weed eradication programs.
- Help manage threats such as overgrazing, weeds, fire and feral animals to maintain healthy native vegetation.

To find out more about saving threatened species check out [www.wwf.org.au/tsn](http://www.wwf.org.au/tsn) or contact the Threatened Species Network at [tsn@wwf.org.au](mailto:tsn@wwf.org.au).



Threatened Species Network



Australian Government



WWF

The Threatened Species Network is a community-based program of the Australian Government and WWF-Australia.



Golden-tailed gecko © Craig Eddie