Nectar Feed Trees

Why are nectar feed trees important?

Nectar and pollen from the flowers of eucalypts, banksias, melaleucas and other shrubs provide an important food resource for many species of insects, birds and mammals. These include a number of threatened species, for example the Regent Honeyeater, Swift Parrot, Yellow-bellied Glider, Squirrel Glider, Eastern Pygmy-possum, Grey-headed Flying Fox and Blossom Bat.

Dependence on nectar by individual animals varies widely with some species relying almost exclusively on this food source while others use nectar and pollen to supplement their diet at different times of the year.

It is therefore important for these animals that a diversity of nectar producing plants are available throughout different seasons of the year and in particular, plants that produce nectar in autumn and winter months when other food resources become scarcer.

Roly Paine

Sugar Glider

Flowering patterns and the production of nectar in many eucalypts and other species of plants can be sporadic and inconsistent from year to year depending on plant age, position in the canopy and individual seasonal conditions such as rainfall.

A number of plants produce nectar in late summer, autumn and winter. Some of these may be considered keystone species in that they provide a vital food resource during these times of the year. Table 1 provides examples of some (but not all) of these keystone species.

Kristin den Exter

Wallum Banksia

How to identify nectar food trees

Field identification of the species listed in Table 1 can often be difficult. A number of field guides and keys are commercially available to assist. Some of these are listed on this Note together with a number of websites which give information on plant identification.

What can you do?

Protection and management of trees and shrubs, particularly those with larger flowers that produce abundant nectar are important in providing a range of food resources for native animals and enhancing biodiversity on your property.

Retention of existing vegetation has many benefits including providing shade and shelter, maintenance of soils and enhancement of biodiversity and basic ecological processes (e.g. food web including micro-organisms through to insects, birds and other plants and animals). Retaining vegetation reduces fragmentation of the landscape and helps ensure genetic diversity of species.

Actively managing areas of native vegetation helps ensure their long term health and condition. This may include the control of

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Table 1: Nectar Feed Trees

CMAs: Border Rivers/Gwydir, Hunter/Central Rivers, Namoi, Northern Rivers	
White Mahogany - *Eucalyptus acmenoides, E. umbra, E. carnea*	Spotted Gum species - *Corymbia spp.*
Ironbark species - *E. siderophloia, E. paniculata, E. fergusonii, E. placita, E. ancophila, E. fusiformis, E. caleyi, E. crebra, E. fibrosa. E. tetrapleura, E. sideroxylon, E.ophitica*	Mountain Gum - *E. dalrympleana*
Swamp Mahogany - *E. robusta*	Manna Gum - *E. viminalis*
Forest Red Gum - *E. tereticornis*	Needlebark Stringybark - *E. planchoniana*
Bloodwood species - *Corymbia spp.*	Tyndale Stringybark - *E. tindaliae*
Box species - *E. rudderi, E. conica, E. molucanna, E. largeana, E. rummeryi* (including Yellow Box *E. melliodora* and White Box *E. albens*)	Red Stringybark - *E. macrorhyncha*

CMAs: Hawkesbury/Nepean, Central West, Lachlan, Murrumbidgee, Murray and Southern Rivers, Lower Murray/Darling, Sydney Metro and Western	
Ironbark species - *Eucalyptus paniculata, E. tricarpa*	Swamp Mahogany - *E. robusta*
River Peppermint - *E. elata*	Black Sallee - *E. stellulata*
Mountain Grey Gum - *E. cypellocarpa*	Swamp Gum - *E. ovata*
Maiden's Gum - *E. maidenii*	Red Bloodwood - *Corymbia gummifera*
Forest Red Gum - *E. tereticornis*	Spotted Gum - C. *maculata*
Mountain Gum - *E. dalrympleana*	Other - *E. globoidea, E. macrorhyncha, E. delegatensis, E. pauciflora, E. bicostata, E. agglomerata, E. muelleriana*
Manna Gum - *E.viminalis*	

Note: Important nectar food trees are not restricted to those in the above list

weeds, stock management (lower stocking rates or rotation of stock in vegetated areas), reducing fire intensity and frequency and eliminating drift from fertilisers such as superphosphates and herbicides.

Additionally, encouraging retention of understorey species, native grasses and herbs and key habitat resources such as trees with hollows, logs and rocks on the ground and autumn/winter nectar-producing plants provides a range of habitats for native animals.

Minimising damage to retained trees and native vegetation

As far as practicable, forestry operations should not damage protected trees by ensuring that:

- debris is not heaped around protected trees
- machinery operations do not harm protected trees, and
- directional felling techniques are employed to avoid (as far as is practicable) damage to protected trees.

References and Further Reading

- Brooker, M I H and Kleinig, D A (1999), Field Guide to Eucalypts of South Eastern Australia, Revised Edition, Vols 1-2, Blooming Books, Sydney.
- Steenbeeke, G L (1999), The Plants Directory CD-ROM: Vol 1, North Eastern NSW, Orkology Kreations.
- DECC: www.environment.nsw.gov.au
- Atlas of NSW Wildlife information and species profiles http://wildlifeatlas.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/wildlifeatlas/watlas.jsp

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