

# Drooping Sheoak

*'Banjo Frog's Concert Spectacular' is a children's storybook set in the Fleurieu Peninsula in South Australia, part of the Mt Lofty Ranges. This information sheet is one of a series on the heroes of the story.*

## Introduction

Drooping Sheoak is an important species for conservation as it provides food and habitat for a range of native animal and bird species. It is the primary food source for the highly endangered Kangaroo Island Glossy Black-Cockatoo, but its seed cones provide food for many birds, its flowers attract bees and butterflies, and fungi found on its roots is eaten by bandicoots, potoroos and bettongs.

To assist with Kangaroo Island Glossy Black-Cockatoo recovery efforts (and to assist a range of other native species), significant works have been undertaken on the mainland to establish habitat so glossy blacks may return. Works include promoting the natural regeneration of Drooping Sheoaks and revegetation including sheoak seeds and seedlings. Managing rabbit impacts is key to the success of this work.

## Description

Drooping Sheoak is a small to medium grey-green tree that grows to 5–8 m tall and is distinguished by its weeping, needle-like leaves.

The bark is dark, tough and corrugated (or fissured) extending up the trunk and becoming significantly smoother on the branches.

This species has separate male and female plants, with the females producing oval fruit cones (3-4 cm long, brown in colour) and the males producing drooping yellow-brown flowers on the needle tips in the autumn months.

The foliage is made up of photosynthetic stems (phylloclades) that resemble pine needles; and the true leaves, which are reduced to small, saw-like 'teeth' at the end



Source: Atlas of Living Australia website at <http://www.ala.org.au>



### (Not so) Fun Fact

*Rabbits love to eat sheoak seedlings. They sniff them out and eat them before they grow into mature trees. As few as one rabbit per 2 hectares of land is sufficient to remove all sheoak seedlings in that area.*

of the nodes. The true leaves are easily seen if you snap a stem at one of its joins (nodes).

## Distribution

Drooping Sheoak grows in a diverse range of habitats across south-eastern Australia, including all southern regions of South Australia (e.g. Mt Lofty Ranges, Eyre Peninsula, mid-North, Yorke Peninsula, Riverland, South-East and Kangaroo Island) as well as Victoria, Tasmania and New South Wales.

## Habitat & Habits

Drooping Sheoak usually grows in grassy woodlands, sometimes with eucalypts. It is also found on rocky sea coasts and on dry ridges inland. On the Fleurieu there were an estimated 22,000 hectares of sheoak woodland but only about 2% remains.

Drooping Sheoaks are very hardy plants and can grow on infertile soils and salty areas. They have the advantage of being able to fix nitrogen from the air and absorb nutrients

### Did you know?

*There are about 50 species of Allocasuarina and Casuarina that are known as sheoaks in Australia.*

### Fun Fact

*The term 'casuarina' was used because their needle-like leaves look very similar to the feather of a cassowary (scientific name, Casuariiformes). 'Allo' means other.*

### Did you know?

**The devastating 2019-20 fires on Kangaroo Island burned 54% of Kangaroo Island Glossy Black-Cockatoo feeding habitat and 38.5% of their known nests. This demonstrates why establishing feed trees and other habitat for them on the mainland is so important.**

provided by the mycorrhizal fungi that are attached to the roots. It is these fungi that are so attractive to potoroos, bettongs and bandicoots (and probably bilbies before they became extinct across the southern parts of their former range).

## Rabbits

In the past, Drooping Sheoaks were removed from many areas by clearance (used for timber, fuel, cultural uses, etc.) and by grazing from domestic livestock, and boom-bust populations of kangaroos and wild European rabbits that heavily grazed on emerging seedlings.

The continued presence of rabbits in Drooping Sheoak habitat prevents natural regeneration and hinders conservation efforts to replant Drooping Sheoak woodlands on the mainland. Rabbit control is critical to protecting sheoak recruitment and revegetation of sheoak woodlands. Revegetation and regeneration on Kangaroo Island, where there are no rabbits, isn't faced with the same problem.

## Easter Bilby's Friends

In 'Banjo Frog's Concert Spectacular' children plant trees and other habitat, and that is just what is happening on the Fleurieu Peninsula as people across the region do their bit to safeguard the future of drooping sheoaks. Effective rabbit control is one part of multi-faceted revegetation programs.



### Fun Fact

*Drooping Sheoak cones are available throughout most of the year and can be soaked in water to give it a lemon flavour.*

Easter Bilby and friends are all affected by rabbits and other pressures like loss of habitat and predation. They want their homes, their food and their friends back. People are the key to environmental recovery; and more information on the people and organisations helping Easter Bilby's Friends can be found on the Easter Bilby's Friends website [www.easterbilbysfriends.com.au](http://www.easterbilbysfriends.com.au).

## Other information

Electronic flora of SA: [Allocasuarina verticillata](#)

[Backyard Buddies: Sheoak](#)

[Drooping Sheoak](#)

[Native Grassy Habitats: Mt Lofty Ranges](#)

Conservation Advice: [Eyre Yorke Block Drooping sheoak](#)

Threat abatement plan [Rabbit competition & land degradation](#)

Recovery plan [SA Glossy Black-Cockatoo](#)

### Did you know?

**On Eyre Peninsula 'Drooping sheoak grassy woodland on calcrete of the Eyre Yorke Block Bioregion' has been listed as critically endangered under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.**

### Drooping Sheoak's names:

Scientific name – *Allocasuarina verticillata*

Kaurna name – karku

Ngarrindjerri name – kolgi

Other common names – Oak bush

## More information about Rabbit-Free Australia

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**Bilbies Not Bunnies**