



Photo Credit: Terra Dumont

Waimakariri Bush Blocks

What they are and how you can protect them

Bush blocks are small patches of native forest or scrub, often referred to as forest remnants because they are all that remain of the once extensive native forests of the Canterbury foothills and plains. Even small bush blocks, disconnected from other forest ecosystems are vitally important for the future of our biodiversity.

Bush blocks include both areas dominated by forest trees and the areas of scrub that either flank and protect the interior of taller bush or exist as independent ecosystems on hillsides and terraces.

Once regarded as only good for clearing, native scrub supports a diverse range of native plants and animals. Scrub is also an excellent starting point for forest restoration as it provides the first stage of a vegetation cover that might take decades to achieve through restoration planting.

Bush blocks (both forest and scrub) are valuable as they:

- Act as stepping stones through the landscape for our wildlife. For example, they allow native birds to move down from the mountains in winter to feed in the lowlands.

- Are reservoirs of native plant seed, allowing natural regeneration to occur and support local restoration projects.
- Are often the last refuges of rare or endangered native plants and animals, providing a base from which to rebuild populations.
- Often occur in gullies and steep slopes where they protect our soils and streams.

Threats to forest ecosystems include stock and wild animals browsing and trampling young trees, invasion from exotic weeds like old man's beard, and predators like rats, stoats, and cats.

Ways you can help protect your bush block:

- Contact Environment Canterbury or the Waimakariri District Council about any changes to forest or scrub remnants or about their protection.
- Control the threats to natural regeneration – these might include browsing by livestock or wild animals, or invasive weeds.
- Get advice from an ecologist before you consider any planting – make sure you only introduce species that are ecologically appropriate for the site.
- Keep stock out to the block prevent them from grazing your forest remnant.



Waimakariri has remnant and regenerating podocarp-broadleaf forest, scrub land, and beech forest.
 Photos David Norton, Sue Mcgaw (CC BY-NC), Terra Dumont



Both bush remnants and native scrub provide great food and shelter for native birds, lizards, and insects.
 Photos John Sullivan (CC-BY), Terra Dumont, Ben Weatherley (CC-BY-NC), Andrew Townsend (CC BY-NC).

Possible actions:

- Control weeds
- Control animal pests and predators
- Deer fence your block to keep out wild deer and goats
- Legally protect your bush by putting it into a QEII covenant – this will ensure it will be appropriately managed both now and after you have left the property.
- Connect multiple small patches of bush by retiring land and allowing forest regeneration to restore linkages.

Funding and advice

For more information about your bush block or assistance with protecting them, please contact:

- **Waimakariri District Council** on 0800 965 468 and ask for the Ecologist – Biodiversity Advisor or email office@wmk.govt.nz

- **Environment Canterbury** on 0800 324 636 and ask for the Local Biodiversity Officer. Visit ecan.govt.nz/your-region/your-environment/our-natural-environment/biodiversity-funding/
- **Department of Conservation (Rangiora)** on 03 313 0820 and ask for a Biodiversity Ranger. Go to doc.govt.nz/get-involved/funding/
- **Queen Elizabeth II National Trust (QEII)** on 0800 467 367 and ask for your local QEII Representative. Visit qei.org.nz or email info@qei.org.nz.