



Skinks and geckos can be associated with *kanuka* remnants. Spotted skink shown here.
Photo: Andy Towbridge

Waimakariri Dryland Ecosystems

What they are and how you can help protect them

Dryland ecosystems support about half of New Zealand's most threatened plants.

In Waimakariri District, drylands often contain *kānuka* remnants with high diversity of native herbs, mosses, fungi and grasses.

We have seen extensive loss of dryland ecosystems. Less than 0.5% of original habitat remains on the Waimakariri plains. This has meant that many of the lizards and invertebrates that use this habitat have also declined.

These remant drylands are vulnerable to increases in moisture and nutrients from adjoining farmland, and invasion by weeds such as gorse and broom and pasture grasses. Stock and animal pests such as rabbits, hares and hedgehogs are also threats.

Ways you can help protect drylands

- Contact Environment Canterbury, the Department of Conservation or Waimakariri District Council about any changes to habitat such as vegetation clearance
- Avoid over-spraying and drift from irrigation
- Use as little herbicide and fertilisers around habitat as possible
- Prevent access by cattle, horses and pigs. Light sheep grazing may be beneficial.



Dryland ecosystems often have diverse moss, lichen and herb fields.
Photo: Zipporah Ploeg



"Waste" areas, rough pasture, rocky piles - anywhere that hasn't been cultivated - is potential lizard habitat. Photo: Jean Thompson



Grass skink and gecko found in small area of shrubland. Note that it is illegal to handle or harass native reptiles without a DOC permit.
Photo: Jean Thompson



Dryland ecosystems can support orchids, kānuka and clematis species. Photos: Miles Giller

Possible actions

- Permanently fence off dryland habitats including an appropriate buffer (don't irrigate or apply fertiliser within the buffer)
- Sensitive control of woody weeds and exotic grasses that increase nutrients and prevent regeneration
- Control of exotic grasses may result in spraying of native grasses (cutting and pasting woody weeds and using a grass-selective herbicide may be appropriate).
- Check with experts to make sure any restoration of degraded sites is carried out appropriately
- Remove animal pests and predators by regular trapping.

Funding and advice

For more information on dryland remnants or assistance to protect Waimakariri drylands, please contact:

- **Environment Canterbury** on 0800 324 636 and ask for the local biodiversity officer. Go to <https://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 www.doc.govt.nz/get-involved/funding/
- **Waimakariri District Council** on 0800 965 468 and ask for the ecologist – biodiversity advisor
- **Queen Elizabeth II National Trust (QEII)** www.queii.org.nz, info@queii.org.nz, 0800 467 367. Ask for your local QEII representative.