

Coastal Scrub

The Corangamite coastline is known for its extremes, with windswept cliff tops to undulating sand dune environments. While these environments are exposed to extreme conditions such as poor nutrient levels and salt-laden winds and sea-spray, they are home to a diversity of vegetation types and provide habitat to a variety of native animals. Approximately 60 percent of all the Coastal Scrub vegetation has been cleared since European settlement¹.



Photo: The windswept cliff tops of the Corangamite coast near Port Campbell. Photograph Sarah Anderson

The Dunes

Sand dunes are dynamic systems, continually changing with the prevailing conditions and coastal disturbances. Vegetation in these environments commonly occur in bands or zones in response to coastal conditions. For example, colonising species such as Hairy Spinifex (*Spinifex sericeus*) and introduced Marram Grass (*Ammophila arenaria*), will rapidly establish on the foredune and stabilise the sand.

Further from the ocean, where disturbance is not as great as the foredune, small tree and shrub species become more established e.g. Coast Beard-heath and Coast Wattle. These systems provide valuable protection from coastal storm surges and increased wave/tidal activity.

Headlands

The headlands and cliff tops of the Corangamite coastline are largely dominated by low growing shrub species due to their exposure to extreme salt-laden winds and sea-spray from the south-west¹.



What can you find in the Coastal Scrub ecosystem?

The Coastal Scrub ecosystem is made up of a number of different Ecological Vegetation Classes.

What is an Ecological Vegetation Class (EVC)?

A collective of plant communities that are defined by a range of similar attributes e.g. plant types, location and distribution.

Some Ecological Vegetation Classes you can find along the cliff tops and sand dunes of the Corangamite coast include:

- Coastal Dune Scrub
- Coastal Headland Scrub
- Coastal Tussock Grassland
- Coastal Alkaline Scrub

All are either vulnerable, depleted or endangered across the Corangamite region.



Photo: The Corangamite Coast at Blanket Bay, Great Otway National Park. Photograph Sarah Anderson

Table: Typical species of Corangamite's dunes and cliff tops¹.

Scientific name	Common name
<i>Melaleuca lanceolata</i> ssp. <i>lanceolata</i>	Moonah
<i>Allocasuarina verticillata</i>	Drooping Sheoak
<i>Leptospermum laevigatum</i>	Coast Tea-tree*
<i>Bursaria spinosa</i> ssp. <i>spinosa</i>	Sweet Bursaria
<i>Myoporum insulare</i>	Common Boobialla
<i>Ozothamnus ferrugineus</i>	Tree Everlasting
<i>Leptospermum continentale</i>	Prickly Tea-tree
<i>Leptospermum scoparium</i>	Manuka
<i>Leucopogon parviflorus</i>	Coast Beard-heath
<i>Acacia longifolia</i> ssp. <i>sophorae</i>	Coast Wattle*
<i>Clematis microphylla</i>	Small-leaved Clematis
<i>Acaena novae-zelandiae</i>	Bidgee-widgee
<i>Tetragonia implexicoma</i>	Bower Spinach
<i>Epacris impressa</i>	Common Heath
<i>Correa reflexa</i>	Common Correa
<i>Lomandra longifolia</i>	Spiny-headed Mat-rush
<i>Dianella brevicaulis</i>	Coast Flax-lily
<i>Poa poiformis</i>	Coast Tussock-grass
<i>Carpobrotus rossii</i>	Karkalla

*Can become invasive weeds in some communities.

Threats

- Increased erosion of dune and cliff top systems through unregulated human access, leading to changes in dune shape and stability e.g. blowouts and foredune collapse.



- Increased urbanisation around the coastline, resulting in fragmentation of vegetation and increasing weed invasion and spread.
- Increased predation of native fauna by introduced pests (e.g. foxes and cats) and domestic pets

What's wrong with this photo?



Photo: Domestic cats increase competition and prey on the wildlife of Coastal Scrub vegetation. Photograph CCMA

Table: Some common weed species of Corangamite's dunes and cliff tops

Scientific name	Common name
<i>Lycium ferocissimum</i>	African Box-thorn
<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	Spear Thistle
<i>Lagurus ovatus</i>	Hare's-tail Grass
<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	Cocksfoot
<i>Rubus sp. aff. armeniacus</i>	Blackberry
<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire Fog
<i>Ammophila arenaria</i>	Marram Grass
<i>Chrysanthemoides monilifera</i>	Boneseed
<i>Rhamnus alaternus</i>	Italian Buckthorn
<i>Asparagus asparagoides</i>	Bridal Creeper

Wildlife

Due to the various vegetation types associated with the Coastal Scrub and the close proximity to other communities e.g. forests, woodlands, estuaries, wetlands and riparian zones, there is an abundance of wildlife that utilise the habitat of Coastal Scrub. Some of the wildlife include:

- mammals (echidnas, antechinus, native rats)
- marsupials (wallabies, kangaroos, possums)
- woodland and heathland birds (honeyeaters, scrubwrens, thornbills, rosellas, currawongs, robins, parrots, fairy-wrens)
- coastal birds (gulls, terns, waders, chats, cormorants)
- birds of prey (eagles, falcons, kites, harriers)¹.



Photo: Coastal Scrub vegetation of the Port Campbell National Park. Photograph Sarah Anderson



What can you do?

There are a number ways you can help protect Coastal Scrub ecosystems, to ensure its survival, these include:

- using designated tracks and beach access points, to avoid trampling vegetation,
- keeping dogs on leads and picking up their waste to avoid increased nutrient levels and limit disturbance to native animals,
- recycle waste and dispose of garden waste appropriately instead of dumping it as this is a number one cause of weed invasion,
- join a local community group and become a volunteer e.g. Landcare and local friends groups.



Photo: Coastal Scrub vegetation on the cliff tops of the Port Campbell National Park. Photograph Sarah Anderson



Photographs

Photographs courtesy of Sarah Anderson and Corangamite CMA (CCMA).

References

1. Viridians Biological Databases (2005). *Flora Information System*. Department of Sustainability and Environment, Victoria.

