



SAVING OUR SPECIES

Farming for dragons

Productive landscapes can protect dragons



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Monaro grassland earless dragon

Tympanocryptis osbornei

Endangered

Dragons on farms

Having dragons on your land is a healthy country indicator. Their presence is a sign the land is healthy and under the right level of management.

In well-managed native grasslands, dragons can thrive right alongside sustainable livestock grazing.



What is the Monaro grassland earless dragon?

The Monaro grassland earless dragon (*Tymppanocryptis osbornei*) is unique, found nowhere else in the world!

You can tell dragons apart from other lizards by their distinctive rough, scaly skin and defined head. They are small: up to 16 cm long including their tail, and identifiable by the distinctive 3 thin white lines running along their patterned light-and-dark back.

They have no external ear openings, but instead have a hidden eardrum.

They sleep beneath rocks, in the burrows of wolf spiders and within cracks in the soil. Tussocks of native grass provide shelter from predators and overnight shelter during the summer.

They are a 'sit and wait' predator, feeding on grassland insects like ants, beetles and grasshoppers.

This dragon doesn't travel far, staying within 100 m of their burrows.

Where do they live?

The Monaro grassland earless dragon lives in natural grasslands in the Monaro district. They thrive in paddocks containing open space between grass tussocks and rock cover for basking.

They have been described as a 'Goldilocks species', preferring some grass cover but not too much. They rarely occur in drainage areas with dense tall grasses.

This is the only dragon in the Monaro region found in grasslands, so if you see a small rough, scaly lizard there, it's probably a Monaro grassland earless dragon.

Why are they declining?

Much of the natural grassland in the region has been modified and is no longer suitable habitat. This unique native animal will struggle to survive pasture improvement and fertilizer intensification, ploughing and rock removal.

How can you help?

- Retain areas of native pasture
- Identify areas of your farm that are dragon-friendly
- Manage stocking rates and timing to maintain suitable grassland and habitat condition – check out our guide inside
- Allow rocks to remain in paddocks
- Consider how your activities may disturb the dragons during their breeding season (November to March)
- Let us know if you think you have dragons or natural grasslands on your property.

Awareness and sympathetic management of your land can help with their survival. Advice and property assessments are available to help manage habitat.

If you would like any further information, please email: monaro.dragon@environment.nsw.gov.au



Is there support to look after dragon habitat?

Dragon-friendly farming is an opportunity to improve management of native biodiversity alongside agricultural production. Caring for biodiversity on your agricultural holdings can open up opportunities in emerging sustainability markets.

The NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust offers a range of support options for landholders interested in conserving and managing biodiversity on private land.

Grants to protect and manage native vegetation on private land may be available through organisations such as South East Local Land Services and Landcare groups.

Saving our Species can also help you manage your grasslands so you can share your land with the dragon.





Photos

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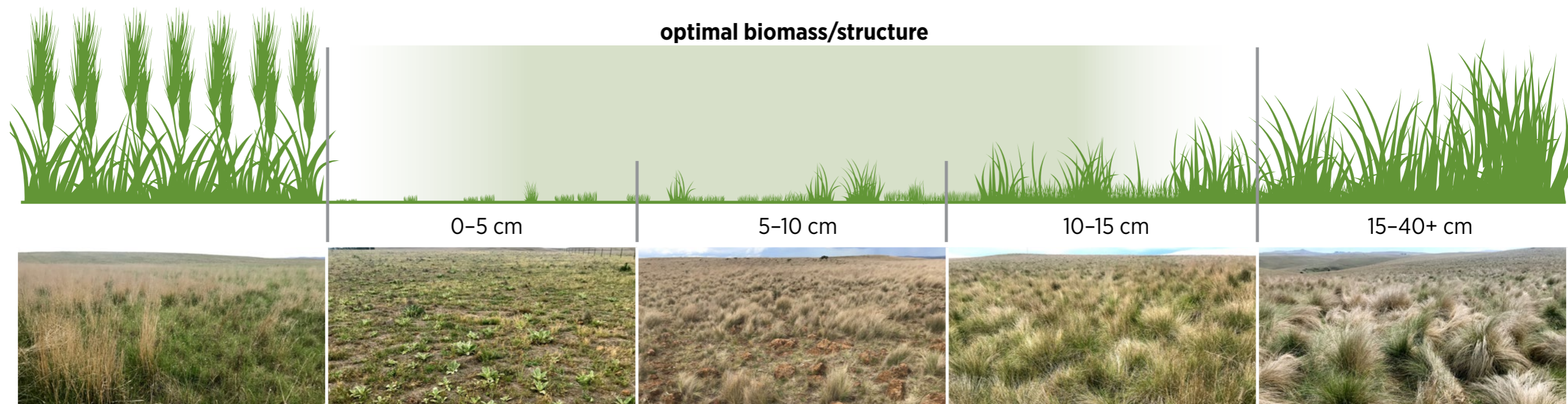
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Land management guidelines for the Monaro grassland earless dragon

Maintain a well-defined tussock structure with obvious inter-tussock spaces containing bare ground (~5%), rocks, short grasses and forbs. Grazing and fire are the preferred methods for biomass control when needed, depending on situation, season and grass state.



Habitat rating	Not suitable	Moderate to poor (low)	Optimal	Moderate to poor (tall)	Poor
Grassland description	Cropped, direct drilled pasture or rocks removed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Native-dominated grassland Short grass with some bare ground Tussocks highly spaced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Native-dominated grassland A few medium height tussocks Moderate inter-tussock spacing composed of some bare ground, rocks, short grasses and forbs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Native-dominated grassland Many medium height tussocks Minimal inter-tussock spacing composed only of short grasses and forbs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Native-dominated grassland Tall dense grass with limited short grass and forbs
Management intent	Not applicable	Promote native grasses and forbs. Increase tussock height to optimal levels, giving consideration to climate outlook.	Promote native grasses and forbs. Maintain suitable habitat and ensure growth doesn't change to poor rating.	Promote native grasses and forbs. Reduce tussock height to optimal levels, giving consideration to climate outlook.	Promote native grasses and forbs. Reduce tussock height to optimal levels.
Management action	Not applicable	Remove grazers where possible. Do not remove surface rock.	Maintain habitat. Depending on trajectory for growth, consider either resting paddock, maintaining grazing or increasing grazing. Do not remove surface rock.	Introduce or increase grazing* unless coming into dry period. Do not remove surface rock.	Introduce grazing* or other biomass control* as appropriate. Do not remove surface rock.

*Suggested seasonality for increased biomass removal

- Grazing: summer and autumn; ideal after seed set of native plants, with lower risk of wet soil pugging
- Cool mosaic burns (leaving 30% unburnt): late autumn (from after first rains) to early spring when C4 grasses are inactive and more flammable, and dragons are overwintering in burrows.