

FLORA AND FAUNA GUARANTEE - SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

FINAL RECOMMENDATION ON A NOMINATION FOR LISTING

Alpine Snowpatch Community

Date of receipt of the nomination: 1 August 1991  
Date of preliminary recommendation: 4 September 1991  
Date of final recommendation: 10 March 1992

File No.: 91/1662

**Validity:**

The nomination is for a valid item and the prescribed information was provided. The nominated community is clearly described so as to be distinguished from all other communities, on the basis of both its species composition and physiographic characteristics.

The community is defined by McDougall (1982) as units 5D and 6 - "Short Turf Snowpatch" and "Diuturnal Snowpatch". It occurs on the lee side of ridges in areas where snow persists for considerably longer periods than nearby areas, often until mid-summer. The vegetation on lower areas (Short turf snowpatch) is dominated by *Carex hebes* (Sedge), *Poa hothamensis* (Ledge Grass), *Viola betonicifolia* (Showy Violet) and a variety of other forbs. Plants are short, rarely exceeding 10 cm. Snowpatches in higher areas (Diuturnal snowpatch) are dominated by *Carex hebes*, *Poa fawcettiae* (Horny Grass) and *Celmisia astellifolia* (Silver Snow Daisy), which dominates the upper parts of the snow patches where the snow remains the longest.

McDougall (1982) stated that the short turf snowpatch component (of the nominated community) is equivalent to the grassland D of Carr & Turner (1959).

**Eligibility for listing as a community under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee**

The nominated item satisfies at least one criterion of the set of criteria prepared and maintained under Section 11 of the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*, and stated in Schedule 1 of the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Regulations 1990*.

**Evidence that criteria are satisfied:**

**Criterion 2.2** *the community is significantly prone to future threats which are likely to result in extinction*

**Evidence:**

The main threat to the community is physical disturbance and damage, caused primarily by cattle grazing and trampling. Clear evidence for this threat is provided by McDougall (1982) and by expert advice from KTRI\*.

Grazing has caused major soil loss, entrenched cattle tracks, bare areas and weed invasion.

Invasion by the introduced weeds *Acetosella vulgaris* (Sheep Sorrel) and *Hypochoeris radicata* (Cat's ear) is a significant problem. Trampling and disturbance by tourists, wanting to see the last snow for the year, may constitute an additional threat.

Cattle grazing is being phased out in parts of the alpine country, but the alps are subject to increasing use by humans, so it is likely that these threats will continue and may increase in severity of effects.

**Sub-criterion 2.2.1** *The community is very rare in terms of the total area it covers or it has a very restricted distribution or it has been recorded from only a few localities.*

**Evidence:**

The nominated community is restricted to the high altitudes of the alps, in sheltered areas where snow persists into late spring and summer. Although widely distributed in high alpine areas, it has a small total area and is considered to be rare.

The data presented on distribution and abundance are the result of comprehensive surveys and provide clear and strong evidence that the community is rare in terms of abundance.

\* Keith Turnbull Research Institute, Dept. of Conservation and Environment, Frankston.

## Background Information:

- Species categorised by Gullan *et al.* (1990) as rare or threatened in Victoria occur in the nominated community: *Luzula acutifolia* (Sharp-leaf Woodrush) (rare), *Plantago glacialis* (Small Star Plantain) (vulnerable) and *Oreomyrrhis pulvinifera* (Cushion Caraway) (vulnerable).

## Advertisement for public comment

In accordance with the requirements of Section 14 of the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*, the preliminary recommendation was advertised for public comment for a period of at least 30 days.

The preliminary recommendation was advertised in:

"The Age" - on 13 November 1991

"Alpine Observer" - on 12 November 1991

*Government Gazette* - on 13 November 1991

Submissions closed on 16 December 1991.

## Further evidence provided:

No public comments were received by the Scientific Advisory Committee.

No evidence was provided to warrant a review of the Scientific Advisory Committee's preliminary recommendation that the community is eligible for listing.

## Documentation

The published information provided to the SAC has been assessed. To the best of their knowledge, the SAC believes that the data presented are not the subject of scientific dispute and the inferences drawn are reasonable and well supported.

## Final Recommendation of the Scientific Advisory Committee:

The Scientific Advisory Committee concludes that on the evidence available the nominated item is eligible for listing in accordance with Section 11(1) of the Act because primary criterion 2.2 is satisfied.

The SAC also concludes that sub-criterion 2.2.1 has been satisfied and that no evidence exists to suggest that primary criterion 2.2 cannot be satisfied as a consequence of sub-criterion 2.2.1 being satisfied.

The Scientific Advisory Committee recommends that the nominated item be supported for listing on Schedule 2 of the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*.

## Selected references:

Barnett, J. (1987) The effects of Alpine grazing on conservation values. Victorian National Parks Association, Melbourne.

Carr, S.G.M. & Turner, J.S. (1959) The ecology of the Bogong High Plains, I. The environmental factors and grassland communities. *Aust. J. Bot.* 7: 12-33.

Gullan, P.K., Cheal, D.C. & Walsh, N.G. (1990) *Rare or threatened plants in Victoria*. Dept. of Conservation and Environment, Melbourne

McDougall, K. (1982) The alpine vegetation of the Bogong High Plains. *Env. Stud. Publ.* No. 357. Ministry for Conservation, Victoria.


McDougall, K. (1991) High mountain flora and vegetation. Alpine Ecology Training Workshop, Howman's Gap.

Moseley, J.G. (1988) *Australian Alps World Heritage Nomination Proposal*. Victorian National Parks Association, Melbourne.

Williams, R.J. (1991) The ecology of alpine and sub-alpine ecosystems in Victoria. Alpine Ecology Training Workshop, Howman's Gap.

Endorsement by the Convenor of the Scientific Advisory Committee

Date

  
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Dr. Neil Murray

30 March, 1992