

EVC/Bioregion Benchmark for Vegetation Quality Assessment

Look-up Table: EVC 44: Sub-alpine Treeless Vegetation

EVC No.	Component EVC Name	Description
41	Montane Riparian Thicket	Occurs in montane and sub-alpine areas, often within Montane Damp Forest along drainage lines, streams with gentle gradients and in soaks at the heads of gullies on south-facing aspects. The waterlogged soils are colluviums or alluviums rich in organic matter and it is a closed shrubland to 8 m tall in structure, often forming a narrow, linear strip. The understorey consists of a variety of shade-tolerant species. Along the stream flats ferns are the common life form while sedges, grasses and herbs form a sparse but diverse ground layer.
42	Sub-alpine Shrubland	A generally dense shrubland of sub-alpine and alpine areas frequently found on sheltered sites fringing Sub-alpine Woodland where snowfall persists as ground cover in winter months and where rainfall is high. It occurs on a range of geologies on shallow soils.
156	Alpine Coniferous Shrubland	An alpine and sub-alpine shrubland dominated by Mountain Plum Pine <i>Podocarpus lawrencei</i> and restricted to rocky, fire protected sites amongst granite tors or associated with basalt block streams.
170	Alpine Dwarf Heathland	A very low, open heathland to 20 cm tall occurring on rocky pavements with limited soil development on exposed ridges and peaks above 1700m ASL. It is subject to strong winds, frosts and high temperatures during the summer months which stunts plant development. This rare EVC is characterised by the layering growth habit and very low shrub height.
171	Alpine Fen	A low, open sedge land of pools within bogs, or within some valley floor heathlands in high rainfall alpine areas of Victoria above 1200m ASL. The pools form in wet peats within a bog or fen or wet valley floor heathland.
210	Sub-alpine Wet Heathland	A wet, treeless heathland characterised by a dense layer of low heathy shrubs to 2 m tall, with a number of sedges and rushes in the understorey. Occurs at elevations above 1000 m, in soaks or along small streams. Rainfall is generally greater than 1000 mm per annum, and during winter, this EVC can tolerate long periods of snow cover and low temperatures.
239	Alpine Creekline Herbland	Dense herbaceous mats occurring along snow patch drainage-lines and upper creeklines in alpine areas, on thin organic/soils of Quaternary organic origin, associated with gravel and rock. At optimum development, the community comprises a dense mat of <i>Celmisia sericophylla</i> with few associated species.
288_61	Alpine Valley Peatland (Raised Bog)	A dwarf heathland of intermittently wet high altitude valley floors and terraces associated with creeks and bogs. Typically dominated by <i>Epacris glacialis</i> and <i>Empodisma minus</i> growing on former peatland on the margins of alpine wetlands, streams and bogs. Alpine Relic-bog Dwarf Heathland is a bog that has dried out such that it can no longer support Sphagnum, a non-vascular plant species that is intolerant of the drying out of wet peat soils.
288_62	Alpine Valley Peatland (Valley Bog)	Sphagnum Moss and sedge dominated vegetation of alpine and some sub-alpine valley floors. Waterlogging and cold air drainage are important environmental variables determining the extent of this extremely rare EVC as is the <i>in-situ</i> development of peat – soils comprising the undecomposed remains of plant materials. Shrubs may be present but emerge from a more or less continuous cover of Sphagnum moss. Other prominent life-forms are also herbaceous and include various forbs, lilies, and tussock grasses. Much of the habitat has been lost to the construction of water impoundments and stock grazing has degraded remaining areas.

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913	Alpine Pond Herbland	Herbland occurring on systems of small temporary ponds in alpine areas within the EVCs Sub-alpine Wet Heathland, Alpine Damp Heathland and/or Alpine Damp Grassland. These habitats are poorly understood and the known sites are on granitic geologies, typically with humified peat soils.
905	Alpine Short Herbland	A dwarf herbland less than 0.3 m tall growing on wet alpine soils, in sites with a short growing season. The habitat of this EVC is snow patch soaks and terraces on upper creek head soaks, on peaty-stony soils at elevations of 1680 -1830 m. Soils are constantly water-logged, variously subject to intermittent deeper inundation. Extremely localised in highest mountains and often dominated by <i>Caltha introloba</i> and <i>Oreobolus pumilio</i> .
1001	Alpine Grassland	A tussock grassland dominating valleys and saddles of extensive high altitude plains such as the Bogong High Plains and the Howitt Plains with a high cover and diversity of forbs generally on free draining substrates. It is primarily delimited by topography, altitude and ultimately frost tolerance. Alpine Grassland is typically wedged between heathlands and shrublands on higher ground and wetland vegetation types (eg. Sub-alpine Wet Heathland or Alpine Damp Grassland) on the valley floor.
1002	Alpine Damp Grassland	A dense tussock grassland of high altitude valleys and plains generally above 1500 metres ASL and dominated by a thick sward of grasses such as <i>Poa costiniana</i> and sedges such that individual grass tussocks are not readily distinguishable. It occurs on moist sites with deep humic soils tending towards peat. Alpine Damp Grassland is usually found within or on the margins of wet heathland and peatlands but may occur within drier grassland as isolated patches.
1003	Sub-alpine Dry Shrubland	An alpine and sub-alpine open shrubland occurring on shallow soils associated with steep slopes, rocky outcrops, peaks and ridge-lines of mountains where denudation is comparatively active and exposure to strong cold winds and drought stress are common in the winter and summer respectively.
1004	Alpine Grassy Heathland	High altitude, open heathland with inter-shrub spaces dominated by tussock grasses and a wide range of forbs. It occupies a wide range of habitats generally on slopes above 1400m ASL where exposure and frost are limiting to tree growth.
1011	Alpine Peaty Heathland	A heathland occurring in alpine and sub-alpine valley floors or on gentle slopes with impeded drainage and with the water table at or near the surface throughout the entire year. Sphagnum spp. and other bog and marsh forbs and sedges dominate the field layer.
1012	Snowpatch Grassland	An alpine short turf (or sward structure) grassland/sedgeland occurring on the lee side of ridges and peaks above 1600 m ASL on southerly or easterly aspects where accumulations of snow persist beyond the general thaw. The snow cover extends to early summer and truncates the growing season.
1013	Alpine Rocky Outcrop Heathland	A low heathland occurring on shallow soils of exposed peaks and ridges. It is widespread in high mountain areas generally above 1400m ASL where rock is at or near the surface. Lichens and mosses may constitute significant cover in some locations.
1014	Late-lying Snowpatch Herbland	A low alpine herbland confined to sheltered slopes of highly exposed summits and ridges where wind-blown snow accumulates and snow melt is not complete until mid-summer, resulting in very few species being capable of existing on these sites within a very short growing season.

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