The Razor on the Catherine River-Buffalo River divide, as viewed from Mount Stapleton

FOREWORD

Land is a resource that provides many of our material and aesthetic needs. It is conserved when management maintains and improves the productive capacity of soils without detriment to adjacent lands, waters or other resources. It deteriorates when we impair the soil's physical, chemical or biological condition. Processes of soil deterioration can take many forms, such as erosion, salting, compaction, loss of humus, leaching of nutrients, landsliding and waterlogging.

Productive capacity and susceptibility to deterioration vary from one land type to another — depending on the influence of many characteristics, such as slope, soil permeability and rainfall. Furthermore, processes in one land type can affect others.

To develop and apply sound management practices, we need to recognise ecosystems and to understand the processes within and between them. The Soil Conservation Authority has developed a system of land classification based on integrating data on climate, geological material, land form, soil and native vegetation into 'land systems' and 'land components'. Although land systems are mapped on a broad scale, descriptions of the land components within them are relatively detailed.

The survey reported on in the following pages is one of a series begun in 1952, designed to provide a broad-scale coverage of the State of Victoria. The purpose is to map, describe and evaluate the biophysical nature of the land, as basic information for planning its conservation under a variety of uses and determining its most suitable use in the public interest.

The information provides a basis for planning at the State or regional level, and provides a systematic background for local investigations such as assessment of the land's capability for specific uses.

The surveys have evolved from principles put forward by Downes (1949), Christian and Stewart (1953), Costin (1954), Gibbons and Downes (1964), Gibbons and Haans (1976) and others.