

Land Unit 9.

This land unit consists of the numerous small valleys on the plateau at elevations of about 4,300 feet to 5,000 feet. They are generally only several chains wide and have a shallow, gently concave cross section and a very gently sloping gradient.

They are generally referred to as "plains" and have been called high-valley plains in this study. The largest is Hospice Plain and other large ones are Camp Plain, Bogong Plain, Kowan Plain, Lyrebird Plain, Skeleton Gully, Long Plain, Wild Dog Plains and Five Acre Plain. Smaller plains are scattered throughout the plateau and a relatively large T-shaped plain and several smaller ones occur on North Buffalo.

The climate is typically sub-alpine with annual precipitation probably exceeding 75 inches and snow persisting for several months in winter.

The environment of the high-valley plains differs from that of the rest of the plateau because of the flat gradients of these plains. Cold air which drains from the adjacent slopes does not readily drain from these plains so that they are colder than the adjacent areas. Because of this, estimates of average monthly temperatures based on correlations with elevation may indicate higher temperatures than those actually occurring. The following estimates have therefore been reduced by several degrees. In January average temperatures of around 52° F. to 56° F. may be expected and 30° F. to 32° F. may be typical averages for July.

The topography also results in slower drainage of the soils than elsewhere, and the permanently wet forms of vegetation, the wet heaths, fens and bogs, are the characteristic vegetation of the lower parts of these valleys.

The sequence of vegetation which normally occurs from the poorly drained centre of the valley out to the sides is : bog and/or fen, very frequently associated with wet heath (*Baeckea gunniana*—*Epacris brerora* alliance), grading into snow grass grassland (*Poa australis* association), and finally the low shrubs of the Hovea—*Bossiaea* heath (*Hovea longifolia*—*Bossiaea foliosa* alliance). The valleys are usually bordered by snow gum woodland (*E. pauciflora* association) at the higher elevations, but at the lower elevations, mountain gum—snow gum woodland (*E. dabrympleana*—*E. pauciflora* association) occurs on northern aspects, and alpine ash forest (*E. delegatensis* association) occurs on southern aspects.

The soils in these valleys are peats in the wet centre of the valley or more commonly humified peats where the drainage is entrenched, and alpine humus soils under the grasslands and low shrubs. They are generally not stony but where adjacent to steep slopes, rocks from the slopes may be scattered around the plains.

The environment of the high-valley plains is the most sensitive to change of any in the Park.

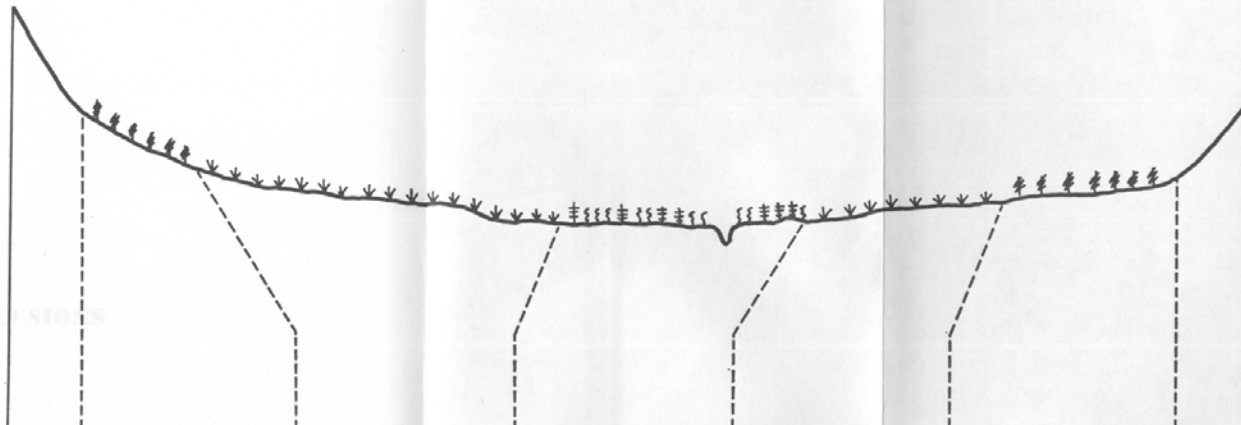
Although all the larger areas of high-valley plains have been delineated, some of the very small areas may have been missed. These are often too small to map at the scale used or are not clearly apparent on the aerial photos.



Plate 26. Hospice Plain (a high-valley plain) and Lake Catani—an aerial view of the Buffalo Plateau seen to the south-east over the Buckland valley

LAND UNIT 9 (High-valley plains)

Fig. 9



Topography	Shallow sloping valleys with gentle gradients. Available relief up to about 30 ft.				
Elevation range	From about 4,300 ft. in the east to about 5,000 ft. in the south				
Estimated average temperatures	Jan. 52° F.—56° F. : July 30° F.—32° F. : cold-air drainage makes these areas very frosty				
Estimated average annual precipitation	76 in. to over 80 in. with snow persistent for 2 to 3 months				
Soils	Alpine humus soils		Peats and humified peats	Alpine humus soils	
Vegetation	Heath of hovea and Bossiaca (<i>H. longifolia</i> - <i>B. foliosa</i> alliance)	Grassland of snow grass (<i>Poa australis</i> assn.)	Wet heath (<i>B. gunniana</i> - <i>E. breviflora</i> alliance) <i>Sphagnum</i> moss bogs, <i>Carex fens</i>	Grassland of snow grass (<i>Poa australis</i> assn.)	Heath of hovea and Bossiaca (<i>H. longifolia</i> - <i>B. foliosa</i> alliance)
	Land Units 3, 4, 6 or 7			Land Units 3, 4, 6 or 7.	