The University of Hong Kong
School of Biological Sciences

Guest Seminar

A global perspective on woody plant encroachment

Date: 27 November, 2026

Time: 3:00 PM

Venue: KKLG106





About the speaker:

David Eldridge is Professor at the School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of NSW, Sydney, Australia. He previously held a joint position with the New South Wales government as a Senior Principal Research Scientist. David has 40 years of experience in rangeland monitoring and assessment, soil conservation in developing countries, grazing management, desertification and ecology of desert systems and has published over 300 papers in international journals (H index 84), such as Nature, Nature Geoscience, Nature food, ISME, Ecology Letters, Global Change Biology. He is Editor-in-Chief of a new journal Drylands published by Cambridge University Press and co-chair the Global Drylands Ecosystem Program (Global-DEP). Over the past 10 years David's research has focused on the effects of shrub encroachment on ecological processes and how management of shrubs influencing soil and plant function.

Abstract:

The encroachment of woody plants into savannas has been a topic of considerable interest to ecologists worldwide. Despite a greater understanding of the ecological benefits provided by woody plants, the contemporary view is that encroachment is a form of landscape degradation. Consequently, woody removal is used globally to attempt to reinstate grasslands. Surprisingly, there have been no systematic attempts to assess the impacts of removal on ecosystems, hindering our capacity to manage woodlands and savannas under changing climate. In this presentation David will briefly describe the Australian landscape and its flora, the impacts of woody plants on ecosystem functions, how removal of woody plants has influenced structure and function, and finally outline recent work reporting a global assessment of woody removal on ecosystem structure function and composition.