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Australian forest profiles

Rainforest

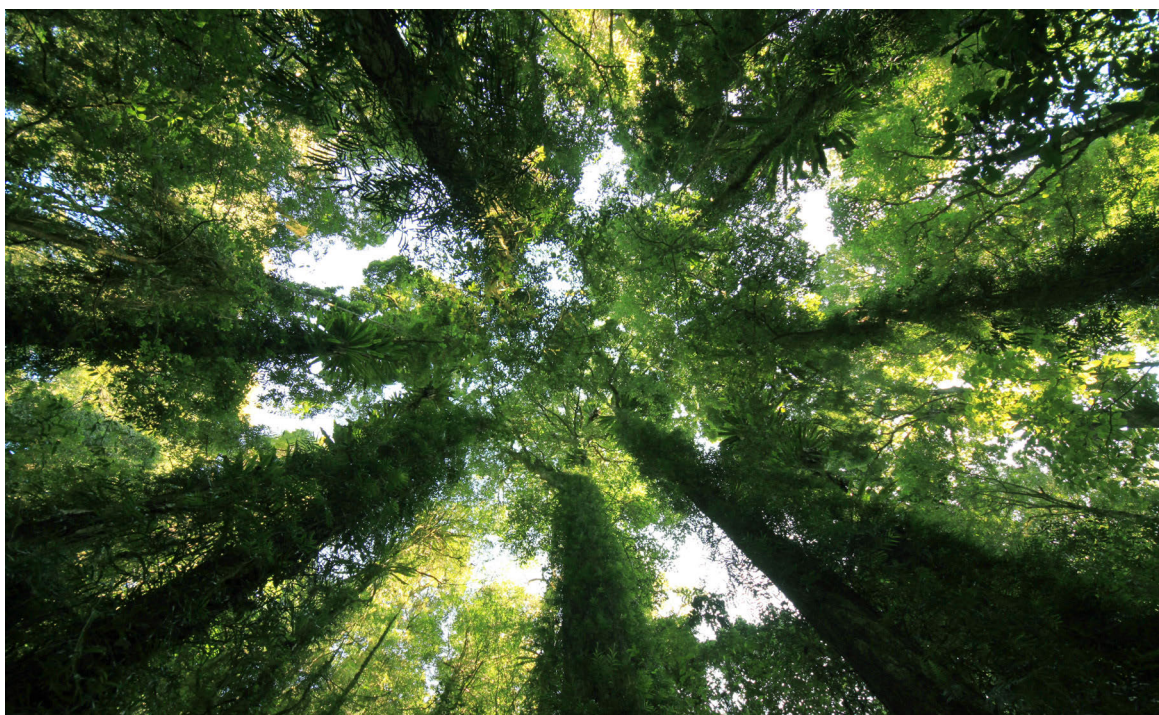


Australia has 3.6 million hectares of the Rainforest native forest type, which is 3 per cent of Australia's total native forest area.

Australia's rainforests are typically characterised by high rainfall, lush growth and closed canopies. They rarely experience fire, and generally contain no eucalypts or only the occasional individual eucalypt tree emerging from the rainforest canopy. Rainforest tree species are shade-tolerant when young and establish in the understorey

of mature forest. They grow into large trees when events such as tree falls, lightning strikes or wind damage (including from cyclones) create gaps in the canopy.

Rainforests support a significant part of Australia's biodiversity, including many of Australia's unique plant families. The tropical rainforests in Far North Queensland are rich in marsupial, frog and butterfly species, while the cool-temperate rainforests of Tasmania support diverse fungi, mosses and lichens.



Rainforest canopy, Dorrigo National Park, New South Wales
Rohan Jacobsen

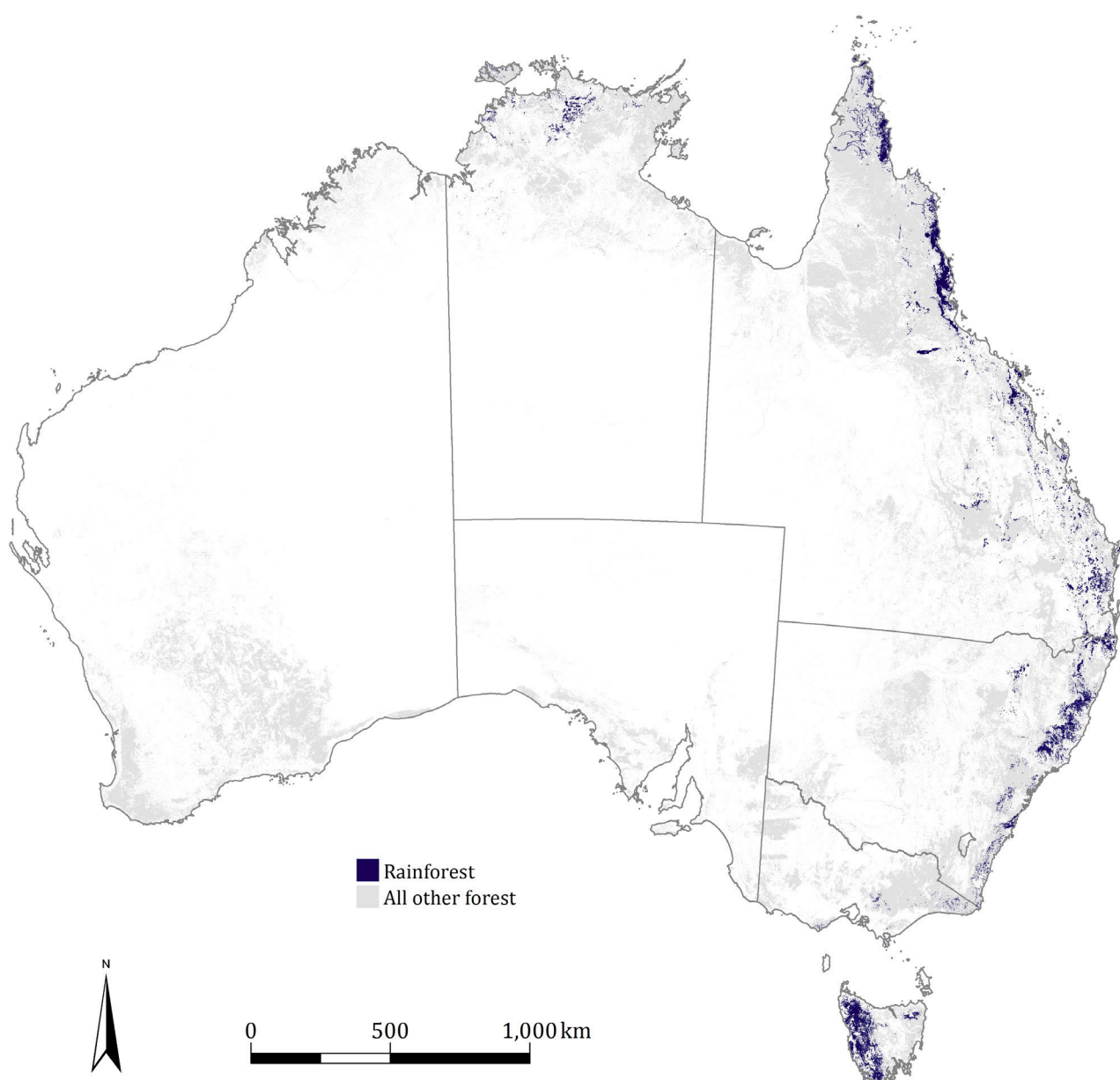
Distribution and ownership

The Rainforest native forest type is found in the Northern Territory and all states except South Australia (Map 1). Two million hectares (55 per cent) are in Queensland and 0.7 million hectares (20 per cent) are in Tasmania.

Australia has many types of rainforest, varying with rainfall and latitude. Tropical and subtropical rainforests are found in northern and eastern

Australia in wet coastal areas. Warm-temperate rainforests grow in New South Wales and Victoria, and cool-temperate rainforests are found in Victoria and Tasmania and in small areas at high altitude in New South Wales and Queensland. Dry rainforests occur in pockets protected from frequent fire in sub-coastal and inland areas of northern and eastern Australia and northern Western Australia. Monsoon rainforests occur in northern Australia in seasonally dry coastal and sub-coastal regions.

MAP 1 Distribution of the Rainforest native forest type, 2013



Projection: Albers equal-area with standard parallels 18°S and 36°S.

Source: ABARES (2016). Map compiled by ABARES 2016

[Open a high-resolution version of Map 1 that can be saved as a PNG file](#)

TABLE 1 Ownership of the Rainforest native forest type, by state and territory, 2013 ('000 hectares)

Tenure	ACT	NSW	NT	Qld	SA	Tas.	Vic.	WA	Australia
Leasehold	0	20	23	253	0	7	0	0	304
Multiple-use public forest	0	95	0	168	0	170	8	0	442
Nature conservation reserve	0	324	0	953	0	462	9	0.2	1 749
Other Crown land	0	1	6	91	0	45	1	0.1	144
Private	0	166	230	522	0	25	1	0	944
Unresolved tenure	0	0	1	15	0	0	0	0	16
Total	0	606	260	2 004	0	708	20	0.3	3 598

Note: Totals may not tally due to rounding. The six forest tenure categories are defined in *Australia's State of the Forests Report 2013*.

Source: ABARES (2016)

[Download Table 1 data as an Excel workbook](#)

A total of 1.7 million hectares (49 per cent) of the Rainforest native forest type is on nature conservation reserves (Table 1). Large areas of rainforest are found in well-known national parks such as the Daintree National Park in northern Queensland, Barrington Tops National Park in the Hunter region of New South Wales and the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park in Tasmania. A total of 0.9 million hectares (26 per cent) of the Rainforest forest type is on private land.

Forest structure

The Rainforest native forest type has a high proportion of closed forest at 72 per cent (2.6 million hectares) (Figure 1). Seventy-three per cent (2.6 million hectares) is medium-height forest.

Native forests are divided into three classes based on crown cover:

woodland forest (20 to 50 per cent crown cover)

open forest (>50 to 80 per cent crown cover)

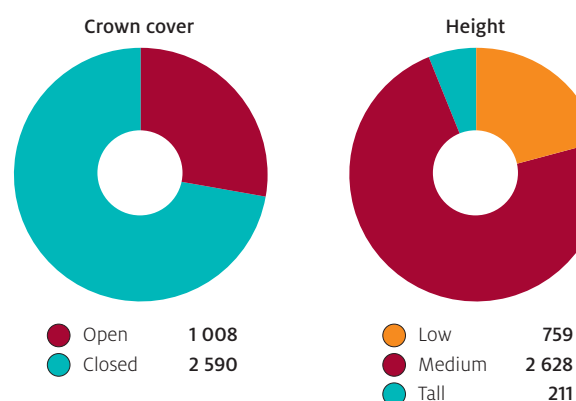
closed forest (>80 to 100 per cent crown cover)

and three classes based on mature tree height:

low (2 to 10 metres)

medium (>10 to 30 metres)

tall (>30 metres).

FIGURE 1 Structure of Rainforest native forest type, 2013 ('000 hectares)

Source: ABARES (2016)

[Download Figure 1 data as an Excel workbook](#)

Importance and uses

Rainforests are very important for the conservation of biodiversity. They provide habitat for many forest-dwelling and forest-dependent species of plants and animals. This includes numerous species that are endemic to Australia, and species listed as threatened under the *Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

Rainforest comprises only 3 per cent of Australia's total native forest, but provides habitat for 60 per cent of Australia's plant species, 60 per cent of butterfly species, 40 per cent of bird species and 35 per cent of mammal species.

Thirty-two per cent of Australia's rainforests are within UNESCO World Heritage Areas. They are places of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance. Both their rich biodiversity and their World Heritage Area status are strong drivers of tourism, ecotourism and associated economic benefits.

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Rainforest in Curtain Fig National Park, Queensland
Claire Howell

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This is one in a series of profiles on Australia's major forest types. It has been compiled using information from the Australia's State of the Forests Report series and subsequent updates. The latest report, Australia's State of the Forests Report 2013, and the profiles, are available at agriculture.gov.au/abares/forestsaustralia.

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