Eucalypts are iconic Australian forest trees. The Eucalyptus forest type is by far the most common forest type in Australia covering 101 million hectares, which is 77% of Australia’s total native forest area.

The term 'eucalypt' includes approximately 800 species in the three genera Angophora, Corymbia and Eucalyptus. Almost all eucalypt species are native to Australia. Eucalypts evolved from rainforest ancestors, adapting to an environment in which drought, nutrient-poor soils and fire were increasingly common.

Eucalypts have oil-rich foliage that burns readily, and they display a range of strategies to survive and recover from fire. The majority of eucalypt species are evergreen, retaining their leaves year-round.

River red gum (Eucalyptus camaldulensis) forest, Murray River, New South Wales
Claire Howell
River red gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) is the most widely distributed eucalypt, and is found in all Australian mainland states. The forests of south-eastern Australia contain a wide range of dominant eucalypt species, including major commercial timber species such as mountain ash (*E. regnans*), messmate stringybark (*E. obliqua*), alpine ash (*E. delegatensis*), silvertop ash (*E. sieberi*), blackbutt (*E. pilularis*) and spotted gum (*Corymbia maculata*).
### Table 1 Ownership of Eucalypt native forest, by state and territory, 2018 (’000 hectares)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tenure</th>
<th>ACT</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>NT</th>
<th>Qld</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>Tas.</th>
<th>Vic.</th>
<th>WA</th>
<th>Australia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leasehold forest</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2,832</td>
<td>7,221</td>
<td>19,315</td>
<td>1,127</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1,962</td>
<td>32,464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple-use public forest</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1,591</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2,484</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>2,953</td>
<td>1,318</td>
<td>8,879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature conservation reserve</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>4,799</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2,339</td>
<td>1,598</td>
<td>924</td>
<td>3,044</td>
<td>4,702</td>
<td>17,525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Crown land</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>591</td>
<td>760</td>
<td>946</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>6,568</td>
<td>9,466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private forest</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5,582</td>
<td>11,773</td>
<td>9,731</td>
<td>1,446</td>
<td>742</td>
<td>947</td>
<td>2,052</td>
<td>32,273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unresolved tenure</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>129</td>
<td>15,460</td>
<td>19,764</td>
<td>35,184</td>
<td>4,283</td>
<td>2,461</td>
<td>7,175</td>
<td>16,602</td>
<td>101,058</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Totals may not tally due to rounding. The six forest tenure categories are defined in Australia’s State of the Forests Report 2018.

Source: ABARES (2019)

Download Table 1 data as an Excel workbook

Eucalypt forest in south-western Australia are dominated by jarrah (E. marginata) and karri (E. diversicolor). Typical eucalypts of northern Australia include Darwin woollybutt (E. miniata) and Darwin stringybark (E. tetrodonta).

Many species of multi-stemmed mallee eucalypts are found across the inland regions of southern Australia. In inland arid zones, eucalypts are confined to the edges of rivers. Eucalypts are generally not found in the tropical and subtropical rainforests in eastern Australia, or in the warm and cool temperate rainforests of Victoria and Tasmania.

### Forest structure

The Eucalypt forest type is divided into 11 forest subtypes based on the form of individual trees, crown cover and tree height. Eucalypts grow in two forms: single-stemmed trees and multi-stemmed mallee.

A total of 60 million hectares (69%) of non-mallee Eucalypt forest is woodland forest and 71 million hectares (81%) are medium-height forest (Figure 1).

Mature mountain ash (E. regnans) trees are usually between 55 and 75 metres high, in tall forest. Some mountain ash trees can grow to more than 90 metres, making this the tallest plant species in Australia, one of the world’s tallest hardwoods, and one of the world’s tallest flowering plants.

A total of 13 million hectares (94%) of mallee Eucalypt forest is woodland forest and 11 million hectares (81%) are low forest (Figure 2).

### Native forest structural classes

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

- **woodland forest** (20 to 50% crown cover)
- **open forest** (>50 to 80% crown cover)
- **closed forest** (>80% 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 non-mallee Eucalypt native forest, 2018 (’000 hectares)](source: ABARES (2019))

Download Figure 1 data as an Excel workbook
Eucalypt native forests are important for the conservation of Australia’s rich biodiversity. They support many forest-dwelling or forest-dependent species of flora and fauna. This includes species endemic to Australia, and species that are listed as threatened under the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.

Red-tailed black-cockatoo: a eucalypt specialist

The red-tailed black-cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus banksii*) is a forest-dwelling species of parrot that requires large tree hollows for nesting. Two subspecies are listed as threatened: the south-eastern subspecies (*C. b. graptogyne*) and the forest subspecies (*C. b. naso*). The south-eastern red-tailed black-cockatoo is found only in western Victoria and south-east South Australia. It inhabits eucalypt woodlands of varying species, but feeds mainly on seeds from desert stringybark (*E. arenacea*) and brown stringybark (*E. baxteri*). The forest red-tailed black-cockatoo is found only in south-west Australia and feeds mainly on seeds from jarrah (*E. marginata*) and karri (*E. diversicolor*). Both subspecies face threats from habitat loss and limited availability of nesting hollows.
Indigenous Australians have traditionally used nearly all parts of eucalypt trees. Leaves and leaf oils have medicinal properties, and saps can be used as adhesive resins. Bark and wood have been used for making vessels, tools and weapons such as spears and clubs.

Because of the size, wood quality and widespread distribution and abundance of eucalypts, eucalypts are a significant source of wood. The variability in wood colour, shape, hardness, weight, strength and durability makes eucalypt useful for many applications. Sawn wood is used in large-scale construction, general building, furniture-making and wood-turning. Engineered wood products such as laminated veneers, fibreboards and particleboards are used for construction and flooring. Eucalypt wood is also used for chipping, paper pulp and fuelwood. Oils distilled from eucalypt leaves are used for aromatherapy and in perfumes.