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Australian forest profiles

Rainforest

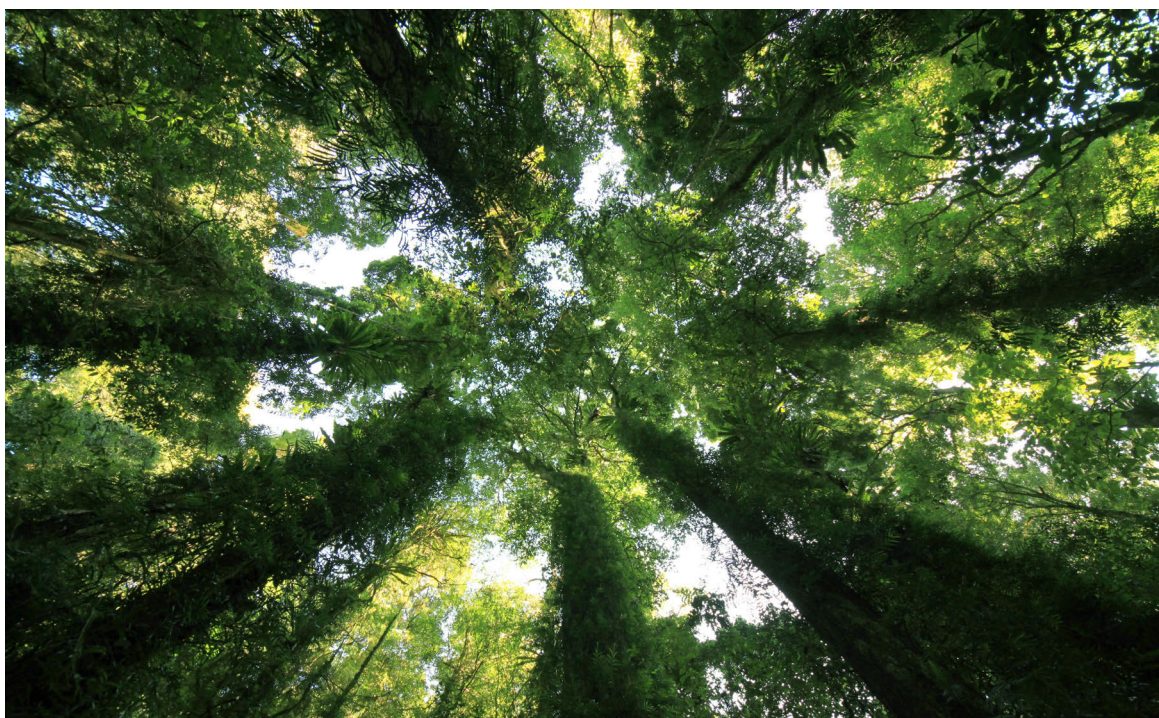


Australia has 3.6 million hectares of the Rainforest native forest type, which is 2.7% of Australia's total native forest area.

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 typically shade-tolerant when young, and establish as saplings 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

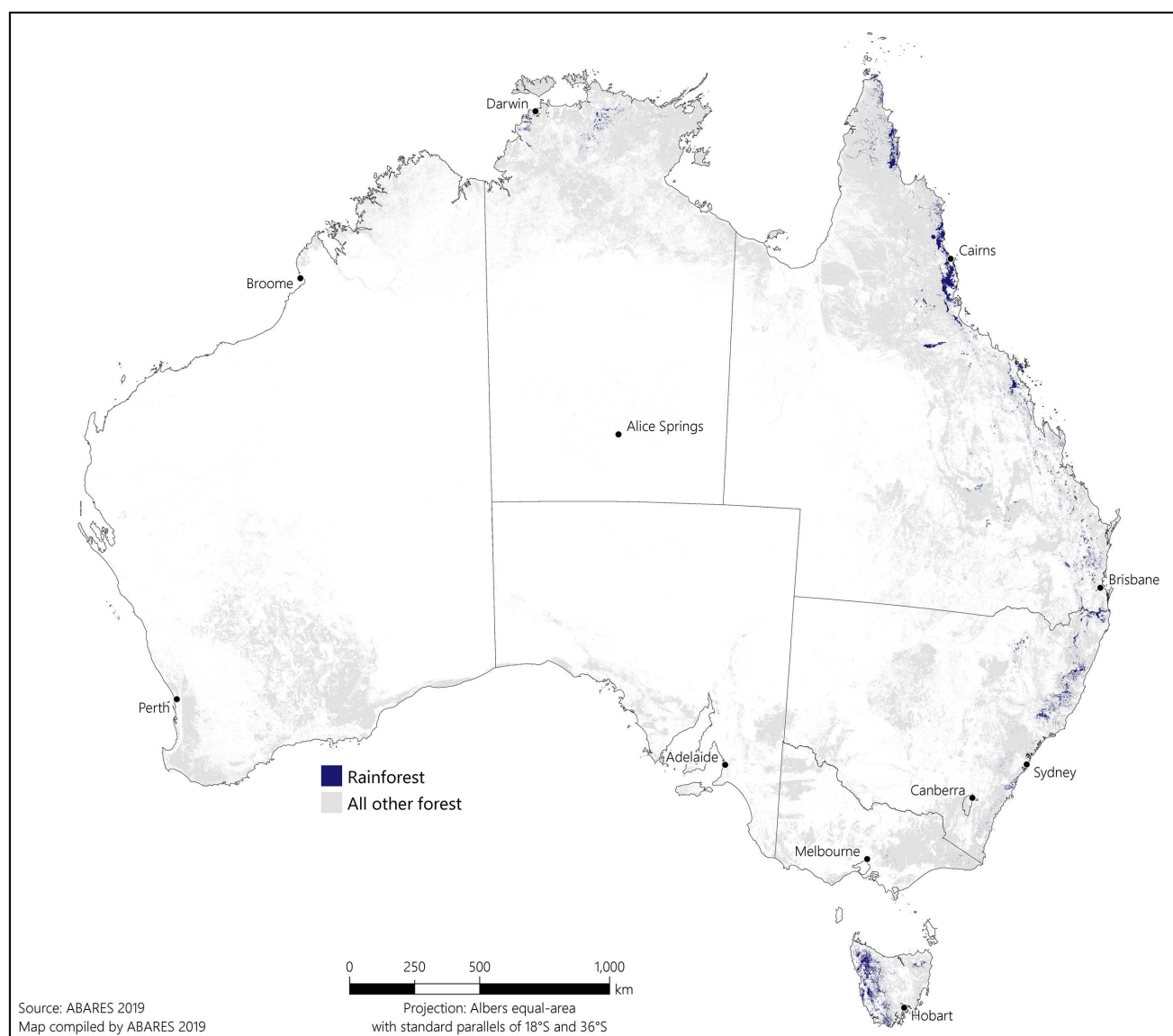
Distribution and ownership

The Rainforest native forest type is found in the Northern Territory and all states except South Australia (Map 1). A total of 2.0 million hectares (55%) is in Queensland and 0.7 million hectares (20%) 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, 2018



[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, 2018 ('000 hectares)

Tenure	NSW	NT	Qld	SA	Tas	Vic	WA	ACT	NT
Leasehold forest	0	4	32	217	0	0	0	0	254
Multiple-use public forest	0	92	0	106	0	68	9	0	275
Nature conservation reserve	0	320	0.3	932	0	537	10	0.1	1,800
Other Crown land	0	9	3	77	0	73	0.3	0.1	163
Private forest	0	169	251	639	0	21	1	0	1,080
Unresolved tenure	0	0.2	0.3	9	0	0	0	0	10
Total			287					.2	

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](#)

A total of 1.8 million hectares (50%) 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.

In addition, 1.1 million hectares (30%) of the Rainforest forest type are on private land (Table 1).

Forest structure

A total of 2.6 million hectares (72%) of the Rainforest native forest type is closed forest, and 2.6 million hectares (73%) is medium forest (Figure 1).

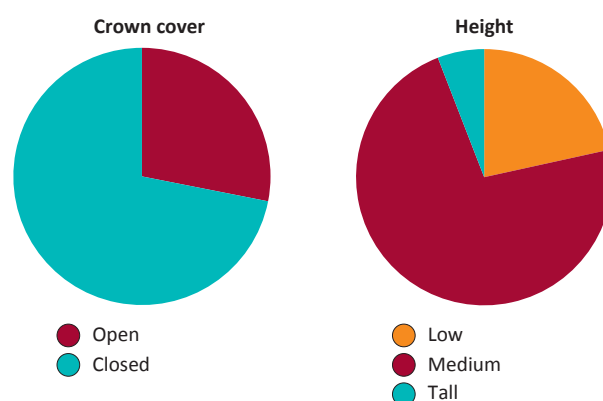
Native forest structural classes

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 to 100% 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, 2018 ('000 hectares)

Source: ABARES (2019)

[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 2.7% of Australia's total native forest, but provides habitat for 60% of Australia's plant species, 60% of butterfly species, 40% of bird species and 35% of mammal species.

A total of 32% of Australia's rainforests are within UNESCO World Heritage Areas, and 63% are located in Australia's National Reserve System (see *Australia's State of the Forests Report 2018*, Indicator 1.1c). 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. The latest report, *Australia's State of the Forests Report 2018*, and the profiles, are available at agriculture.gov.au/abares/forestsaustralia.

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