

Australian Threatened Species 2007

Black gum—South-Esk pine forest

Conservation status



Black gum flowers. © R Brereton

Black gum—South-Esk pine forest *Eucalyptus ovata*—*Callitris oblonga*

Australian Government:

Vulnerable (Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999)

South-Esk pine *Callitris oblonga* ssp. *Oblonga*

Australian Government:

Endangered (Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999)

Tasmania: Vulnerable (Threatened Species Protection Act 1995)

What does it look like?

Tasmania's black gum—South-Esk pine forest (*Eucalyptus ovata*—*Callitris oblonga*) is an ecological community, which is a naturally occurring group of living things (plants and animals) found in a particular habitat. The canopy typically consists of black gum (*Eucalyptus ovata*) but may also include white gum (*Eucalyptus viminalis*) or black peppermint (*Eucalyptus amygdalina*). The midstorey is South-Esk pine (*Callitris oblonga* ssp. *Oblonga*) and the shrubby understorey includes native blackthorn (*Bursaria spinosa*), slender honey myrtle (*Melaleuca gibbosa*) and silver wattle (*Acacia dealbata*).

This ecological community is a sub-group of shrubby black gum (*Eucalyptus ovata*) forest, which has been extensively cleared since European settlement. The structure and composition of these communities have been significantly degraded in many locations.

Where is it found?

Black gum—South-Esk pine forest occurs along rivers on alluvial flats and adjacent to riparian zones in the Tasmanian Midlands and eastern Tasmania. The community is found along the St. Pauls, South-Esk, Apsley, Cygnet and Swan Rivers, and less than 600 hectares are left in Tasmania.

Black gum—South-Esk forest. © Threatened Species Unit, Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment



Black gum—South-Esk pine forest

Threats to the black gum—South-Esk pine forests

Black gum—South-Esk pine forest is a vulnerable ecological community. Historically, land clearing had a major impact, but today habitat degradation and climate change are the major threats.

Woody weeds, such as gorse (*Ulex Europaeus*), have invaded the black gum-South-Esk pine forest, competing with native species and contributing to the risk of fire, as several woody weeds are highly flammable and burn easily. South-Esk pine is highly sensitive to fire and usually dies after being burnt. Grazing by domestic animals also contributes to habitat degradation and prevents regeneration of many of the native forest species.

Climatic changes such as changes in rainfall and temperatures also have an effect on black gum—South-Esk pine forests by increasing the chances of fires and floods.

How do black gum—South-Esk pine forests benefit from protected areas?

Currently, only 10 per cent of remaining black gum—South-Esk pine forests is in secure reserves. Further protected areas, including private reserves or covenanted private land, are urgently required to protect black gum-South-Esk pine forests from inundation by large scale farm dams, incremental clearing and grazing by stock on private land.

What you can do

- Join the Threatened Plant Action Group's weed-busting event on National Threatened Species Day.
- Establish a 'Friends of' group or join a community group in your local area to help protect ecological communities and other threatened species.
- Contact your local Landcare group or nursery to find out what native plants you should grow in your backyard. South-Esk pine is readily available from native plant nurseries and is easy to grow in the right conditions; it is often grown in pots as a native Christmas tree.
- Remove proclaimed and known environmental weeds from gardens or properties.
- Consider placing a conservation covenant on your native habitat.



South-Esk pine on the banks of the Aspley River.
© Wayne Lawler

Case study: Bush Heritage Australia private reserve on the Aspley River

In 1998, Bush Heritage Australia purchased 6.8 hectares of land from the Tasmanian Conservation Trust on the Aspley River on Tasmania's east coast, with the aim of protecting a significant stand of black gum—South-Esk pine forest.

Originally, the land had been partially cleared, grazed by cattle and selectively logged. The introduced woody weed gorse had heavily invaded parts of the reserve putting the South-Esk pine under threat.

The Tasmanian Conservation Trust and Bush Heritage Australia, with help from the Threatened Species Network and Conservation Volunteers Australia, have made considerable progress towards reducing the threat from gorse and have largely revegetated the cleared part of the reserve. In 2000, Bush Heritage Australia received a Threatened Species Network Community Grant, which funded fencing of the reserve from adjacent private land, resulting in stock and vehicle exclusion.

Bush Heritage Australia have since covenanted the land, thereby securing it against further habitat loss and degradation, and they are continuing to control gorse to prevent it re-invading, both within the reserve and on adjacent private land.

Contact

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You can find out more information about protecting private property by contacting your state TSN Coordinator, visiting www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/incentives/covenants.html or by contacting the Department of the Environment and Water Resources Community Information Unit, email ciu@environment.gov.au, or freecall 1800 803 772.

Reference

Visit www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/ts-day/index.html

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