



Gondwana Rainforests of Australia

Inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1986

Gondwana Rainforests of Australia



Gondwana Rainforests of Australia contains remnants of the great rainforests that once covered the entire continent of Australia.

These reserves feature striking vertical cliffs, the world's best preserved eroded volcanic craters, wild rivers and many impressive high waterfalls.

The area is one of the best places on earth to see ancient ferns and *Araucaria* such as Hoop pines.

An outstanding record of flowering plants, true songbirds and other rare or threatened animals of the most ancient lineages show that these reserves have played a significant role in providing refuge to species for millions of years.

In 1986, a number of rainforest reserves located on the Great Escarpment of eastern New South Wales, known as the Australian East Coast Sub-tropical and Temperate Rainforest Parks, were inscribed on the World Heritage list for their outstanding natural universal values:

- as an outstanding example representing major stages of the earth's evolutionary history
- as an outstanding example representing significant ongoing geological processes and biological evolution
- containing important and significant habitats for the in situ conservation of biological diversity.

Large extensions to the area, including reserves in south-east Queensland, were listed in 1994 as Central Eastern Rainforest Reserves [Australia]. Then in 2007 the name was changed to Gondwana Rainforests of Australia to better reflect the values of the property. The current listing includes approximately 50 separate reserves located between Newcastle and Brisbane. Only areas of reserved Crown land are listed.

Rainforest occurs in New South Wales and south east Queensland as discontinuous patches surrounded by fire-prone eucalypt forest and agricultural lands. These patches range in size from tiny gully stands to lush forests covering large valleys and ranges. The Gondwana Rainforests include the most extensive areas of subtropical rainforest in the world, large areas of warm temperate rainforest and nearly all of the Antarctic beech cool temperate rainforest.

Rainforest once covered most of the ancient southern supercontinent Gondwana and remains the most ancient type of vegetation in Australia. The Gondwana Rainforests provide an interesting living link with the evolution of Australia. Few places on earth contain so many plants and animals which remain relatively unchanged from their ancestors in the fossil record. Some of the oldest elements of the world's ferns and conifers are found here and there is a concentration of primitive plant families that are direct links with the birth and spread of flowering plants over 100 million years ago. A range of geological and environmental influences in the Gondwana Rainforests determine where forest communities grow. This process has occurred over millions of years and will continue to change the forest mosaic into the future.

High waterfalls crashing into steep gorges are spectacular examples of an important ongoing natural process - erosion. Erosion by coastal rivers created the Great Escarpment and the steep-sided caldera of the Tweed Valley surrounding Mount Warning. This towering mountain was once the buried plug of an ancient vast volcano. Today, rainforest grows on the fertile, well watered soils that remain.

The evolution of new species is encouraged by the natural separation and isolation of rainforest stands. Many plants and animals found in the World Heritage property are locally restricted to a few sites or occur in widely separated populations.



Although rainforests cover only about 0.3 per cent of Australia, they contain about half of all Australian plant families and about a third of Australia's mammal and bird species. The Gondwana Rainforests have an extremely high conservation value and provide habitat for more than 200 rare or threatened plant and animal species. The distributional limits of several species and many centres of species diversity occur in the property. The Border Group is a particularly rich area with the highest concentration of frog, snake, bird and marsupial species in Australia.

Exploring the World Heritage rainforests in the Gondwana Rainforests World Heritage property is easy. Many of the reserves are readily accessible from major towns by sealed or graded gravel roads.

The Gondwana Rainforests of Australia are managed principally by the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service (part of the New South Wales Department of Environment and Climate Change) and the Queensland Environmental Protection Agency.



title page: Buttress roots in wet sclerophyll forest – Springbrook National Park, Queensland Paul Candlin

top strip: The wet sclerophyll forest in Lamington National Park Paul Candlin

top: Mt Warning National Park from Blackbutts Picnic Area – caldera of the 20 million year old Tweed Shield Volcano Paul Candlin

above: Brindle Creek, Border Ranges National Park, DEWHA

below: Mundora Creek, Springbrook National Park Paul Candlin



Gondwana Rainforests of Australia

Further information

Department of the Environment,
Water, Heritage and the Arts

[www.environment.gov.au/heritage/places/
world/gondwana/index](http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/places/world/gondwana/index)

UNESCO World Heritage

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/368>

Contact

Gondwana Rainforests of Australia

Gondwana Rainforests Executive Officer
c/- NSW NPWS
PO Box 1236
Coffs Harbour NSW 2450

Email: gondwana@environment.nsw.gov.au
Tel: 02 6650 7101

Queensland Environmental Protection Agency

www.epa.qld.gov.au

New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service

www.environment.nsw.gov.au

