

BLUE GUM HIGH FOREST OF THE SYDNEY BASIN BIOREGION

Before European settlement, forest, woodland and heathland ecological communities, including the Blue Gum High Forest covered the Sydney region. This ecological community is now restricted to small bushland remnants nestled amongst the suburbs of Sydney.

The Blue Gum High Forest is listed as a critically endangered ecological community under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). It is also listed as an endangered ecological community in NSW under the *NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*.

What is the Blue Gum High Forest?

The Blue Gum High Forest is a tall forest that typically grows in high-rainfall areas, receiving more than 1100 mm per year, and on deep soils derived from Wianamatta Shale. The forest has several vegetation layers in its undisturbed state. The tall tree canopy can be over 30 metres high. Smaller trees and shrubs grow underneath the tall tree canopy. The vegetation on the ground is a dense, diverse mix of herbs, grasses, ferns and vines.

Typical plant species found in the Blue Gum High Forest are listed in the table. The list is not exhaustive and not all of the species listed will occur in every patch of Blue Gum High Forest.

Many patches of Blue Gum High Forest have become degraded with the remaining ecological community now embedded within an urban environment. The listed ecological community includes patches with an intact vegetation structure, a tree canopy cover greater than 10%, and an area greater than one hectare. Patches with less than 10% tree canopy cover are also included if they are more than one hectare in size and are part of a native vegetation remnant larger than 5 hectares.

Where does the Blue Gum High Forest occur?

The Blue Gum High Forest is found in Sydney's northern suburbs. It is known from the Local Government Areas of Ku-ring-gai, Hornsby and Baulkham Hills.

Typical plant species

Tall trees

Smooth-barked Apple (*Angophora costata*)
Blackbutt (*Eucalyptus pilularis*)
Sydney Blue Gum (*Eucalyptus saligna*)

Small trees and shrubs

Forest Oak (*Allocasuarina torulosa*)
Coffee Bush (*Breynia oblongifolia*)
Hairy Clerodendrum (*Clerodendrum tomentosum*)
Blueberry Ash (*Elaeocarpus reticulatus*)
Prickly Beard-heath (*Leucopogon juniperinus*)
Narrow-leaved Orangebark (*Maytenus sylvestris*)
Mock Olive (*Notelaea longifolia*)
Narrow-leaved Geebung (*Persoonia linearis*)
Rough-fruited Pittosporum (*Pittosporum revolutum*)
Sweet Pittosporum (*Pittosporum undulatum*)
Muttonwood (*Rapanea variabilis*)

Herbs, grasses and ferns

Maidenhair Fern (*Adiantum aethiopicum*)
Common Ground Fern (*Calochlaena dubia*)
Flax Lily (*Dianella caerulea*)
Bordered Panic (*Entolasia marginata*)
Spiny-headed Mat-rush (*Lomandra longifolia*)
Pastel Flower (*Pseuderanthemum variabile*)

Vines

Australian Clematis (*Clematis aristata*)
Wombat Berry (*Eustrephus latifolia*)
Wonga Wonga Vine (*Pandorea pandorana*)
Bearded Tylophora (*Tylophora barbata*)

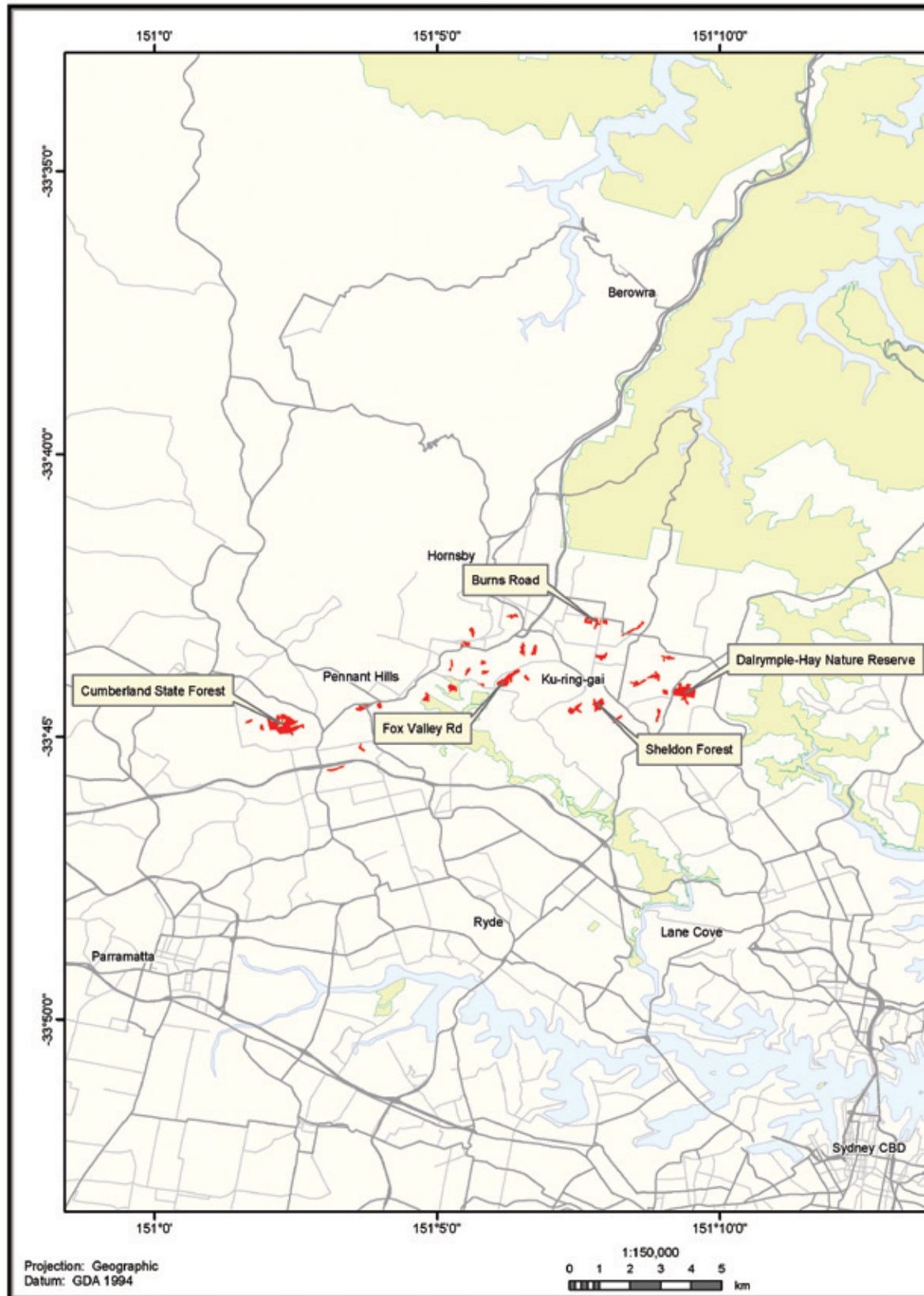
Why is the Blue Gum High Forest included on the list of nationally threatened ecological communities?

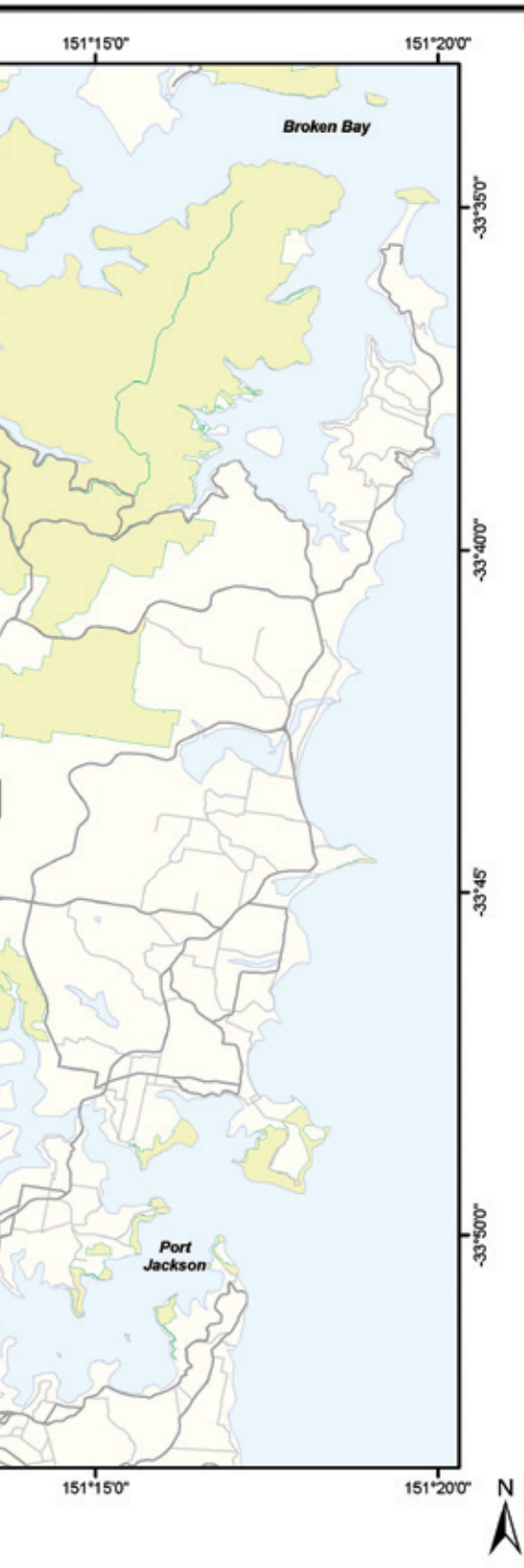
Over 200 years, intensive land use in the Sydney Basin Bioregion has severely affected the Blue Gum High Forest. Most of the forest has been cleared, less than 5% of the original forest is intact and retains the structural integrity of the vegetation. Existing remnants continue to be threatened by clearing and weed invasion.

National listing of the Blue Gum High Forest aims to prevent its further decline. The listing will help land managers, community groups and other organisations in their efforts to protect and recover the ecological community.



Nationally threatened species and ecological communities





Blue Gum High Forest of the Sydney Basin Bioregion

This is an indicative map only and it is not intended for fine scale assessment.

Legend

- Ecological Community Likely to Occur
- Conservation Reserves
- Roads

Source:
The distribution of areas where Blue Gum High Forest of the Sydney Basin Bioregion is likely to occur is from Native Vegetation Maps of the Cumberland Plain Western Sydney, Final Edition, NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service (2002). The following attributes were mapped from the 'Poly Code' field; 'A' and 'B'. The distribution includes all areas of Polycode 'A' and 'B' with an area of 1 ha or more.

Conservation Reserves from the Department of the Environment and Heritage, Collaborative Australian Protected Areas Database (CAPAD 2000).

Road information is Copyright © PSMW Australia Limited (2003). Data supplied by MapData Sciences.

Caveat:
The information presented in this map has been provided by a range of groups and agencies. While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy and completeness, no guarantee is given, nor responsibility taken by the Commonwealth for errors or omissions, and the Commonwealth does not accept responsibility in respect of any information or advice given in relation to, or as a consequence of, anything containing herein. The map has been collated from a range of sources, with data at various resolutions.

Data used are assumed to be correct as received from the data suppliers.

The Native Vegetation of the Cumberland Plain data has limitations which are described in the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service (2002) Interpretation Guidelines for the Native Vegetation Maps of the Cumberland Plain Western Sydney, Final Edition, NSW NPWS, Hurstville.

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Nationally threatened species and ecological communities



The Australian Minister for the Environment and Heritage decided to list the Blue Gum High Forest after considering advice from the Threatened Species Scientific Committee. The Committee is an independent scientific body that advises the Minister on the conservation status of native species and ecological communities.

What does the listing of the Blue Gum High Forest mean for land managers?

National listing means that activities likely to have a significant impact upon the Blue Gum High Forest should be referred to the Minister for assessment and approval (unless they are subject to an exemption under the EPBC Act). Significant impacts may involve, but are not restricted to, clearing vegetation at a site.

Making a referral under the EPBC Act is easy and free. Just complete and submit the relevant form from the Department of the Environment and Heritage web site. Based on your referral, the Minister will determine if assessment and approval are required. If approval is not required then you can proceed with the action, as described in your referral. If approval is required, the EPBC Act ensures that the assessment and approval process is undertaken in a timely manner.

The EPBC Act allows for some exemptions to the requirement for assessment and approval. This means that some activities may not need an assessment or approval if you meet certain requirements. Information on exemptions can be found at: www.deh.gov.au/epbc/publications/exemptions.html.

What priority actions can help conserve the Blue Gum High Forest?

Priority conservation actions that can help recover the Blue Gum High Forest are to:

- prevent further clearing or fragmentation of the ecological community
- create buffer zones and link fragments through restoration of remnants
- manage weed infestations *and*
- develop and implement appropriate management regimes to prevent further loss or decline.

You may also wish to participate in the development and implementation of your region's Natural Resource Management Plan. In this case, contact the Sydney Metro Catchment Management Authority through their web site at: www.dipnr.nsw.gov.au/nvrig/sydney_metro.html.

Is funding available to help conserve the Blue Gum High Forest?

Since 1996, the Australian Government has provided more than \$440 000 of funding to help protect remnants of the Blue Gum High Forest. Local community groups and councils have used the funding to enhance these valuable remnants by replanting native species, removing weeds, and maintaining wildlife and vegetation corridors.

Further funding is available for projects to protect and recover nationally threatened species and ecological communities.

- Information about the Threatened Species Network community grants is available at: www.wwf.org.au/tsn.
- Information about Envirofund grants is available at: www.nht.gov.au/envirofund.

Where can I get more information?

Further information is available from the Department of the Environment and Heritage.

- EPBC Act web site: www.deh.gov.au/epbc
- EPBC Act Administrative Guidelines on Significance: www.deh.gov.au/epbc/assessmentsapprovals/guidelines/index.html
- Referral form: www.deh.gov.au/epbc/assessmentsapprovals/referrals/form.html
- Community Information Unit: Free call 1800 803 772

Information on endangered ecological communities and vegetation management laws in NSW is available from the NSW Department of Environment and Conservation:

- www.environment.nsw.gov.au/index.htm and the NSW Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources:
- www.dipnr.nsw.gov.au/index.html.

Photography credits

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