

Oldgrowth Forest



Tall eucalypts, gnarled trunks, towering myrtles – oldgrowth forests look different in different types of forest.

Why Are They Important?

Some plants and animals largely depend on oldgrowth forests for habitat, so it's important that adequate tracts of oldgrowth forests are protected in our system of national parks and forest reserves.

But that doesn't tell the whole story – because many wildlife species need access to a range of forest growth stages. For example, wedge-tailed eagles mainly nest in oldgrowth forests, but their range extends to other forest types and often into adjacent rural land.

That's why Tasmania's system of reserves (which covers more than 40% of the state's land area) represents the full mosaic of forest types and growth stages.

It is important to recognise oldgrowth as a dynamic, rather than a static concept. The reservation of most existing oldgrowth forest has now been achieved but in the future it will become increasingly important to focus on where oldgrowth forests, or regrowth forests with oldgrowth elements, are best located to meet biodiversity and social objectives over the long term.

What Are They Like?

Mature forests with no signs of disturbance are inspiring and beautiful places, where the power of nature feels strong and timeless.

This is true, even though oldgrowth forest often attracts emotionally-charged, lyrical but quite inaccurate descriptions. For example, large tracts of the wet eucalypt forests of southern Tasmania didn't exist during the last Ice Age, 10,000 years ago – yet they're sometimes described as 'forests that have stood since time began.' Broad areas of north-west rainforest have been exploited for timber and minerals since the early days of settlement, but some call them 'ancient, pristine, untouched wilderness.'

None of that takes away from the fact that few people are unmoved by the cathedral beauty of an oldgrowth forest.

But remember that mature trees are an important source of high-quality sawlogs – the wood we need to process into high-grade structural timber. Until Tasmania has sufficient areas of maturing regrowth forests, a limited amount of harvesting will still occur in the small areas of oldgrowth forests outside reserves.

