

‘Oldgrowth’ – it’s an emotive term that can fire people’s passions. What does it really mean? Where are Tasmania’s oldgrowth forests? How extensive are they?



Forests are living ecosystems that flourish, mature, die or burn, then grow again. As they change, they go through four stages of growth:

- Regenerating forests** – less than 20 years old
- Regrowth forests** – from 20 to 110 years old
- Mature forests** – over 110 years old
- Senescent (ageing or over-mature) forests** – trees begin to die, foliage becomes patchy and gaps appear in the forest crown

Where does oldgrowth fit? It's not solely a growth stage – it's a descriptive term that combines information about the age of the forest and its history of disturbance – either by natural impacts like fire or storm; or by human activity such as logging.

Oldgrowth is defined as 'ecologically-mature forest where the effects of disturbance are now negligible.'

Where Are They?

About half of Australia's oldgrowth forests are in New South Wales. Tasmania has the nation's highest proportion of oldgrowth forests – almost 40% of our forests are oldgrowth. Most of them are on public land and around 80% of the total area of Tasmania's oldgrowth forests are protected within our extensive system of reserves.

This includes large areas of oldgrowth wet eucalypt forests in the Murchison and Weld Valleys; oldgrowth cool temperate rainforest in the Tarkine region of North West Tasmania; and oldgrowth dry eucalypt forest in East Coast reserves like the Douglas-Apsley National Park.