

Eucalyptus Forest

What are eucalypt forests?

Eucalypt forest environments are characterised by towering gumtrees up to 70m tall. They include a high number of gumtree species and are found throughout coastal NSW. Eucalypt forests can be wet or dry forests, depending on rainfall and soil type. On your next road trip or holiday, look out the window you are sure to spot one!

Animals and Plants!

The high open-tree canopy of eucalypt forests gives way to thriving undershrubs made up of ferns, soft-leaved shrubs and herbs. This attracts many species, such as gliders that like to shelter by day in gumtree hollows.

This striking habitat is also home to one of Australia's most iconic native animals, the koala. Koalas, among some other animals, have adapted in order to eat the eucalyptus leaves, which, to some other animals, can be quite toxic to eat. Koalas are tree dwellers, which means they live in the forks of the gum trees! You will rarely see a koala on the ground, as they get all their nutrients, including water, from the eucalypt leaves.

Life Cycle of a Eucalyptus Leaf



1 A developed tree grows flowers. Pollen is released from stamens (the male parts of the flower).



2 Pollen sticks to the stigma (the female parts of the flower).



3 The flower loses its stamens and a dry woody fruit forms. These are often called gumnuts. The fruit holds developing seeds.



4 When the seeds are ready the fruit opens and the small seeds fall to the ground.



5 The seeds begin to germinate if they fall on to soil and have good conditions for growing. They develop into seedlings and then into mature trees. Finally, the cycle begins again.

Why they need PROTECTING

There are many different human impacts that are having a large effect on Eucalyptus Forests, in turn playing a part in the decline of koala populations. These include:

HABITAT LOSS: The most significant cause of koala population declines. Clearing is mainly associated with urban development in coastal regions as well as agricultural and mining development.

Koalas are increasingly forced to move across cleared lands, urban districts and roads where the probability of mortality from road deaths and predation is considerably higher.

DROUGHT: May affect koala populations, especially if it occurs over long periods and with increased frequency. Drought conditions decrease the nutritional quality of food trees. This places increased emphasis on the prospect of climate change and the long-term effects on populations.

FIRES: Fires have always posed a factor in mortality rates. Immediate effects include incineration, injury and burns associated with exposure to fire. Indirect effects occur through loss of food in the post-fire period and through dog predation when animals are on the ground.