

Blue Mountains Shale Cap Forest



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The bark of Blue Gums shed in short ribbons each year making the colour of the trunk change through the year.



This tall tree grows to 40m high (up to 60m). The largest one measured in 2010 was 71 metres tall with a diameter at breast height of



Blue Gum - *Eucalyptus deanei*

What is Blue Mountains Shale Cap Forest?

Blue Mountains Shale Cap Forest is a unique vegetation community in the Blue Mountains and Hawkesbury. The main tree of Blue Mountains Shale Cap Forest is the Mountain Blue Gum (*Eucalyptus deanei*). These trees are usually found along well drained river flats within 100km radius around Sydney.

The ridge tops of Springwood, Biplin, Berambing are capped with Wianamatta Shale soil which provide a rich fertile clay suitable for the Mountain Blue Gum. In fact, *Eucalyptus deanei* was first discovered in Springwood.

The understory plants are a lush herbaceous understory of grasses and vines. This is in distinct contrast to the surrounding bushland in the region which is derived from sandstone, and where the plants tend to be hard and prickly.

Habitat for Animals

Blue Mountains Shale Cap Forest is a good home for animals. It supports more numbers and a greater diversity of mammals and birds than the typical lower, drier eucalypt forests and woodlands of the Hawkesbury and Blue Mountains.

The Mountain Blue Gum is a major provider of nest hollows for owls, parrots, gliders and other hollow dependent fauna including the threatened species Powerful Owl and Glossy Black-Cockatoo.



Powerful Owls nest in large tree hollows of Eucalypts that are at least 150 years old. They roost by day in dense vegetation.

The Powerful Owl's main prey are medium-sized mammals, many of which are hollow-dependant species as well, such as the Greater Glider, Common Ringtail Possum and Sugar Glider.

Values

A plant community once extensive on the Springwood ridge, only small areas remain in the Blue Mountains, with some heavily cleared for farming and timber in the early years of European settlement. Market gardens and orchards followed then suburban development as Sydney expanded.

Only about 1% of the original extent of Blue Mountains Shale Cap Forest remains.



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OUR
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Greater Glider

Looking more like a cuddly toy than a wild animal, this marsupial has a Eucalypt leaf diet as specialised as the Koala.

They can glide as far as 100m — further than any other Australian glider.



Hollows in trees provide homes and nests for 17% of Australian bird species, 42% of mammals and 28% of reptiles .

The Blue Gums in these forests often provide a good source of hollows for birds and mammals to live in.

For one of our native Eucalypt trees to start producing good hollows, they usually need to be **at least 100 years old**.



Common Brush-tail Possum

Hiding in the hollow of a tree and sleeping throughout the day, the nocturnal Common Brushtail Possum will come out at night to feed.

Image: Paul Smith

Typically Occurring Native Plants

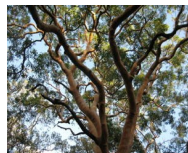
This community is generally characterised by the occurrence of Mountain Blue Gum and Turpentine (*Syncarpia glomulifera*) and occurs as open to tall open-forest on deep, shale-rich soils on ridges and upper slopes. The typical vegetation structure is tall open-forest, although this may vary depending on site conditions and history.

Within Hawkesbury, such vegetation occurs only in the higher altitudes where as it extends to lower altitudes in adjoining Blue Mountains. Other tree species that may be present include Smooth-barked Apple, Rough-barked Apple (see below), Monkey Gum (*E. cypellocarpa*), Blue Mountains Mahogany (*E. notabilis*), Sydney Peppermint (*E. piperita*) and Grey Gum (*E. punctata*).

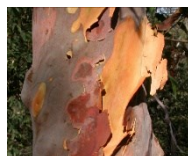


Common grasses found in Blue Mountains Shale Cap Forest from left to right: **Basket Grass** (*Oplismenus imbecilis*) - **Hedgehog Grass** (*Echinopogon caespitosus*), **Kangaroo Grass** (*Themeda triandra*), and vines such as **Old Man's Beard** (*Clematis aristata*).

Smooth-barked Apple



A medium sized tree with twisted and convoluted branches.



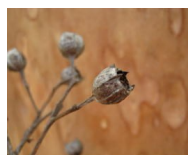
The bark sheds annually revealing different colours depending on the time of year.



The bark is smooth, pink to bright orange to dull pink-mauve-grey, weathering to grey



Flowers are creamy white—in Spring and Summer.

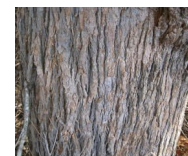


Latin - *costata*, ribbed, of the fruit.

Rough-barked Apple



A medium heavy-flowering tree with contorted upper branches.



The bark is rough, shortly fibrous and generally furrowed, grey to brown.



Leaves are paler on the underside and opposite.



Flowers are creamy white—in Spring and Summer.



Latin—*floribundus*, profusely flowering.

You can find out more online. To to be involved in a local group working to protect the remaining Blue Mountains Shale Cap Forest, contact land-care@hrcc.nsw.gov.au or call 4574 9600.