

Tasmanian Threatened Native Vegetation Communities

RAINFOREST FERNLAND

Conservation status

Threatened: Community 33 - Schedule 3A *Nature Conservation Act 2002*

What is Rainforest fernland?

Rainforest fernland is characterised by dense stands of *Dicksonia antarctica* (soft tree-fern) and the absence of eucalypts. Rainforest tree species such as *Nothofagus cunninghamii* (myrtle) and *Atherosperma moschatum* subsp. *moschatum* (sassafra) are absent or sparsely emergent within the fernland canopy, but often dominate the forest canopy in the surrounding area and may be present in the understorey.

This fernland usually occurs on steep slopes or riverbanks where shallow soils and the gradient may prevent the establishment of trees. Wind-throw or spot fires in rainforest can also remove the canopy trees from a site, with subsequent rapid colonisation by ferns.

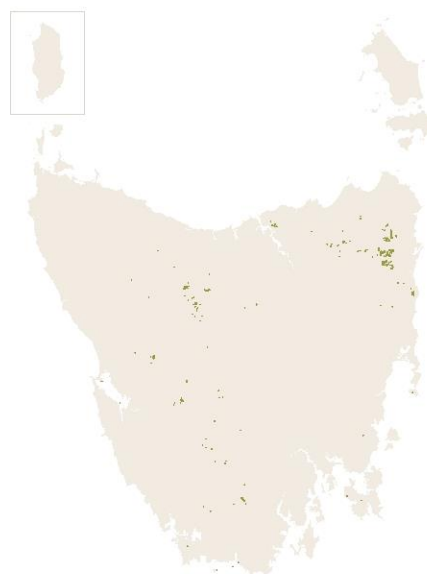
Rainforest fernland can be seen in the gully below Keoghs Lookout on the Arve River Road south of Geeveston.



An example of the Rainforest fernland community at Keoghs Lookout. Stephen Harris.

To help you decide if this Threatened Native Vegetation Community is on your site, a decision tree is provided further below. This is a guide only. Assessment by a qualified ecologist is needed to confirm the presence (or absence) of a listed threatened community.

Distribution, extent and reservation status



Indicative Rainforest fernland distribution from TNVC 2020

The Threatened Native Vegetation Communities 2020 (TNVC 2020) distribution of Rainforest fernland is derived from the [TASVEG 4.0](#) mapping of RFE (Rainforest fernland). TASVEG mapping units provide only an indicative distribution of listed communities.

Rainforest fernland has an approximate Tasmania-wide extent of 2000 hectares. Of this, 37% is mapped within the secure National Reserve System, increasing to 80% in the wider Tasmanian Reserve Estate, which also includes informal and fixed-term reserves.

A snapshot of the reservation status of Rainforest fernland for Local Government is available on the [Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania website](#) and via the 'By Council Area' tab at this [link](#).

Why is Rainforest fernland important and what are its management issues?

Most known occurrences of this rare community are in reserves, such as the Cradle Mountain – Lake St Clair National Park, Savage River Regional Reserve, Savage River National Park, Wild Rivers National Park, and the South-West National Park.

Rainforest fernland is restricted to locations such as steep slopes or riverbanks where establishment of trees is prevented, or where gaps in the canopy occur due to wind-throw or spot fire. While fire can kill tree ferns, the coincident removal of rainforest canopy trees reduces competition and promotes tree fern growth and regeneration, such that fire is not currently considered a particularly threatening process. The present distribution of Rainforest fernland may be correlated with fire history and topography.

How can the condition of the vegetation be assessed?

To help you to assess the condition of Rainforest fernland, the following [TASVEG VCA benchmark](#) is recommended:

- ❖ RFE Rainforest fernland

What does it mean if you have a Threatened Native Vegetation Community?

If you are planning an activity that will potentially impact a Threatened Native Vegetation Community you should seek advice from the authority responsible for regulating this activity. The authority responsible will depend upon the nature of the planned activity (see *Further information*).

In the first instance you can check the [Information for landowners](#) on the Forest Practices Authority (FPA) website for comprehensive advice on when a Forest Practices Plan may be required.

Some vegetation communities can represent important habitat for threatened species. This may have implications when development applications are assessed or for land use.

Matters of National Environmental Significance as listed under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBCA) should also be considered to determine if the proposal will need to be assessed under that Act.

Further information

For further detail about the possible variation within Rainforest fernland refer to the description of the TASVEG mapping unit RFE within the 'Rainforest and related scrub' section of the online publication [From Forest to Fjaeldmark \(Edition 2\)](#).

Further information to assist developers and their representatives in assessing the impacts of proposed developments on natural values is provided in NRE Tasmania's [Guidelines for Natural Values Surveys – Terrestrial Development Proposals](#) and the [Threatened Species Link - Activity Advice](#).

Contact details

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Is Rainforest fernland present at your site?

Q Is the vegetation at your site the threatened community Rainforest fernland?

