

Tasmanian Threatened Native Vegetation Communities

SPHAGNUM PEATLAND

Conservation status

Threatened: Community 36 - Schedule 3A *Nature Conservation Act 2002*

What is *Sphagnum* peatland?

Sphagnum peatland contains one or more species of *Sphagnum* moss (e.g., *Sphagnum cristatum*, *S. falcatulum*). It usually occurs on constantly wet sites (i.e., areas of high rainfall and low evaporation) and can be recognised by the lack of trees and dominance of moss beds, which can form large, rolling hummocks, occasional hummocks, or floating beds on water.

Most *Sphagnum* peatland occurs on the Central Plateau and in the Mersey River catchment. It typically occurs in river valleys, on sandstone shelves with impeded drainage and sites adjacent to lakes and streams above 600 m elevation. Less commonly, *Sphagnum* peatland occurs at lower altitudes on limestone and basalt in the north-west and south-east of the State.

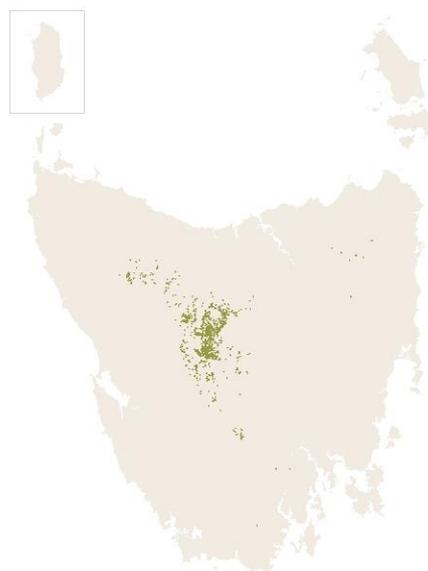
Sphagnum peatland can be seen in Cradle Mountain – Lake St Clair National Park (e.g., near Waldheim); aquatic examples occur at Mole Creek and on the Gog Range.



An example of the *Sphagnum* peatland community at Skull Bone Plains. Pep Turner.

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 *Sphagnum* peatland distribution from TNVC 2020

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

Sphagnum peatland has an approximate Tasmania-wide extent of 4900 hectares. Of this, 82% is mapped within the secure National Reserve System, increasing to 94% in the wider Tasmanian Reserve Estate, which also includes informal and fixed-term reserves.

A snapshot of the reservation status of *Sphagnum* peatland 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 *Sphagnum* peatland important and what are its management issues?

Sphagnum peatlands serve an important ecosystem function by slowing and regulating water flow through catchments and increasing the water holding capacity of landscapes.

The unique habitats associated with *Sphagnum* peatlands are known to support numerous flora and fauna species and *Sphagnum* peatlands can be associated with sites of geomorphological significance (such as sinkholes).

These rare peatlands occur in unique and localised habitats. TNVC 2020 indicates that the average patch size of individual peatlands is 1 hectare, which makes them extremely susceptible to disturbance. Recovery of these peatlands and supported vegetation from any disturbance that alters the hydrology of the system is challenging.

Current threats to the long-term survival of *Sphagnum* peatlands include inappropriate burning, unsustainable long fibre moss harvesting, changes to hydrology brought about by climate change and eutrophication. Illegal harvesting of moss beds for supply to the horticultural industry has resulted in the destruction of several sites throughout the State. Hot fires during dry periods may damage bogs to the point where they collapse, the hydrology is permanently altered, and they revert to other vegetation types. *Sphagnum* peatlands occur in low nutrient environments and any changes in nutrient levels and pH will have a detrimental impact on the community.

How can the condition of the vegetation be assessed?

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

- ❖ ASP *Sphagnum* peatland

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 *Sphagnum* peatland refer to the description of the TASVEG mapping unit ASP within the 'Saltmarsh and wetland' 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 *Sphagnum* peatland present at your site?



Is the vegetation at your site the threatened community *Sphagnum* peatland?

