

# AUSTRALIA'S TROPICAL RAINFOREST

Australia's rainforests are the oldest continually surviving rainforests on earth and once covered the entire Australian continent, but over millions of years, as the climate and geography has changed, so have the rainforests. Australia's Tropical Rainforests now only cover a small strip between the coast of Queensland and the Great Dividing Range. The rainforests stretches around 500 kilometres from Cooktown in the north to Townsville in the south. Today these rainforests represent less than 0.2% of the country's total land mass.

Despite the size of these rainforests they are the home to a wide range of animal life including:

- 18% of all Australian bird species.
- 23% of all Australian reptile species.
- 30% of all Australian frog species.
- 39% of all Australian marsupial species.
- 62% of all Australian butterfly species.



Fungi on the forest floor.



Boyd's Forest Dragon



## FLORA & FAUNA

The typical rainforest is divided into four layers, starting at the bottom, they are the forest floor, the understory, the canopy and the emergent layer. Each layer is like its own eco-system with its own plant and animal inhabitants.

The lowest layer is the **forest floor**, this area receives very little light and is usually covered by dead plants and leaves. It is home to fungi and crawling insects.

Next up is the **understorey**, this area is full of shrubs, ferns and juvenile trees. Birds, snakes and small mammals are found in the understorey.

The **Canopy** is a vast network of branches, vines and leaves formed in the tree tops. The canopy provides home to an array of birds and animals including possums, bats and the rare Bennett's Tree-kangaroo.

The final layer is the **emergent layer**, made from large trees that break through the canopy. The emergent layer is home to many bird and insect species.

Bennett's Tree-Kangaroo

## INTERESTING FACTS

To be classified as a tropical rainforest, the area must receive at least 1.3 metres of rain per year.

Australia's tropical rainforest covers around 9,000 square kilometres.

These rainforests are internationally recognised as being one of the most ecologically fascinating natural areas, as they are one of the few remaining pristine tropical rainforests in the world.

**Approximately 3,000 different plant species from 210 families are found in Australia's Tropical Rainforests.**

Some of the trees that are found there are more than 3,000 years old.