

# in a Rainforest

In coastal forests, patches of rainforest are commonly found in protected gullies where a combination of rain, shade and soil encourage lush growth. These rainforests have a large number of plants and animals living together. They take up only a small part of the total area of forests in NSW.

In State forests, timber harvesting is excluded from rainforest areas and rainforests are protected from threats like fire and weed invasion. But how do you know when you are standing in a rainforest? What do you look for? First, tilt your head backwards and look skyward while you take in the earthy rich smells and adjust to the dim, dappled light. The air seems heavy and moist and there are few eucalypt trees to be seen.

The tall trees form a canopy, with their leaves capturing as much sunlight as possible and forming a shelter for the plants and animals below. Stagorns, elkhorns and bird's nest ferns cling up high on the trunks with their leaves trapping the water they use to survive. Aerial roots dangle, serving as homes for creatures. Lianas trick you. Their woody stems seem soft and bendable as they appear to swing and wrap around unsuspecting trees. Now look in front of you. The plants compete for the speckled dim light of the understorey.

Seedlings, ferns and dwarf palms wait for a tree to fall, which will clear a space for the sunlight to flood through. On the rainforest floor there are barely any plants but there are large amounts of leaf and twig litter that is continuously decaying. The rich, dark and damp soil is home to insects and fungi which play an important role in breaking down dead and decaying material to allow it to be re-used by the living plants.

Fungi must be detected by a keen eye. They come in amazing arrays of shapes, colour, sizes and textures. As you look closer you discover evidence of creatures. Many are asleep in the daytime, but awoken at night to forage for food. Read the description of the creatures below and colour them as you find them in the rainforest picture on the page opposite. Choose one to investigate further.

## Sooty owl

A robust grey black owl who is very secretive. Roosts and nests in tree hollows. Preys on sugar gliders, possums and bush rats.

## Australian brush-turkey

A large black bird with a bare red neck and head and yellow collar. Scratches around the forest floor to look for fruit seeds and small insects.

## Red-legged pademelon

Sleeps between mid morning and mid afternoon supported by a tree or rock. Forages the rest of the time on ferns, leaves and fruits.

## Red-necked pademelon

Sleeps by the day in a hollow made by scraping the ground among the ferns and fallen logs. At night moves to more open areas to feed on grasses and shrubs.

## Long-footed potoroo

Sleeps by day in a nest of vegetation. At night it digs in the soil looking for roots, insect larvae and fungi to eat.

## Ring-tail possum

Sleeps by day in a nest of leaves and twigs or in tree hollows. Climbs through the canopy at night using its tail. Spends some time on the ground. Feeds on fruits, flowers and leaves.

## Golden-tipped bat

Roosts by day under dead, hanging fronds of palms, in tree hollows or bird's nests. Hovers around at night searching for spiders, then swoops down to eat them.

## Large-footed myotis

Roosts by day in caves or dense foliage. Using echo location at night, it flies over open areas of water and captures aquatic insects with its back legs. The only Australian bat to take food from the water.



