



Lower Hunter Valley Key Biodiversity Area

The Lower Hunter Valley - Key Biodiversity Area **An Area of Outstanding Biodiversity Value, just 30 minutes from Newcastle.** **Critical habitat in need of protection.**

The forests of the Lower Hunter Valley have been recognised internationally as a “Key Biodiversity Area” (KBA) on the basis of their key role ensuring the survival of the EPBC listed critically endangered Regent Honeyeater (estimated less than 400 adult birds remain).

This is one of only four areas in Australia where this species has been found regularly, including in significant numbers (in 2012 ~25% of the entire population was recorded in the Lower Hunter Valley KBA) and significantly important breeding events have been recorded in recent times.

The woodlands are also one of the most important feeding sites for the critically endangered Swift Parrot, that migrates from Tasmania in winter to the mainland.

These woodlands are the last remnant of a unique ecosystem. Their remarkable diversity of Eucalypts, ecological communities and woodland birds is driven largely by a “western influence”, i.e. species normally found west of the Great Dividing Range. It is not only the easternmost post of western species but even includes at least two undescribed locally endemic species of Eucalyptus.

Getting as close as 22km to the coast, these ecosystems enjoy higher rainfall here than in the core of their distribution on the western slopes. This makes the Hunter Valley woodlands a drought and climate change insurance policy for the state’s biodiversity. Put simply these woodlands are strategically important refugia for the protection of a range of animal and plant species that inhabit the dry temperate woodlands of south-eastern Australia.

Within this KBA lie the Tomalpin Woodlands, the largest forested remnant on the floor of the Hunter Valley and an area of outstanding biodiversity value.



'Critical habitat refuge in a changing climate'

- Part of the *largest* forested remnant on the floor of the Hunter Valley
- Contains ten (10) nationally threatened species listed under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act (EPBC).
- Five (5) endangered ecological communities (EEC's), six (6) threatened flora species, and over 30 threatened fauna species listed under the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act (BCA).
- Un-paralleled Eucalypt diversity – 29 species (over 10% of NSW species) occur, including two undescribed species (both candidate threatened species).
- Critical drought refuge and habitat for a number of critically endangered woodland birds – including Regent Honeyeater and migratory Swift Parrot at <30 kilometres from the coast.
- Critical nesting site for the Regent Honeyeater, and important captive breeding and release location for ex situ conservation efforts to prevent extinction of this species.
- Werakata National Park and Tomalpin woodlands make up the extent of this important habitat, a combination of public and private managed land.
- The only site where Masked Woodswallows have bred in the Hunter Valley and the only site where White-browed Woodswallows have bred in the Lower Hunter Valley (both species are highly nomadic and irruptive, selecting the most productive areas only to breed).
- Yellow-bellied Gliders present (normally associated with tall, wet forests)



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