



August 2020

Protecting threatened ecological communities and threatened species in Western Sydney



The Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan will protect and manage threatened ecological communities, species and their habitat while facilitating urban growth in Western Sydney.

The biodiversity value of the Cumberland Plain

Due to its variety of topography and soil types, the Cumberland Plain is one of the most species-rich regions in NSW.

Vegetation in the region has become highly fragmented over the years due to increasing urban development. The remaining vegetation mostly consists of grassy woodlands and open forests made up of around 40 different plant communities.

These remnant woodlands and forests are home to a wide range of ecological communities and more than 100 threatened flora and fauna species listed under NSW or Commonwealth legislation or both.

Threatened ecological communities

The [Draft Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan](#) (the Plan) aims to protect eight threatened ecological communities that will be affected by future development in the nominated areas. These communities, which are listed under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* (NSW) are:

- Cumberland Plain Woodland
- Shale Sandstone Transition Forest
- River-flat Eucalypt Forest
- Shale-Gravel Transition Forest
- Cooks River/Castlereagh Ironbark Forest
- Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest
- Freshwater Wetlands
- Moist Shale Woodlands.

Four of these communities are also listed under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth).

Cumberland Plain Woodland

Cumberland Plain Woodland is an open grassy woodland endemic to the Sydney Basin. The dominant trees are Grey Box (*Eucalyptus moluccana*) and Forest Red Gum (*Eucalyptus tereticornis*). Narrow-leaved Ironbark (*Eucalyptus crebra*), Spotted Gum (*Corymbia maculata*) and Thin-leaved Stringybark (*Eucalyptus eugenioides*) occur less frequently.

Only 9% of the original extent remains intact, with remnants scattered widely across the Cumberland Plain. Good examples can be seen at Scheyville National Park.



Cumberland Plain Woodland
Dayle Green/DPIE

Shale Sandstone Transition Forest

Shale Sandstone Transition Forest is found on the edges of the Cumberland Plain, where clay soils from the shale geology intergrade with sandy soils of the underlying sandstone.

Due to the influence of the underlying geology the boundaries are often indistinct, and the species composition varies. The main tree species include Forest Red Gum (*Eucalyptus tereticornis*), Grey Gum (*Eucalyptus punctata*), stringybarks (*Eucalyptus globoidea*, *Eucalyptus*

eugenioides) and ironbarks (*Eucalyptus fibrosa* and *Eucalyptus crebra*).

River-flat Eucalypt Forest

This eucalypt forest is found on the river flats of coastal floodplains. It has a tall, open canopy up to 40 m high. The most common trees are Forest Red Gum (*Eucalyptus tereticornis*), Cabbage Gum (*Eucalyptus amplifolia*), Rough-barked Apple (*Angophora floribunda*) and Broad-leaved Apple (*Angophora subvelutina*).

This community plays an important role in maintaining river ecosystems and riverbank stability. It also provides habitat for a broad range of birds and mammals that depend on trees for food, nesting and roosting.

Protecting threatened ecological communities

The Plan's offset target will protect at least 5,475 hectares of threatened ecological communities. This includes at least 3,170 hectares of Cumberland Plain Woodland and 1,540 hectares of Shale Sandstone Transition Forest.

Around 28,300 hectares of land with high biodiversity value has been identified in the Plan Area. This land will be the focus for establishing new conservation lands to protect and restore threatened ecological communities.



Shale Sandstone Transition Forest
Steven Douglas/DPIE

Threatened species

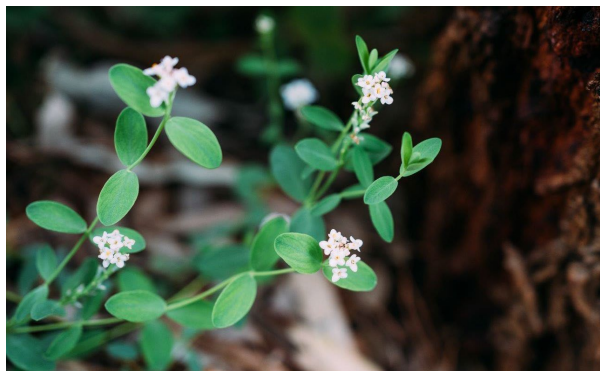
The Plan identifies 49 threatened flora and fauna species that may be affected by future development associated with the Plan. Some of these, like the Cumberland Plain Land Snail are endemic to Western Sydney. Others such as Spiked Rice-flower are also found in adjoining regions. Some migratory species such as the Swift Parrot breed elsewhere but visit the woodlands and forests of the Plan Area at certain times of the year.

Cumberland Plain Land Snail

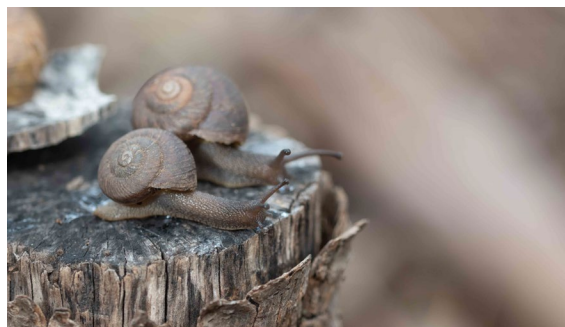
The Cumberland Plain Land Snail (*Meridolum corneovirens*) is strongly associated with Cumberland Plain Woodland, but is also found in other woodland and forest communities of the Cumberland Plain. It is a large snail that lives under bark, leaves and logs, or shelters in loose soil around grass clumps. A trained eye is needed to identify this species which is easily confused with other members of the same genus.

Spiked Rice-flower

Spiked Rice-flower (*Pimelea spicata*) is a small shrub growing to 50 cm tall. Its long white, pink-tinged flowers bloom mostly in summer, but can appear at any time following good conditions. It is found only in Western Sydney and the Illawarra region. On the Cumberland Plain it can be found in Cumberland Plain Woodland and Moist Shale Woodland communities.



Spiked Rice-flower
Josh Treddinick/DPIE



Cumberland Plain Land Snail
Marie-Claire Demers/DPIE

Swift Parrot

The Swift Parrot (*Lathamus discolor*) is a small colourful parrot about 25 cm long. It breeds in Tasmania during spring and summer, and migrates to south-eastern Australia in autumn and winter. Its favoured feed trees on the Cumberland Plain include Forest Red Gum (*Eucalyptus tereticornis*), Spotted Gum (*Corymbia maculata*) and Grey Box (*Eucalyptus moluccana*).

Protecting threatened species

The Plan will result in 4,795 hectares being zoned for environmental conservation (E2 zoning). New reserves and stewardship sites established through the Plan will target habitat important for threatened species.

The Plan includes species offsets for 15 threatened species. Offsets for another 34 species will be achieved by securing potential habitat in conservation lands. Protection measures for specific species will also be built into development control plans.

If English is not your first language, please call 131 450. Ask for an interpreter in your language and then ask to be connected to our Information Centre on 1300 305 695.

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