

NAME: _____

THE WET TROPICS

The Wet Tropics World Heritage Area lies between Townsville and Cooktown on the north-east coast of Queensland and covers an area of 894,420 hectares.

The Barron Gorge National Park is a spectacular section of the Wet Tropics World Heritage area. Carved by the mighty Barron River over 400 million years ago, it is home to steep ravines and majestic waterfalls that cascade from ancient rainforests.

The Wet Tropics has Australia's greatest diversity of animals and plants within an area of just 0.26% of the continent. The Wet Tropics has at least 66 animal species and more than 700 plant species that are endemic (found nowhere else in the world). They include unique green possums, ringtail possums, fierce marsupial cats, rare bats, tree-kangaroos, a rat-kangaroo, melomys and cassowaries.

A PLACE TO CALL HOME

Trees more than 3,000 years old live in the Wet Tropics. Some plant and animal species are more than 100 million years old.

Some of the many fascinating plants, animals and structures that exist in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area are listed below:

Epiphytes: Plants that grow on other plants, often high above the forest floor.

Buttress roots: Large exposed anchoring roots at the base of a tree.

Giant lianas: Large vines that seem to hang freely in the rainforest.

Bracket fungi: Semi-circular fungus – looks like shelves are growing out of the trees or fallen logs.

Strangler fig: A Plant that grows their roots downward from the canopy, enveloping the host tree while also growing upward to reach into the sunlight above the canopy.

Wait-a-while: A climbing palm with sharp thorns along its leaves and whip-like flagella (leafless stems) stretching out to 3 meters long – a danger to bushwalkers!

Leaf litter: Dead plant material, such as leaves, bark and twigs, that has fallen to the ground.

Forest canopy: The upper layer of mature tree crowns.

Understory: The area of a forest growing at a lower height level below the forest canopy. Young canopy trees often persist as suppressed juveniles for decades while they wait for an opening in the forest overstory which will enable their growth into the canopy.

Spectacled flying-fox: A bat with a wingspan of roughly one metre.

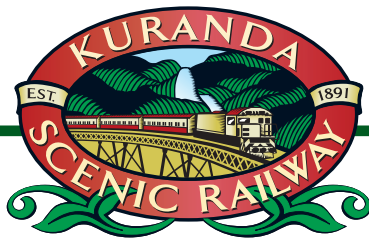
Ulysesses butterfly: A brilliant butterfly – blue wings with black edging.

White-lipped tree frog: A green frog with a pure white lower lip.

Cassowary: The southern cassowary is a large flightless bird, as tall as a person, with a helmet on its head, a vivid blue neck and long drooping red wattles. The Cassowary is endangered, with estimates of only 1500 remaining, and its extinction could affect rain plant diversity as it helps spread the seeds of 100 tree and shrub species.

DID YOU KNOW?

Kuranda Scenic Railway has been travelling through the rainforest since 1891.



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RAINFOREST STRUCTURE

How many can you label on the rainforest diagram below?

Be sure to colour it in when you have finished labelling.

