

Nationally threatened species and ecological communities

TEMPERATE HIGHLAND PEAT SWAMPS ON SANDSTONE

What are the Temperate Highland Peat Swamps?

The Temperate Highland Peat Swamps on Sandstone are temporary or permanent swamps in the Blue Mountains, Lithgow, Southern Highlands and Bombala regions. They include the:

- Blue Mountains Swamps;
- Butler's Swamp;
- Jackson's Bog (also known as Mila Swamp);
- Newnes Plateau Swamps;
- Paddy's River Swamps (also known as Hanging Rock, Long, Mundego and Stingray Swamps);
- Wildes Meadow Swamp; and
- Wingecarribee Swamp.

The Temperate Highland Peat Swamps all occur on sandstone and share similar vegetation. Sphagnum bogs and fens occupy the wetter parts while sedge and shrub associations occur in the drier parts of the swamps. Some, like the Blue Mountains Swamps, are hanging swamps that are prominent on steep valley sides, where water exits the ground between sandstone and claystone layers of rock. Other swamps, like Wingecarribee Swamp, occur in natural depressions or along watercourses.

A variety of native plants and animals make their homes in the Temperate Highland Peat Swamps. These include the nationally endangered Blue Mountains Water Skink, Giant Burrowing Frog and Wingecarribee Leek Orchid. The Giant Dragonfly, which is threatened in NSW, also occurs in this ecological community.

Why is the Temperate Highland Peat Swamps included on the list of nationally threatened ecological communities?

The Temperate Highland Peat Swamps was listed as an endangered ecological community, under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act), due to its restricted distribution and vulnerability to ongoing threats. Only 3,000 hectares of this ecological community remains. Many of the swamps have been damaged by introduced animals, such as cattle, horses, rabbits and pigs. Swamps may also be at risk from the impacts of increased fertiliser runoff, residential development, clearing, weeds and fire. In the past peat mining has caused severe damage to some swamps.

National listing of the Temperate Highland Peat Swamps recognises that its long-term survival is under threat. The listing aims to prevent its further decline, and assist community and land manager efforts toward its recovery.

The Australian Minister for the Environment and Heritage decided to list the Temperate Highland Peat Swamps after considering advice from the Threatened Species Scientific Committee. The Committee is an independent scientific body that advises the Minister on the conservation status of native species and ecological communities.

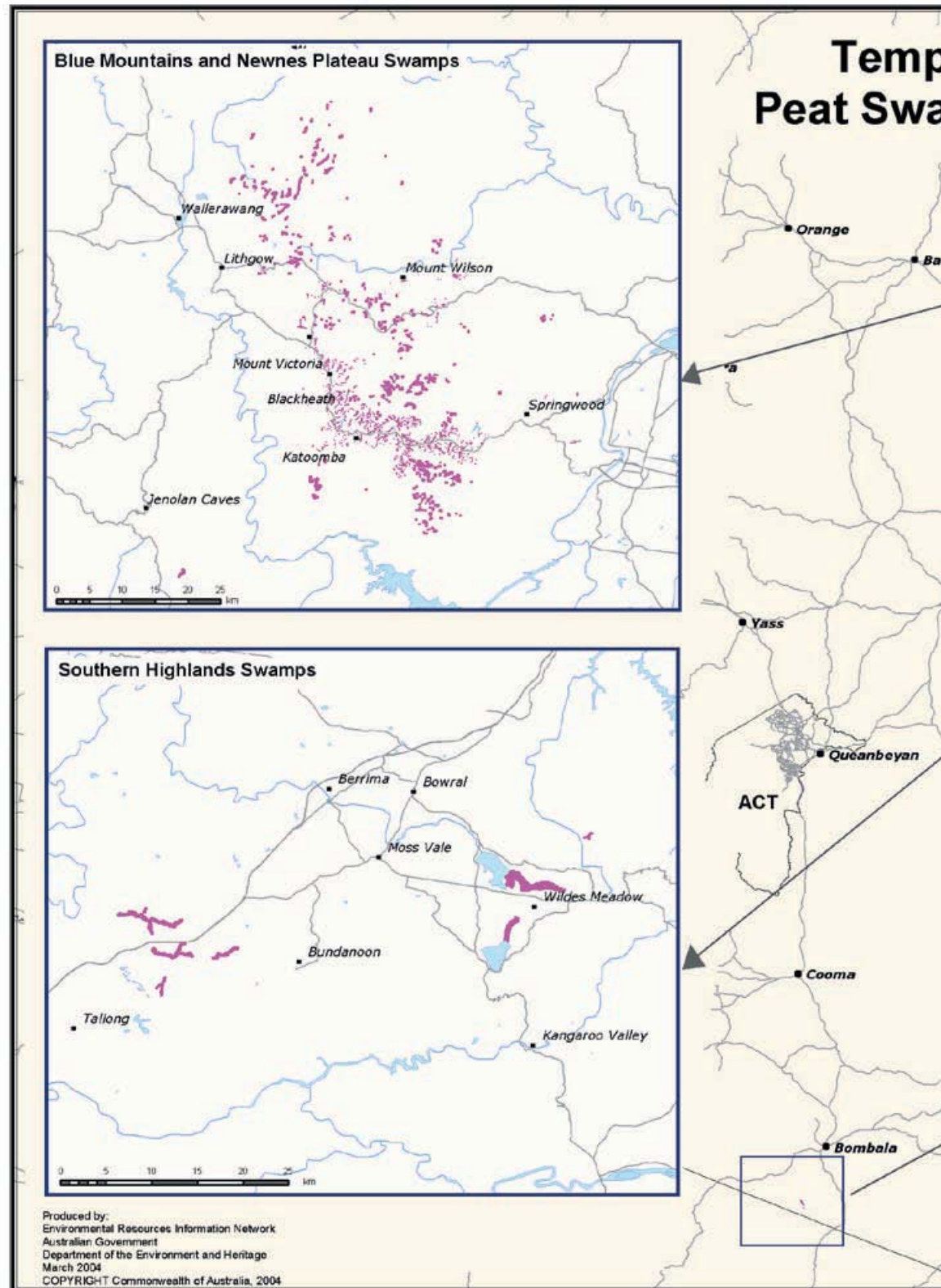
This ecological community also is listed as endangered under the NSW *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995* as a part of the 'Montane Peatlands and Swamps of the New England Tableland, NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin, South East Corner, South Eastern Highlands and Australian Alps bioregions' ecological community.

What does the listing of the Temperate Highland Peat Swamps mean for land managers?

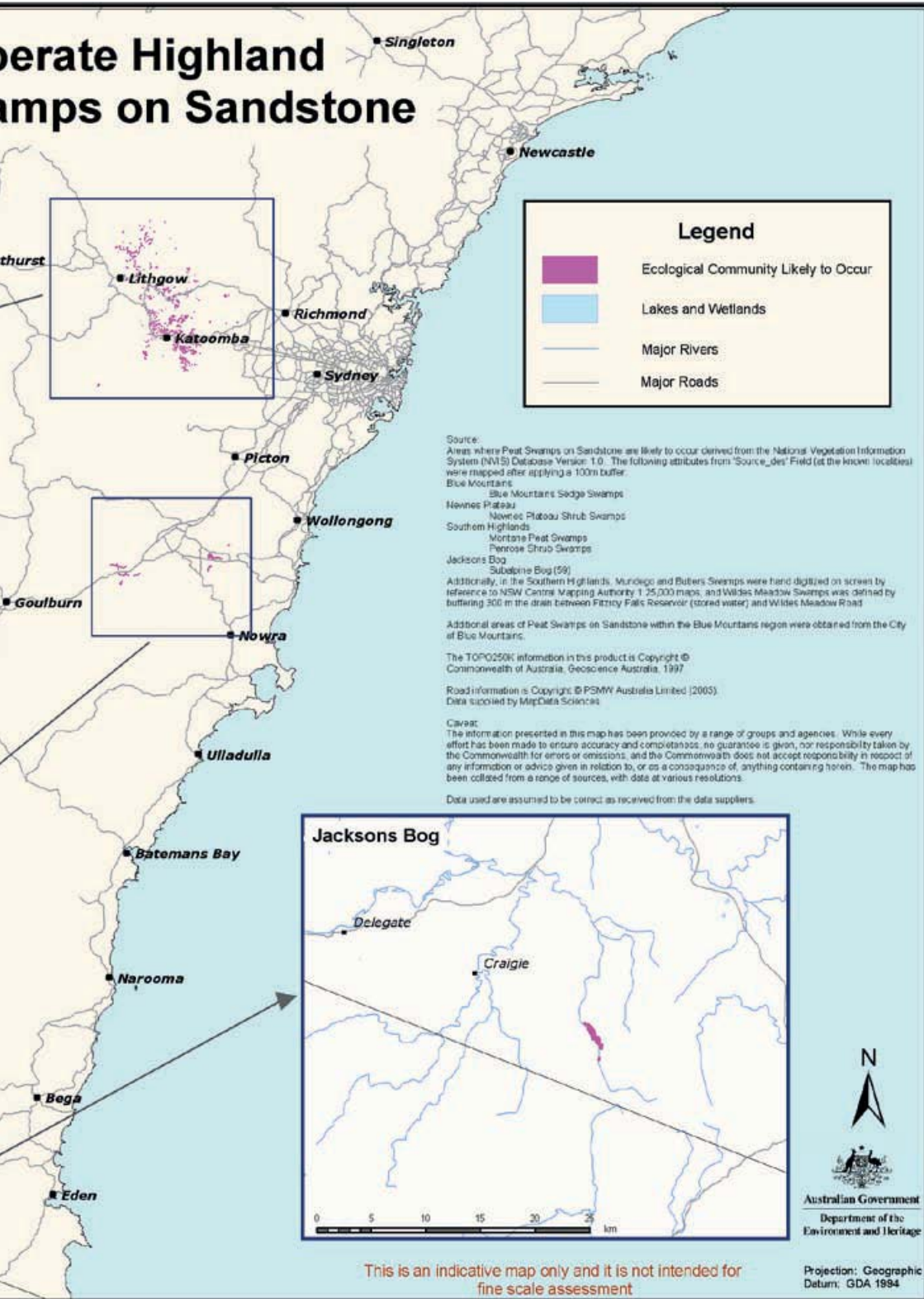
Protection under the EPBC Act applies to all swamps identified as part of the Temperate Highland Peat Swamps.



Nationally threatened species and ecological communities



Temperate Highland Swamps on Sandstone



Nationally threatened species and ecological communities



Two hundred years of land use, including vegetation clearing and stock use, has severely affected the Temperate Highland Peat Swamps. However, listing the swamps under the EPBC Act will not prevent land managers from continuing to use their land in the same way they were before, as long as their activities do not change or intensify.

National protection means that activities which are likely to have a significant impact upon the Temperate Highland Peat Swamps should be referred to the Minister for assessment and approval (unless they are subject to an exemption under the EPBC Act). Activities that may have a significant impact include, but are not restricted to, urban development, hydrological changes, grazing and peat mining.

The process for making a referral under the EPBC Act is easy and without charge. All you have to do is complete and submit the relevant form, which can be obtained from the Department of the Environment and Heritage.

Based on your referral, the Minister will determine if assessment and approval is required. If it is not required, then you are free to take action in accordance with your referral. If it is required, strict timeframes in the EPBC Act ensure the assessment and approval process is conducted in a timely manner.

The EPBC Act allows for some exemptions to the requirement for assessment and approval. This means that some activities may not need an assessment or approval if you meet certain requirements. Information on exemptions can be found at: www.deh.gov.au/epbc/publications/exemptions.html.

What are the conservation priorities for the Temperate Highland Peat Swamps?

Priority conservation actions that can assist in the recovery of the ecological community are to:

- develop conservation covenants with relevant land managers;
- fence important remnants to control the impacts of certain introduced animals;
- identify seasonal and long-term fluctuations in water flows and water quality regimes within the swamps;
- minimise impacts from changes to water flow and water quality;
- manage weeds within and immediately adjacent to existing remnants; and
- rehabilitate degraded remnants with local species known to occur in those swamps.

Funding is available for projects to recover threatened species and ecological communities.

- Information about the Threatened Species Network Community grants is available at: www.wwf.org.au/tsn.
- Information about Envirofund grants is available at www.nht.gov.au/envirofund.

You may also wish to participate in the development and implementation of your region's Natural Resource Management Plan. In this case, contact your local land management agency.

Where can I get further information?

Further information is available from the Department of the Environment and Heritage.

- EPBC Act website: www.deh.gov.au/epbc
- EPBC Act Administrative Guidelines on Significance: www.deh.gov.au/epbc/assessmentsapprovals/guidelines/index.html
- Referral form: www.deh.gov.au/epbc/assessmentsapprovals/referrals/form.html
- Community Information Unit: free call 1800 803 772

Information about wetlands in general is available from:

- The Department's wetlands website: www.deh.gov.au/water/wetlands
- Wetland Care Australia, a not-for-profit company dedicated to on-ground action to repair wetlands: www.wetlandcare.com.au
- The Wetlands Website of the NSW Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources also has a lot of useful information on how to manage and conserve wetlands: www.dlwc.nsw.gov.au/care/wetlands/index.html.

Photography credits

Landscape images throughout by Steve Douglas, Ecological Surveys and Planning.

Skink and dragonfly images throughout by Xuela-Sledge, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service

Printed May 2005