



Tasmanian Wilderness

Inscribed on the World Heritage list in 1982;
updated in 1989

Tasmanian Wilderness



The Tasmanian Wilderness contains some of the last remaining expanses of temperate rainforest in the southern hemisphere.

With living evidence of its ancient Gondwanan heritage, the area is internationally recognised as a hotspot for plant diversity and endemism.

The landscape is graced with some of the world's longest lived trees and inhabited by the world's largest carnivorous marsupials.

Rock art and remains in limestone caves attest to the human occupation of the area for at least 30,000 years. This is one of the richest and best preserved collections of Ice Age sites anywhere in the world.

The Tasmanian Wilderness was inscribed on the World Heritage List for its outstanding natural and cultural universal values under the following criteria:

Natural

- outstanding examples representing the major stages of the earth's evolutionary history
- outstanding examples representing significant ongoing geological processes, biological evolution and man's interaction with his natural environment; as distinct from the periods of the Earth's development, this focuses upon ongoing processes in the development of communities of plants and animals, landforms and marine and fresh water bodies
- contain superlative natural phenomena, formations or features, for instance outstanding examples of the most important ecosystems, areas of exceptional natural beauty or exceptional combination of natural and cultural elements
- contain the most important and significant natural habitats where threatened species of animals and plants of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation still survive.

Cultural

- a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a civilisation which has disappeared
- an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement which is representative of a culture and which has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change
- directly or tangibly associated with events or with ideas or beliefs of outstanding universal significance.

Covering approximately 20 per cent of Tasmania, the Tasmanian Wilderness is one of the largest conservation reserves in Australia. At 13,800 km², it is one of the three largest temperate wilderness areas remaining in the Southern Hemisphere.

The rugged and spectacular landscapes of the Tasmanian Wilderness contain rocks from almost every geological period, the oldest being formed about 1,100 million years ago during the Precambrian period. Some of the deepest and longest caves in Australia and other spectacular karst landscapes are found here.

Due to the diversity of its vegetation the region is recognised as an International Centre for Plant Diversity by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The highly varied flora ranging from open and closed forests through to buttongrass moorland and alpine communities occurs in a unique mosaic of Antarctic and Australian elements. The Antarctic element consists of species descended from those present on the supercontinent Gondwana.

Some of the longest lived trees in the world such as Huon pines (*Lagarostrobos*) and other native conifers grow in the area. *Nothofagus* is an ancient plant genus of Gondwanan ancestry, represented in the area by *N. cunninghamii* and Australia's only winter deciduous tree, *N. gunnii*. Some of the tallest flowering plants in the world, *Eucalyptus regnans*, grow here. The area contains approximately 255, or 63 per cent, of Tasmania's endemic vascular plant species.

The fauna is also of global significance because it includes an unusually high proportion of endemic species and relict groups of ancient lineage. The diverse topography, geology, soils and vegetation, in association with harsh and variable



climatic conditions, combine to create a wide array of animal habitats. Many groups of marsupials and burrowing freshwater crayfish have survived as relicts of the Gondwanan fauna.

The insularity of Tasmania, and of the Tasmanian Wilderness in particular, has contributed to its uniqueness. The area remains a stronghold for several animals such as the Tasmanian devil, Tasmanian pademelon, eastern quoll and ground parrot, that are either extinct or threatened on mainland Australia.

Fauna endemic to the region include the moss froglet, Pedra Branca skink, Pedder galaxias and invertebrate groups with a high proportion of species entirely or primarily restricted to the area, such as freshwater crayfish, mountain shrimps, stoneflies, caddisflies, landhoppers and harvestmen.

The area's cultural World Heritage values relate to Aboriginal occupation.

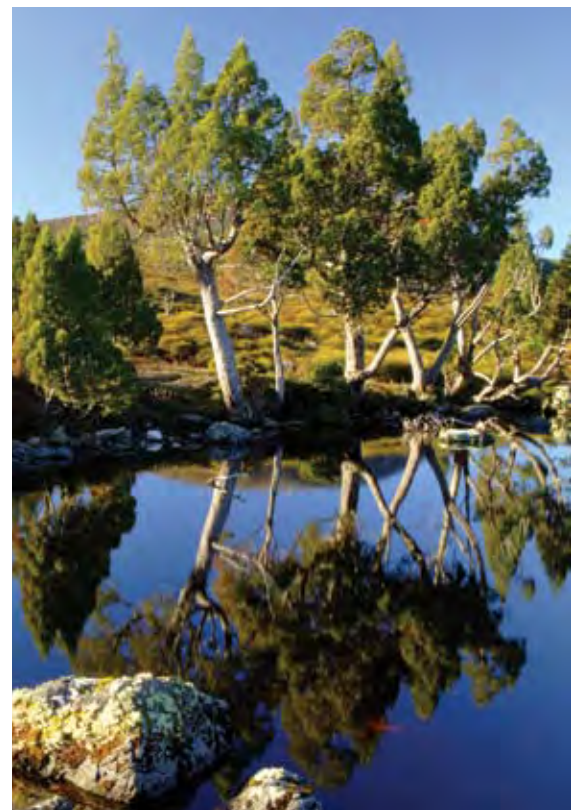
Archaeological surveys have revealed an exceptionally rich and important collection of Aboriginal sites, including Kutikina Cave. These places, along with all of the World Heritage property's Aboriginal sites, are extremely important to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community for their exceptional cultural, emotional and spiritual value.

Over 40 sites have been located in the south west inland river valleys that indicate human occupation dating to at least 30,000 years ago. When these places were occupied the climate was significantly colder and drier than it is now, and the sites reveal the distinctive ways the Tasmanian Aboriginal community developed to survive climate change and Ice Age conditions.

This group of places, which also includes rock art sites, forms one of the richest and best-preserved collections of Ice Age sites found anywhere in the world. During the periods of earliest occupation, the Aboriginal people of the region are believed to have been the most southerly people on earth.

Day-to-day management of the area is the responsibility of the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service (Department of Environment, Parks, Heritage and the Arts). Specialist advice is provided to the Service by:

- Resource Management and Conservation Division (Department of Primary Industries and Water)
- Aboriginal Heritage Office (Department of Environment, Parks, Heritage



title page: Gondwanan relict *Nothofagus cunninghamii* and the world's tallest heath *Richea pandanifolia*

top strip: View across some of the area's extensive, high quality temperate wilderness

top: The Marakoopa Cave system is simply spectacular

above: Tarn and Tasmanian endemic Pencil pines, whose stronghold is the World Heritage Area

All images: Tasmania Department of Environment, Parks, Heritage and the Arts. Joe Shemesh