



Darkwood, New South Wales

Darkwood is a spectacular 1,360 hectare rainforest property, about two hours from Coffs Harbour in northern New South Wales.

Darkwood is part of a package of six properties which the Australian Government helped the New South Wales Government purchase through \$14.75 million from the Caring for our Country initiative. It is managed by the New South Wales Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW) as part of New England National Park.

Nestled beside the Gondwana Rainforests of Australia World Heritage Area, Darkwood is part of a rich wildlife corridor making it an important addition to the National Reserve System – Australia's most secure way of protecting native habitat.

It protects nationally threatened species like the endangered spotted-tailed quoll. More than 15 kilometres of the Bellinger River also winds its way through Darkwood, protecting key aquatic habitat for the giant barred frog and the vulnerable stuttering frog.

The Gondwana Rainforests provide a living link with the evolution of Australia, protecting the rainforests that once covered most of the ancient southern supercontinent, Gondwana. Few places on earth contain so many plants and animals that have evolved from these long-gone forests.



The World Heritage Area is a string of more than 50 reserves scattered over 750 kilometres from the Mount Royal National Park in the New South Wales Upper Hunter region to the Goomburra Forest Reserve, part of the Main Range National Park south-west of Brisbane. Darkwood, which has now become part of this important collection, contains many plants and animals that have evolved from their ancestors following the break-up of Gondwana after the age of the dinosaurs.

Darkwood also has a long social history. The property is on the country of the Gumbaynggirr people, who have continued a strong spiritual connection to their country. After European occupation, Darkwood was used for small scale, subsistence agriculture.



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Now that the property has been purchased for conservation, rangers have removed cattle from the property and are actively managing Darkwood according to world conservation guidelines as part of the New England National Park. This includes weed management work to control blackberries and other invasive plants.

Bush Blitz

In 2010 – the International Year of Biodiversity – Darkwood is one of the first reserves in Australia to be surveyed by scientists through the innovative Bush Blitz project. Bush Blitz is the world's first continental-scale nature discovery project - a three year multimillion dollar project to document the plants and animals in hundreds of properties across Australia's National Reserve System.



Bush Blitz is a partnership between the Australian Government, global resources company BHP Billiton, conservation organisation Earthwatch and rangelands survey group the National Scientific Reference Site Network.

For more information please visit:

www.bushblitz.org.au

For more information about Australia's National Reserve System please visit:

www.environment.gov.au/parks/nrs

Photo credits:

Front – clockwise from top left: Darkwood, fungus, carpet python and landscape by Cameron Slatyer. Darkwood river landscape by DEWHA

Rear – clockwise from top left: Carnivorous land snail by Cameron Slatyer, Bush Blitz scientists at work by DEWHA, dragonfly by Cameron Slatyer, golden-crowned snake, *Cacophis squamulosus* by Cameron Slatyer.