



Cooks River/Castlereagh Ironbark Forest



NPWS/M. Cufer 2001

Conservation Status

Cooks River/Castlereagh Ironbark Forest is listed as an endangered ecological community under the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*.

Description

Cooks River/Castlereagh Ironbark Forest is a community that ranges from open forest to low woodland, with a canopy dominated by broad-leaved ironbark (*Eucalyptus fibrosa*) and paperbark (*Melaleuca decora*). The canopy may also include other eucalypts such as woollybutt (*E. longifolia*). The dense shrubby understorey consists of *Melaleuca nodosa* and peach heath (*Lissanthe strigosa*), with a range of 'pea' flower shrubs, such as *Dillwynia tenuifolia*, *Pultenaea villosa* and *Daviesia ulicifolia* (can be locally abundant). The sparse ground layer is made of grasses and herbs, including kangaroo grass (*Themeda australis*), weeping meadow grass (*Microlaena stipoides var stipoides*) and *Entolasia stricta*.

Distribution

The extent of better quality remnants of Cooks River/Castlereagh Ironbark Forest is now reduced to 1011 ha, which is

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8.3% of its original distribution, with a further 6.2% remaining as scattered trees (NPWS 2002a, NPWS 2002b).

The most extensive stands of Cooks River/Castlereagh Ironbark Forest occur in the Castlereagh and Holsworthy areas. Smaller remnants occur in the Kemps Creek area, and in the eastern section of the Cumberland Plain, such as Cooks River

valley, Duck River, Bankstown, Chullora and Rookwood.

Cooks River/Castlereagh Ironbark Forest occurs primarily in the Penrith, Blacktown, Liverpool, Auburn, Bankstown, Canterbury, Strathfield and Parramatta local government areas.



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Examples to see

Good examples of Cooks River/Castlereagh Ironbark Forest can be seen at the Castlereagh Nature Reserve, Windsor Downs Nature Reserve and Agnes Banks Nature Reserve.

Ecology

Cooks River/Castlereagh Ironbark Forest mainly occurs on clay soils, derived from the alluvial deposits of ancient river systems (up to 65 million years old), or on shale soils of the Wianamatta Shales. The community can intergrade into Shale-Gravel Transition Forest (where the alluvium is shallow), Castlereagh Swamp Woodland (in moist depressions) and Castlereagh Scribbly Gum Woodland (on sandier soils). Castlereagh Ironbark Forest is subject to periodic fires, and most species are able to regenerate from lignotubers and buds beneath the bark as well as seeds stored in the soil.

Castlereagh Ironbark Forest provides habitat for threatened species, such as the downy wattle (*Acacia pubescens*), nodding geebung (*Persoonia nutans*), *Allocasuarina glariicola* and the green and gold bell frog (*Litoria aurea*).

Threats

Castlereagh Ironbark Forest has a very restricted natural distribution. The

remaining remnants are threatened by weeds. Other threats include clearing for development, rubbish dumping and damage by vehicle access.

Recovery and management

The recovery of this ecological community is being addressed as part of the Cumberland Plain Endangered Ecological Communities Recovery Plan which is currently being prepared.

High conservation value Castlereagh Ironbark Forest remnants will be identified in the recovery plan and recommended for protection through a range of mechanisms including reservation, environmental protection zoning and development control processes. Other protection measures can be through plans of management and voluntary conservation agreements. These measures will enable the remnants to be better managed for conservation and vegetation corridors to be formed. The margins of remnants need to be controlled for weeds and, where possible, the natural bushfire cycle should be allowed to maintain species diversity.

For Further Information contact

Central Threatened Species Unit, NSW Department of Environment and Conservation, PO Box 1967, Hurstville NSW 2220 Phone 02 9585 6678. www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au

References

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