

# Macks Creek Revegetation Project

Changing Conservation Status – Warm Temperate Rainforest (Strzelecki Ranges)



Victoria has about 9500 hectares of Warm Temperate Rainforest found only in areas of Gippsland. There are several distinct floristic communities in East Gippsland, Wilson's Promontory, and the Strzelecki Ranges.

The Strzelecki community, Strzelecki Warm Temperate Rainforest, was accepted recently for listing under the Victorian Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act (1988) due to its highly restricted occurrence and the degradation of most remaining stands. Possibly less than 300 hectares remains, of which 194 hectare is within Hancock Victoria Plantation's (HVP) Strzelecki estate. This distinct ecological vegetation class occurs in sheltered gullies at 80-240m elevation. Its canopy of primarily Sweet Pittosporum (*Pittosporum undulatum*) and Muttonwood (*Myrsine howittiana*) is characteristically entangled with vines and so dense that little light reaches the forest floor, where only the most shade tolerant shrubs, herbs and ground ferns grow. Past land clearing and fire has destroyed or compromised the canopy of many stands, resulting in blackberry invasion which prevents natural regeneration.

Long before the Victorian Flora and Fauna Guarantee listing, HVP recognized the importance of the Strzelecki Warm Temperate Rainforest areas and implemented protection and restoration strategies including replacing adjoining pine plantation with permanent buffers of native species.

The Macks Creek Restoration Project is our most ambitious project of this type. 4kms of badly degraded or missing rainforest has been weeded and replanted with canopy trees along the creek and into Tarra Bulga National Park, with the assistance of an open grant and stakeholder partnerships. This stand is now looking good and is subject to ongoing monitoring.

Projects like this are helping to arrest long term decline, but deer, weeds and fire remain the main threats as demonstrated by loss of areas of this ecological vegetation class in the 2014 Jack River fire.