

JUNIOR RANGERS

DRY FORESTS  
ACTIVITY  
BOOK



# THE AUSTRALIAN BUSH

Have you visited the Aussie bush before? This iconic environment is also called a dry forest or woodland.

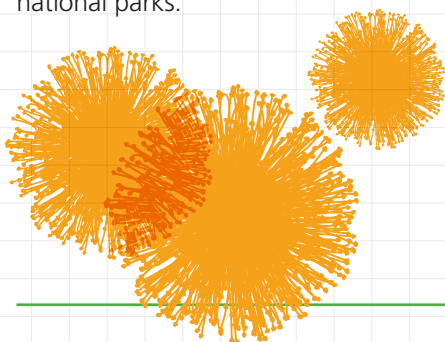
Gum trees, shrubs, wildflowers and fallen branches create perfect patches of paradise.

These features of dry forests create homes, called habitats, for many types of animals to live.

The dry forests are found in areas with less rainfall than other wetter parts of Victoria. The plants and animals that live in dry forests are adapted to survive in dry conditions.

Depending on when you visit a dry forest, you might find the trails are dusty, the leaves fallen on the forest floor are dried and crispy, and creek beds or streams have no or very little water.

Dry forest habitats are found in different locations across Victoria, including some of the most beautiful national parks.



## Dry Forests and Traditional Owners

Traditional Owners are the first scientists, first storytellers, first farmers and First Peoples of Country. They describe Country as the lands, seas, waterways, plants, and animals that they are connected to.

## WHERE ARE THE DRY FORESTS?

Can you unscramble the name to each national park on the map?

1. **i a s n m p G a r**

(Gariwerd) National Park

\_\_\_\_\_

2. **e h T b e n B s i a r g e R a n s**

National Park

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. **a r a K K r a a** National Park

\_\_\_\_\_

4. **e a H t h e t c o - G t o w n y r a**

National Park

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. **b y W a r s n O v e**

National Park

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## PARK TIP!

Everything in a national park is protected. Before your adventure, ensure you visit [parks.vic.gov.au](http://parks.vic.gov.au) to find out everything you need to know.



Traditional Owners have an ongoing connection with Country. They care for Country and keep systems in balance. The knowledge and skills to care for Country are passed down from Elders for thousands of generations.

Sometimes caring for Country might include cultural burns, removing

plants that don't belong or educating visitors on how to keep their Country healthy and beautiful.



Using the ACHRIS map, research the Traditional Owners of the park you are visiting before you go.

# THE BEAUTIFUL BUSH

Have you ever felt relaxed sitting under a gum tree?  
How does being in nature make you feel?

**Dry forests are created from many different plants and animals living together. Each plant or animal brings special adaptations that help them to survive and keep dry forests healthy.**

## DEFINITION: EVAPOTRANSPIRATION

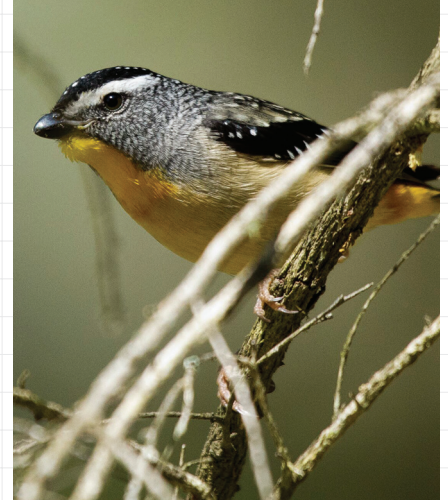
When water is lost from the plant by the heat of the sun.

## DEFINITION: POLLEN

Pollen often looks like a dusty powder. When pollen spreads, new plants are able to grow. Pollinator species, such as birds and bees, carry pollen to other plants nearby.

Many tree leaves let water escape through their pores when it gets hot. But gum leaves droop downwards. This adaptation stop gum trees from heating up too much and losing too much water. It limits evapotranspiration from their leaves.

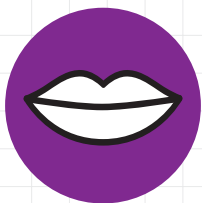
Australian environments often have long periods of time between rainfall, so it is important for plants to hold on to as much water as possible.



Spotted Pardalotes are tiny but mighty helpers. They spend their time in the dry forest canopy, looking for food. Pardalotes love to snack on psyllids, a sap-sucking insect found on gum leaves. Ridding the trees of these sap-suckers helps the forest stay healthy.

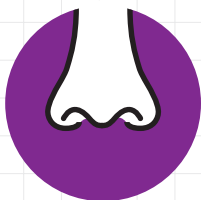


When you explore a dry forest environment, try these sensory activities to sharpen your sensory superpowers.



## SENSE OF TASTE

Ask an adult if they know any native bush plants in your area. Research bush foods by visiting your local indigenous nursery.



## SENSE OF SMELL

Rub a green gum leaf between your fingers. What is that smell?



## SENSE OF HEARING

Set a timer for 1 minute and close your eyes to focus your hearing. How many different sounds can you hear?



## SENSE OF TOUCH

Rub your fingers or hand along the bark of a tree. What does it feel like?

## SENSE OF SIGHT

Look very closely at the bark of a tree. Can you see anything moving?



# BURSTING WITH BIODIVERSITY!

## DEFINITION: BIODIVERSITY

Bio means life. Diversity means lots of different types.

Dry forests and woodlands that are full of life are more equipped in a changing climate.

Healthy dry forests are important safe places for animals and plants as the climate changes.

Some challenges for life in these forests include very hot summer days, unexpected fires or lots of rain that can cause floods.



Wax-lip Orchids grow up to 30cm tall. Be careful not to tread on this flower – it is low to the ground.



Pobblebonk Frogs can be heard by their distinct 'bonk' call. They burrow deep into the ground.



Golden Wattle flowers provide pollen and food for birds and insects during the cooler months.



Blue-banded Bees buzz throughout the forest, being fantastic pollinators.



Hairpin Banksia have needle-like leaves. They are perfect shelter for small animals on the forest ground.



When in flower, Box Ironbark trees provide nectar and pollen for birds and insects.



Huntsmen Spiders blend in with bark in the forest.



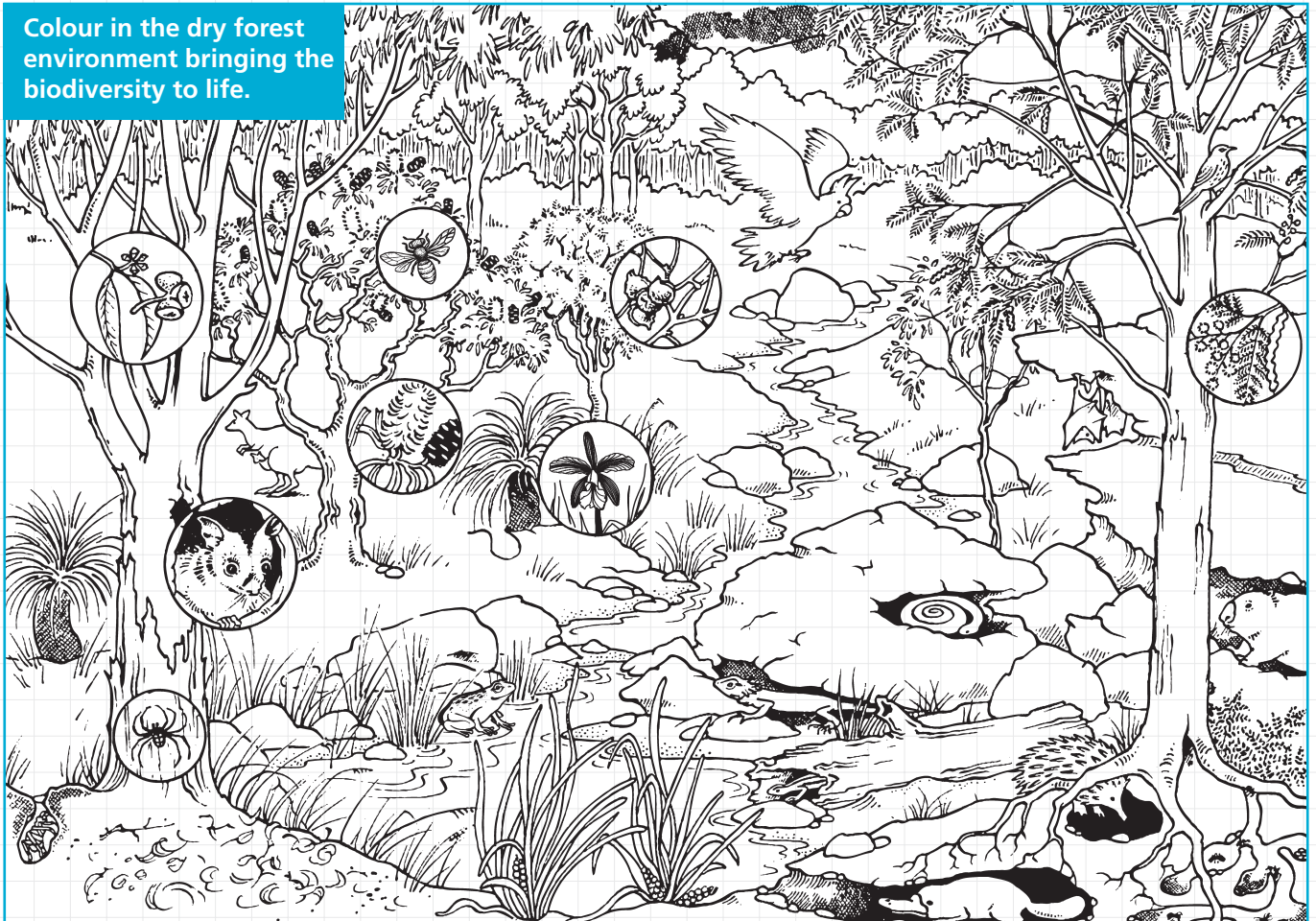
Regent Honeyeaters love to build their nest in the fork of a tree.



### JUNIOR RANGER TIP:

Ever noticed a plant but don't know the name? Try using the iNaturalist App to help you identify and learn a new species.

Colour in the dry forest environment bringing the biodiversity to life.



# FRIENDS OF THE FOREST



## DID YOU KNOW?

Dry forests support a range of insect-catching acrobats! Southern Brown Tree Frogs, Lesser Long-eared Bats and Brush-tailed Phascogales have very different homes, but they all rely on thriving insect populations for dinner.

## The bush is complicated...

Dry forests are home to creatures big and small. The bush might look all the same to you, but these creatures are

able to find their own special places within the forest to thrive. For example, frogs and wombats have very different homes.

## Can you find some of the animals living within the forest?

Species names can go left-to-right, right-to-left and top-to-bottom.



S D F S D L B A E D N A M C R L A C E A S D  
 W E D G E T A I L E D E A G L E F G R H J K  
 E T O L A D R A P D E T T O P S D S E F A Z  
 X B R U S H T A I L E D P H A S C O G A L E  
 L C V B N M Q W E R T Y U I P E O L E K J H  
 I P O B B L E B O N K F R O G R S D N F S G  
 T A Z T A B M O W N O M M O C L X C T V W B  
 T G F W P S A Q E R T Y O Y U O I P H M I N  
 L H J K L L M N B V C X Z Q W N E R O T F Y  
 E V C X A Z A S D F G H J K L G O P N I T U  
 F G H I T E B L O W E D K R E E N R E E P J  
 O B N M Y P O I U Y T R E W Q A S D Y F A G  
 R X Z A P S U G A R G L I D E R L K E J R H  
 E C V B U N M K L H F D S A Q E W Y A U R O  
 S N K L S P O I U W Q Y T W S D H J T I O P  
 T W E L R U C E N O T S H S U B N T E M T D  
 B A X Z C V B M L K J G F D S A R D R Y U I  
 A Y R E D I L G L I A T R E H T A E F T O P  
 T N W Q O O T A K C O C G N A G G N A G A S  
 G S O U T H E R N B R O W N T R E E F R O G  
 W H I T E B R O W E D T R E E C R E E P E R

Common Wombat

Pobblebonk Frog

Southern Brown Tree Frog

Platypus

Wedge-tailed Eagle

Brush-tailed Phascogale

Spotted Pardalote

Lesser Long-eared Bat

Little Forest Bat

White-browed Treecreeper

Regent Honeyeater

Feathertail Glider

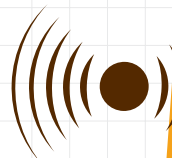
Sugar Glider

Bush Stone Curlew

Gang-gang Cockatoo

Swift Parrot

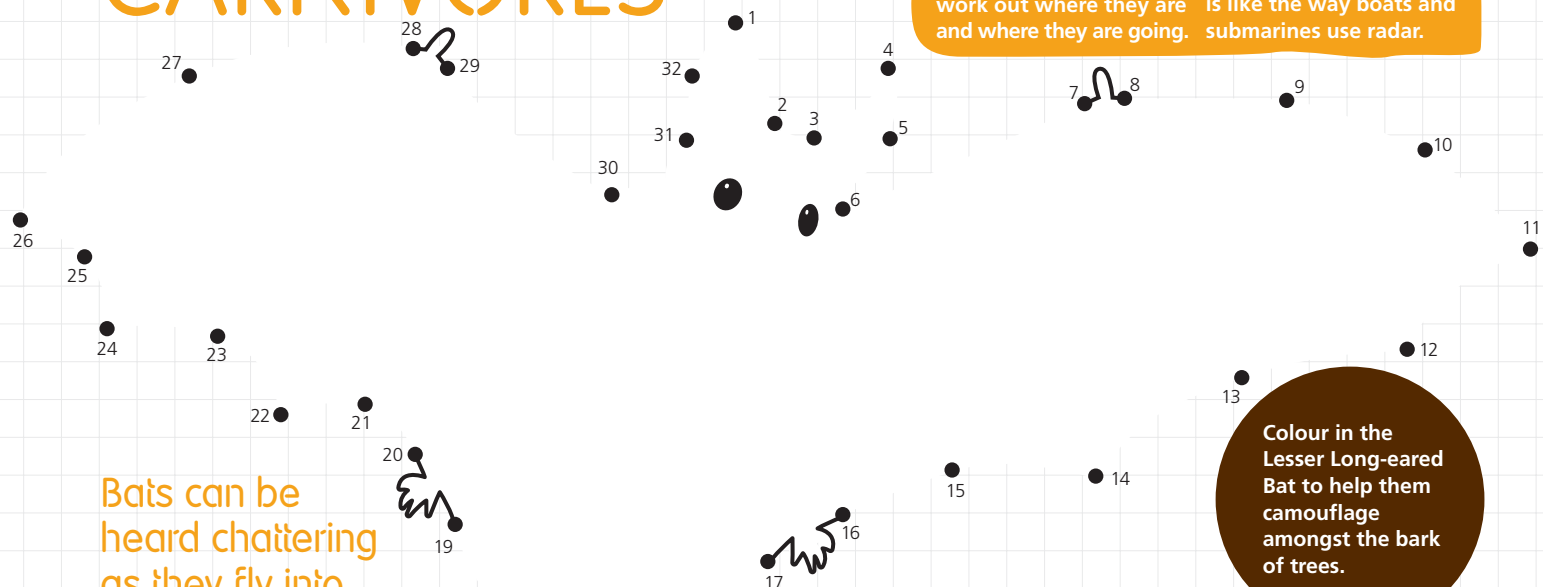
# CUTE CARNIVORES



## FAUNA FACT!

Since microbats can't use Google Maps and don't have very good eyesight, they use echolocation to work out where they are and where they are going.

While in the air, microbats bounce sound waves off objects nearby. The returning echoes help them work out the best flight path. This is like the way boats and submarines use radar.



Bats can be heard chattering as they fly into the evening sky.

Microbats are expert hunters. They fly very fast and very close to the ground. They quickly swoop up their prey, eating as they fly. Bats can eat half their body weight in insects in just one night!

The Lesser Long-eared Bat and Little Forest Bat can be found living in gum trees in dry forest. These fuzzy mammals nestle in behind the bark of large tree or hang upside down in old trees with large holes, called hollows. Sometimes you can hear them chirp whilst resting behind the bark of a gum tree.

Microbats spend the chilly months taking a loooooong nap – this is called hibernating.

Be careful where you tread in a dry forest, because the Yellow-footed Antechinus also calls this environment home.

Antechinus can be seen scampering on the forest floor... or taking a sneaky nap under some fallen bark!

Antechinus are carnivores who scavenge and use their sharp teeth to eat prey. Being a marsupial, the females have a half-pouch for their young to grow in.

Antechinus and bats are just some of the animals that move between dry forest environments.

To ensure wildlife have enough forest areas to explore, we need to protect, restore and connect areas between dry forests.

Rewilding forests and planning for wildlife corridors is an important part of Parks Victoria's work.

Colour in the Lesser Long-eared Bat to help them camouflage amongst the bark of trees.



Lesser Long-eared Bat



Little Forest Bat



Yellow-footed Antechinus

# GET READY FOR AN ADVENTURE

When exploring, everyone needs to be prepared and being prepared looks different for everyone.

Some people might need to make sure their boots fit well, some people might need to ensure they can access the trail from the car park using their wheelchair and some people might need to read a social script about the park before they visit.

One of the best ways to explore the bush is by hiking. Hiking can be venturing up a rocky mountain for an overnight camp or it can be exploring a gentle trail with friends on a nice sunny day. Hiking helps you slow down and take in your surroundings. It keeps you healthy and feeling good by exercising and connecting with nature. Sometimes you might be lucky and come across an extra special creature. Remember to look up into the treetops and down low as you explore.

Don't forget that hiking with a friend and an adult is safe and fun!



A map to make sure you don't get lost and to help stay on the trails.

What might you need to take when you head out into the bush? Draw the items that you need to be prepared for a safe adventure.



Sturdy walking boots and comfy socks to explore and prevent blisters.



A sun smart hat to protect you from harsh conditions.



Sunglasses to help protect your eyes from the sun.



Parks Victoria has a number of resources that can help you prepare for your outside adventure.



Check out the Parks Victoria All Abilities Access web page for resources to help inform you.



Light weight cotton clothing for protection.




A warm jacket just in case conditions change.



A bottle of water and scrumptious snacks, so you don't get hungry.

# HIDEY HOLLOW

 Victoria's networks of parks and reserves form the core of Aboriginal cultural landscapes. Parks Victoria acknowledges the continuing connection that Traditional Owners have to these landscapes and recognises their ongoing role in caring for Country on which we learn, play and live.

Gum trees, also called eucalypts, can grow as tall as 100m and live for hundreds of years.

Trees in the bush can grow super tall. If you look closely, you will see that some old trees have large holes in their trunk, branches or at their base. These holes are called hollows. Hollows provide the perfect home for many different animals. Dead and fallen trees also make the perfect homes for many animals, as they break down and decompose.

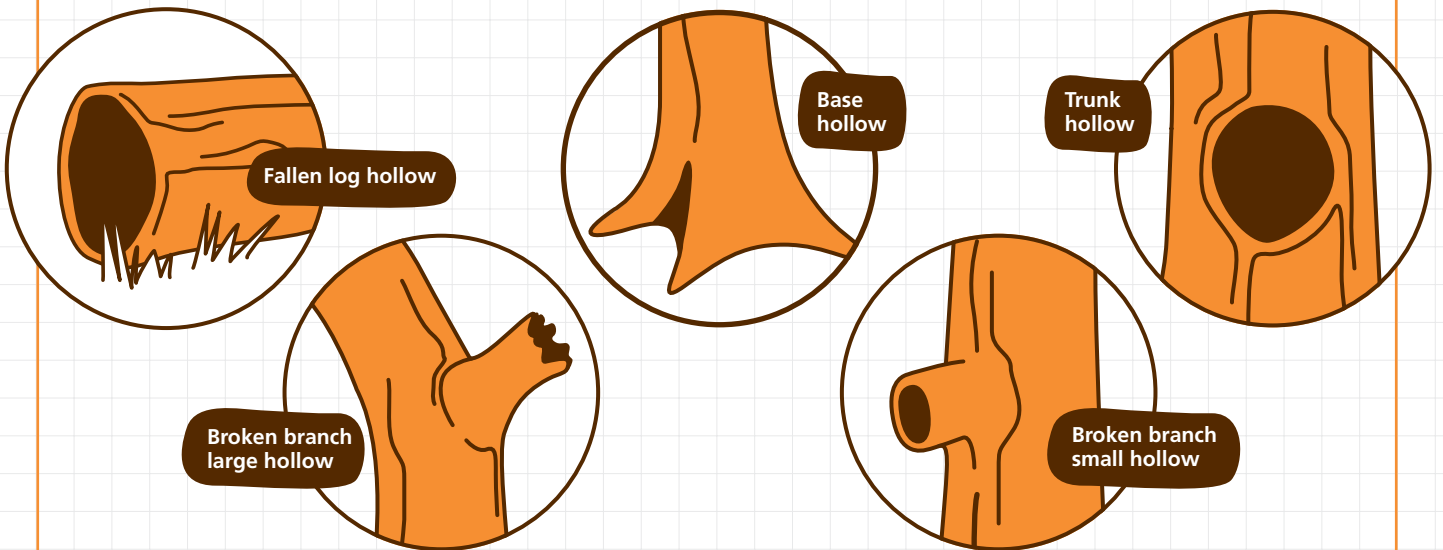
## DID YOU KNOW?

Tree hollows begin to form in some trees that are older than 150 years old.



Use the clues to match the animal to its home.

Draw a line to match the animal to the perfect habitat hollow for that species.



The Gang-gang Cockatoo loves to nest in large hollows high up in the tree.



The Sugar Glider looks for a large hollow branch high up in the tree.



The Eastern Rosella searches up high for small hollows, perfectly sized for raising chicks.



The Yellow-footed Antechinus can be found scavenging in and out of hollows on the forest floor.



The Echidna builds a burrow under a tree.