

---

# The Daintree Rainforest

LILY DUNN

**ABSTRACT** The wonderful plants and animals of the Daintree Rainforest in Queensland, Australia, are at risk of extinction. They and the rainforests of the world must be protected by taking action on climate change.

The Daintree Rainforest is part of the oldest surviving tropical rainforest in the world, and is located on the north-east coast of Queensland, Australia, north of Cairns. It is estimated to be around 180 million years old. The average rainfall in the Daintree Rainforest is approximately 200 cm per year.

Covering an area of around 1200 square kilometres, this amazing rainforest is home to over 12,000 different insect species, including 135 types of dung beetle. In the Daintree, you will also find about 65% of Australia's butterflies and bats, and around 18% of all bird species, and 30% of Australia's frog, reptile and marsupial species.

Approximately 3000 types of plants and trees are found in the Daintree Rainforest. There is a plant called the Gympie-Gympie, which is common throughout the Daintree Rainforest. It is also known as the stinging brush, mulberry-leaved stinger, Gympie stinger and the suicide plant. One of the world's most venomous plants, the Gympie-Gympie stinging tree can cause months of excruciating pain for unsuspecting humans. There are lots of interesting and unique plants in the Daintree, which capture carbon and create oxygen. Many of the plants in the Daintree Rainforest rely on flying foxes for pollination.

Several types of flying fox live in the Daintree. Flying foxes help pollinate plants and spread seeds, ensuring the survival of our native forests. They do this over much larger distances than birds or insects. Many rainforest trees only flower at night, and so these beautiful nocturnal mammals play a very important role in pollinating the forest. Sadly, in recent years, flying foxes have been affected by global warming, with extreme heat events killing thousands of these bats each summer.

In the Daintree there are two types of tree-kangaroo: the Lumholtz's tree-kangaroo and the Bennett's tree-kangaroo. Both are classified as threatened. The Lumholtz's tree-kangaroo is the smaller of the two species. It is an arboreal marsupial which lives in trees in the rainforest. Tree-kangaroos are *not* nocturnal. They are active by day *and* night, taking short naps when they are tired. They have strong forearms with long claws, which they use for climbing trees. They have the longest tail of all kangaroo species, and they use it for balance. Tree-kangaroos can walk and climb moving their back legs independently. All other kangaroos can only hop with both feet at the same time. Tree-kangaroos rely on the rainforest for food, which includes leaves, flowers, moss and fungi. Unfortunately, these beautiful marsupials are going blind. Scientists think that this may be due to climate change, which is making some of the tree-kangaroos' food toxic. Blind tree-kangaroos are at greater risk of straying into populated areas and being hit by cars or attacked by dogs.

It is so important that we conserve the Daintree Rainforest. This ancient rainforest creates oxygen for us all, but many of its species of plants and animals are at risk of extinction due to climate change. We could lose beautiful creatures like the tree-kangaroo and the flying fox forever if we do not protect the rainforests of the world.

I am in fifth grade, and we do learn a bit about the environment at school, but definitely not enough! I think it is very important that kids learn more in school about saving the environment and native animals. Most of what I have learned is from books or wildlife documentaries. Another great way to learn about native animals is by visiting a wildlife sanctuary, or even a zoo. Lots of zoos have breeding programs for endangered animals. Since European settlement in 1788, at least 58 species of Australian native animals have become extinct. If children learn about animals and get to see them in person, they are more likely to care and want to help save them.

---

**LILY DUNN** is 10 years old and lives near Sydney, Australia. She is passionate about the native wildlife of Australia and their habitats. She likes to read, swim and play soccer.