

Fauna of Blue Mountains Swamps



1. Giant dragonfly



2. Blue Mountains Water Skink



3. Giant Burrowing Frog



4. Swamp Ant nest



5. Lewin's Rail

Blue Mountains Swamps are home to a unique range of fauna. Swamp fauna includes both swamp specialists such as the **Blue Mountains Water Skink** which are restricted exclusively to swamps as well as species that use swamps opportunistically or as part of their habitat such as the **New Holland Honeyeater**.

Swamps are resource rich habitats full of edible vegetation, seeds, fruits and nectar filled flowers which feed insects, skinks, birds, and small mammals which in turn feed predators including snakes such as **Copperhead**, **Tiger** and **Red-bellied Black Snakes**, **Kookaburras** and birds of prey which frequent swamps to hunt for frogs, swamp rats and skinks.

Blue Mountains Swamps are home to several threatened species including two endangered fauna species, the endemic **Blue Mountains Water Skink** (*Eulamprus leuraensis*) and the endangered **Giant Dragonfly** (*Petalura gigantea*) as well as several vulnerable species including the **Red Crowned Toadlet** and the **Giant Burrowing Frog**.

Frogs
Blue Mountains Swamps are a major habitat for frogs who thrive in the damp moist environment and the areas of standing water which are constantly being replenished by groundwater

Ants-Swamp ants often build raft nests of sticks and vegetation which 'float' over the damp swamp floor to keep them from getting inundated

Euastachus australasiensis (Swamp Crayfish) is both a watercourse dweller (which can coexist in creeks with the Spiny Crayfish, *E. spinifer*) and a Blue Mountains Swamp dweller. Burrows can be found in both the wetter part of these swamps through to surprisingly dry surface situations adjoining swamps provided there is good groundwater. Look for the characteristic "yabby" holes which they dig into the swamp substrate and the small mounds of excavated materials located near the entrance.



6. Copperhead



7. Blue Mountains Crayfish





8. Southern Emu Wren



9. New Holland Honeyeater



10. Yellow-faced Honeyeater



11. Swamp Wallaby

Birds

Blue Mountains Swamps are bustling with birdlife. Many bird species come into swamps from the surrounding bushland to hunt for insects or feed on flowering swamp shrubs. Blue Mountains Swamps are full of nectar rich plants such as *Banksia ericifolia*, *Callistemon citrinus* and *Grevillea acanthifolia* which provide food for local honeyeaters such as New Holland Honeyeaters as well as for migratory honeyeaters such as Yellow-faced, White-napped, Scarlet and Crescent Honeyeaters as they undertake their northern winter migration. Regionally significant birds which live in the dense vegetation of swamps include the Southern Emu Wren, Lewin's Rail, the Buff-banded Rail and Latham's Snipe.

Mammals

Swamp wallabies shelter in the dense swamp vegetation and graze on edible herbs (e.g. *Dichondra repens*), sedges (e.g. *Empodisma minus*) as well as grasses on the edges of swamps.

Swamp rats (*Rattus lutreolus*) also feed predominately on grasses and sedges.

Swamp rats create extensive networks of tunnels under the swamp vegetation by biting away and eating the obstructing plants. Swamp rat tunnels and burrows, along with yabby holes, appear to provide important refuges from fire for creatures such as the Blue Mountains Water Skink and the Giant Burrowing Frog

Refugia from Drought

Blue Mountains Swamps act as a refugia for many species during droughts when groundwater keeps swamps wet and green while the bushland around them begins to dry out. Swamps help fauna survive dry difficult periods by providing food and water until the rains come again.

Whose burrow is that?

Blue Mountains Swamp floors are full of burrows which provide cool moist shelters for their inhabitants. Giant Dragonfly larvae live down their burrows for up to 10 years before emerging to become adult dragonflies. Swamp crayfish burrow down to the water table and live in the water at the end of their burrows. Giant Burrowing frogs dig deep burrows or utilize disused yabby holes for over-wintering and to weather unfavourable conditions or dig shallow burrows to avoid detection during the day. Swamp rats construct nests in burrows up to a metre deep but where the ground is waterlogged they make nests above ground in tussock grass.



12. Blue Mountains Water Skink in burrow

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