FACT SHEET 6

LOWLAND VALLEY HARDWOOD FOREST

The Norfolk Island Vegetation Mapping Project has described and mapped 14 distinct native plant communities on Norfolk Island. This series of fact sheets presents information about each of the communities.

Lowland Valley Hardwood Forest

Valley forest once more common in lowland areas. Includes hardwoods and tree ferns that can be seen in many lowland valleys.

This community is a drier version of the Moist Upland Hardwood Forest, which occurs higher up the mountain valleys and slopes. It has fewer species than the moister community. Largely missing are several species found in the Moist Upland Hardwood Forest, such as *Pennantia endlicheri* and *Freycinetia baueriana*. However, this forest would have been moister than the Plateau Hardwood Forest on the surrounding plateaus and ridges, resulting in the presence of many ferns, including very tall smooth treefern (*Cyathea brownii*), which are still a feature of many of these valleys.

White oak (also called Norfolk Island hibiscus) is a medium to large tree with attractive pink to mauve flowers in spring and early summer.

Lowland Valley Hardwood Forest, Forestry Section, Norfolk Island National Park. Photo: Kevin Mills

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Plant community	Key species	Other species	Threatened species
Lowland Valley Hardwood Forest	• White oak (*Lagunaria patersonia*) • Smooth tree fern (*Cyathea brownii*) • Ironwood (*Nestegis apetala*) • Bloodwood (*Baloghia inophylla*) • Beech (*Myrsine ralstoniae*) • Norfolk pine (*Araucaria heterophylla*)	• Norfolk evergreen (*Alyxia gynopogon*) • Ti (*Cordyline obtecta*) • Two frond fern (*Asplenium dimorphum*) • Prickly shieldfern (*Arachnoides aristatum*)	• Ti (*Cordyline obtecta*) • Beech (*Myrsine ralstoniae*)

Indicative species composition

The table above identifies the key species present (those species that are most characteristic of the plant community), other species (additional species that are likely to be present and assist in defining the community), and some of the threatened species present.

Further information

These fact sheets are based on the Norfolk Island Vegetation Mapping Project conducted by the Invasive Species Council between 2018 and 2020. Naomi Christian and Dr Kevin Mills conducted the vegetation surveys, and described and mapped the native plant communities. Two maps were produced – one showing the estimated distribution of native plant communities in 1750, and one showing their distribution in 2020.

The plant community maps are available at:

- www.norfolkisland.gov.nf/services/waste-and-environment/native-vegetation/native-vegetation-mapping-project
- www.invasives.org.au/niveg

There are 180 native plant species on the Norfolk Island Group, of which around 25% are endemic. Forty-six species have been identified as threatened with extinction. Describing and mapping the 14 native plant communities was done to help land managers protect and restore habitat for these threatened species and other wildlife of Norfolk Island.

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