



Hunter Bird Observers Club



Brief: Barrington to Hawkesbury Climate Corridors

We recommend urgent conservation measures to limit the significant loss of biodiversity projected for the Barrington Tops to the Hawkesbury River region.

Under a plausible worst case climate scenario, predictions suggest as many as 45 percent of NSW Threatened fauna species and 72 percent of NSW Threatened flora species will have little or no suitable habitat remaining in 50 years. The biodiversity of the North Coast, Hunter and Greater Sydney regions are under particular threat from climate change. The spatial range and number of Threatened Species are projected to greatly diminish in these regions.¹

The central NSW coastal region between Barrington Tops and the Hawkesbury River connects two World Heritage Areas, and spans almost 11,300 km², including the LGAs of Central Coast, Lake Macquarie, Cessnock, Newcastle, Port Stephens, Maitland, Dungog, and the former Great Lakes Council area of Mid Coast LGA.

The natural environment of the area is under intense pressure from agriculture, forestry, and urban development. The last ten years have seen over 7,000 ha of the region's native bushland earmarked for "greenfield" urban development. From 2008 to 2017, about 6,500 ha of bushland was lost, almost a third due to logging in southern Mid-coast LGA.

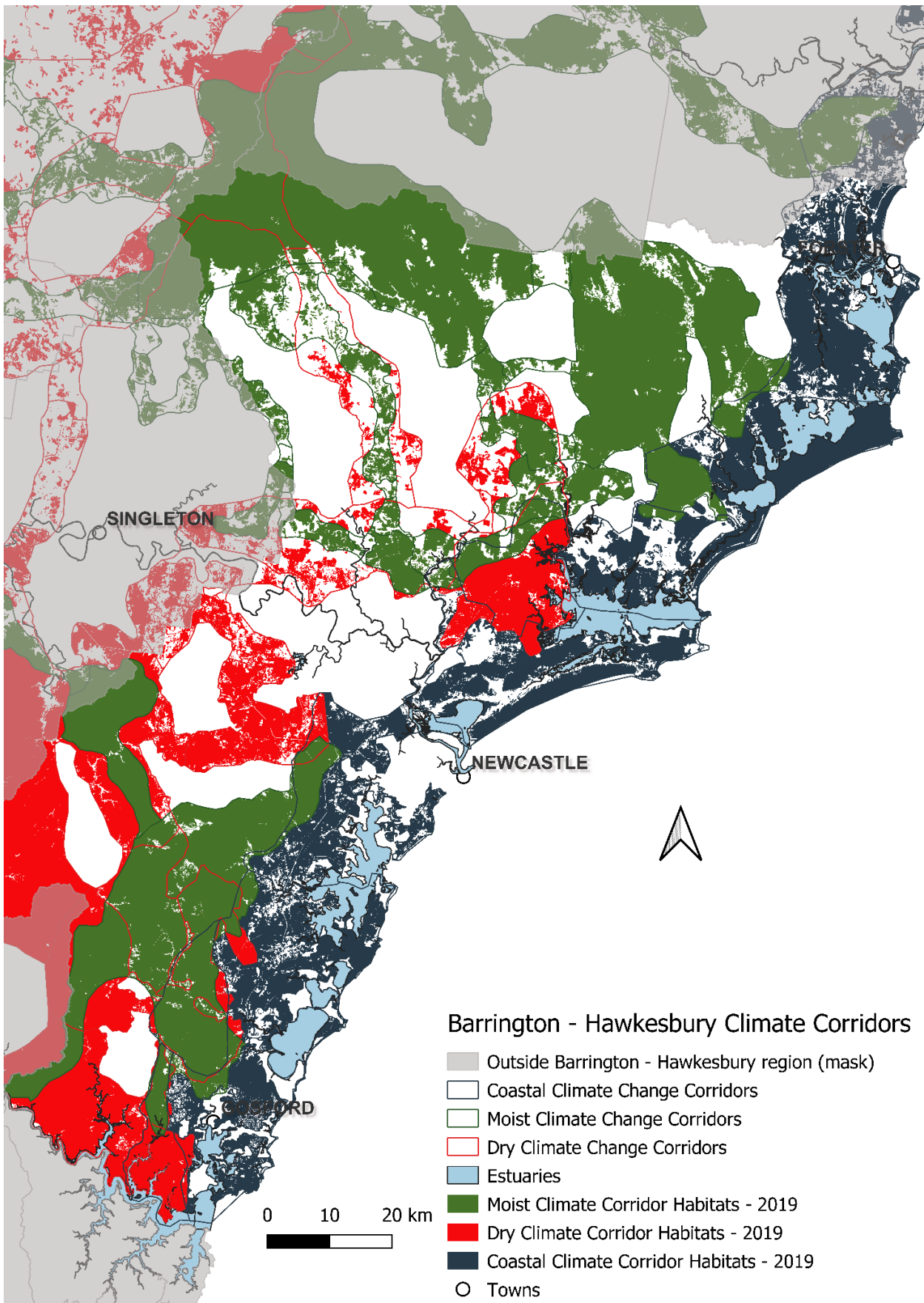
In 2070, we estimate existing National Parks and State Forests will support climate refugia for many of the threatened fauna species predicted to decline. However, to allow for populations to move as climate patterns shift, these climate refugia must be protected from further degradation and functionally connected with large protected landscape scale corridors.

We recommend:

- **An immediate moratorium on further land clearing within identified Climate Corridors.**
- **A specific strategy be included in the 2041 Regional Plans for Hunter and Central Coast for the protection of Climate Corridors supported by detailed zoning and development guidelines under local environmental plans and development control plans and investment programs implemented by Local Land Services.**
- **The Biodiversity Offset Scheme be radically amended to provide adequate stewardship payments to encourage landholders to protect, manage, and rehabilitate native vegetation within Climate Corridors.**
- **Targeted voluntary private land acquisition of large core areas of high quality habitat and essential corridors for restoration, particularly the large areas of moist forests in southern Mid-coast, and moist and dry landscapes across the Hunter River Valley through Cessnock, Singleton, and Dungog LGAs.**
- **State Forests be transferred to National Park reserves as Regional Parks or other appropriate reserve category and managed by local communities for conservation and recreation.**

¹ Beaumont et al. (2019). <https://www.climatechange.environment.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-06/Identifying%20climate%20refugia%20for%20key%20species%20in%20NSW.PDF>

Five Coastal Climate Corridors, twelve Dry Climate Corridors, and five Moist Climate Corridors identified in 2007 by NSW Government² are recommended for rehabilitation and protection from further bushland loss and degradation.



² The Department of Environment and Climate Change (2007) Fauna Corridors for Climate Change: Landscape Selection Process Key Altitudinal, Latitudinal and Coastal Corridors for response to Climate Change Hunter Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority (HCRCMA).