

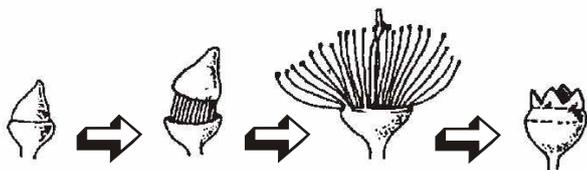
River Nature Notes



RIVER RED GUMS

Gum trees are as typically Australian as kangaroos and meat pies. Our most widespread gum is the River Red, which grows in all states except Tasmania.

The scientific name for the River Red Gum is *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*. It has white flowers between September and December.



Each bud has a little cap.

The cap comes off and the white stamens unfold.

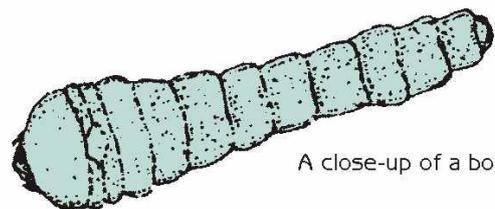
A woody gum nut develops. It contains many tiny seeds.



The word eucalyptus comes from two Greek words 'eu' and 'kalyptos' which means well covered. It refers to the bud's little cap. Scientists call this cap an *operculum*. Different species of eucalyptus often have uniquely shaped operculums, and this is one of the features scientists use to identify one species from another.

Gum trees get their name from the dark gum that oozes from wounds on the trunk. Trees are often damaged by storms, fires, floods or animals. They make the gum to seal the wounds before borers can get inside. It is one of their main ways of protecting themselves from insect attack.

Borers are the larvae of longicorn beetles and similar insects. When they get inside the bark, they chew through the wood and damage the tree.



A close-up of a borer.

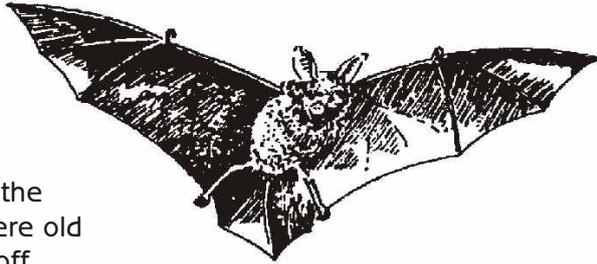


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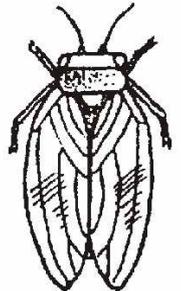
HOME AMONG THE GUM TREES

Large River Red Gums are home to many native animals, including small bats. They often hide during the day in hollow limbs where old branches have broken off.



In spring and early summer, white, sugary lerps appear on the leaves of River Red Gums. These are made by the tiny, orange nymphs of an insect called a psyllid. Its scientific name is *Glycaspis blakei*. The nymph sucks sugar from the leaf. It eats some of it and uses the rest to make a white shelter to hide under.

EGG



Decode the names of 6 more animals you may spot in a River Red Gum. (Change each letter to the one that comes before it in the alphabet).

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

P X M

D J D B E B

I P O F Z F B U F S

U F S N J U F

H F D L P

L J O H G J T I F S



Want to learn more about Gum Trees in the NT?

Check out the book *Field Guide to Eucalypts Volume 3* by Ian Brooker & David Kleinig.