

## **STRUCTURAL CLASSIFICATION OF PLANT COMMUNITIES**

This activity is to be carried out during the bus trips between Paluma and Townsville.

It is important that the name a biologist gives to a community gives some clear idea of that community to another biologist. For that reason, descriptive terms are used (see "A Structural Classification of Communities"). A common procedure for selection of a community name is first to identify the most prominent plant species present, and then to indicate the overall appearance of the community.

### **A Structural Classification of Communities**

	Very Dense (100-70%)	Dense 70-50%	Medium 50-30%	Sparse (30-10%)	Very Sparse (Less than 10%)
*Trees over 30M	tall closed forest	tall forest	tall open forest	tall woodland	-
Trees 10-30m	closed forest	forest	open forest	woodland	open Woodland
Trees 10m	low closed forest	low forest	low open forest	low woodland	low open woodland
Shrubs over 2m	close scrub	scrub	open scrub	tall shrubland	tall open shrubland
Shrubs 0.25-2m	closed heathland	heathland	open heathland	shrubland	open shrubland
Hummock grasses	-	-	-	<b>hummock grassland</b>	<b>open hummock grassland</b>
<b>Herbaceous layer</b>					
<b>mainly grasses</b>	<b>closed grassland</b>	<b>grassland</b>	<b>grassland</b>	<b>open grassland</b>	<b>very open grassland</b>
<b>mainly sedges</b>	<b>closed sedgeland</b>	<b>sedgeland</b>	<b>sedgeland</b>	<b>open sedgeland</b>	<b>very open sedgeland</b>
<b>mainly herbs</b>	<b>closed herbland</b>	<b>herbland</b>	<b>herbland</b>	<b>open herbland</b>	<b>very open herbland</b>
<b>mainly ferns</b>	<b>closed fernland</b>	<b>fernland</b>	<b>fernland</b>	-	-

\* A tree is a woody plant more than 5m tall, usually with a single stem: a shrub is a woody plant less than 8m tall, frequently with many stems arising at or near the base.

Use both the table *A Structural Classification of Plant Communities* and the drawing of the transect to help you complete the table below.

<b>Location details</b>	<b>Approximate height above sea level</b>	<b>Features of Plant Community</b>	<b>Classification</b>
Along the Bruce Highway to the base of the Paluma Range	< 50m asl		Coastal Woodland
Base of the range to Little Crystal Creek (7km from the bottom)	50 - 300m asl		
Little Crystal Creek	300m asl		Gallery Forest
2-3 kilometres above Little Crystal Creek	370m asl	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mountain Bloodwoods</li> <li>• Finer species of grasses eg Kangaroo Grass</li> </ul>	
"The Saddle", a sharp bend 10km from the bottom	500m asl	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sheoaks/ casuarinas</li> <li>• Turpentine trees</li> </ul>	
Mountain Creek to the top of the range (12km from the bottom to the crest at 16km from the bottom)	600 - 975m asl	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dense high Canopy</li> <li>• Strangler figs</li> <li>• Treeferns</li> <li>• Native ginger</li> <li>• Climbers &amp; epiphytes</li> </ul>	