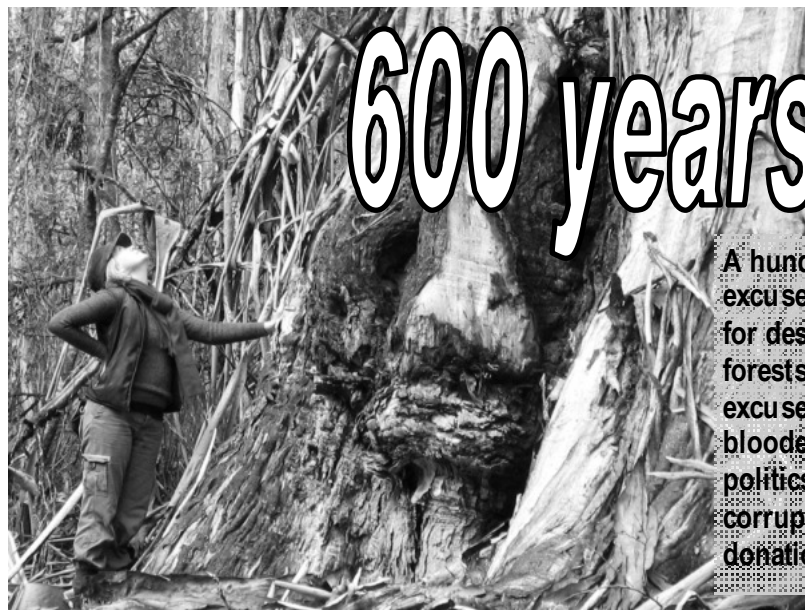


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600 years old!

A hundred years ago the excuse was ignorance for destroying ancient forests. Now the only excuse is pure, cold-blooded, merciless politics, union corruption and political donations to the ALP.

In March this year, it was confirmed that an old growth tree that was cut down on Brown Mountain was older than Christopher Columbus and was young when Joan of Arc rode around France. The radiocarbon dating results from the New Zealand laboratory showed there was a 68% chance that the piece of wood EEG took from the stump was growing between 1435 and 1490 AD (and that wasn't from the centre of the stump). The tree was 550-600 years old!

This significant find turns current theories on tree ages on their heads. Until now, foresters guessed large trees were 200-250 years old. The tree sampled had about a 10 metres girth at 1.4m above ground level. The larger trees, now stumps, could have been growing when Marco Polo sailed the oceans. Measuring in at 12 or more metres means that these giants could have survived 800-1000 years of fires, storms and drought, only to be taken out by a chainsaw-wielding homo-sapien in 2009 in just under an hour.

And would you believe that this ancient great grandmother began to resprout just weeks after having been savagely

decapitated. The optimistic new shoots were killed off totally in April when a hot management burn incinerated the remaining life out of the once magnificent stand of ancient forest.

Such mammoth trees have taken centuries to grow and store their carbon. No bureaucrat had better utter that word 'sust....ble' within my hearing!

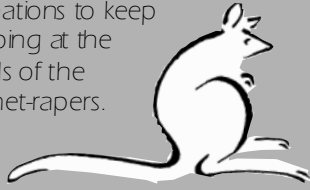
When this astonishing discovery was brought to the attention of our state government and the question asked if they will be reassessing their prescriptions for large tree protection, the answer - in writing - was no. They still intend to keep knocking over ancient trees to maintain that 'balance' between the environment and jobs!

Mr Brumby promised to protect the 'last significant stands of old growth forest' in 2006. Since then, hundreds of hectares have been annihilated. If this new discovery doesn't make our forests 'significant' and worth protecting, what more evidence does Mr Brumby need?

The Potoroo Review

This is the newsletter of Environment East Gippsland, Australia's longest running forest campaign group. We bring you the facts about forests and the environment that rarely make it to the mainstream media.

We never worry about biting the bureaucracy's hand as it never feeds us. That means we rely totally on membership and donations to keep nipping at the heels of the planet-rapers.



Membership - \$20 or \$15 conc. (includes newsletter).

EEG - Private Bag 3, ORBOST
Vic 3888 . ph/fax 5154 0145
eeg@eastgippsland.net.au
www.eastgippsland.net.au

Coordinator - Jill Redwood

Tax deductible donations can be sent to us at the above address made out to EEG. Receipts will be issued promptly.

The Potoroo is an endangered 'mini kangaroo' which survives in East Gippsland's forests. It eats fungus, so digs a lot of dirt, and like us, is often threatened by loggers.

Articles which appear in the *Potoroo* are the opinions of the authors' and not necessarily those of EEG.

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Candid Cameras save forests

Environment East Gippsland has tried many ways to protect forests over the years and the most successful method has been where we have found threatened species that have legislated protection. The Long-footed Potoroo has protected some significant sites in East Gippsland; it was able to magically protect about 450 ha where found (under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act). This has now been revised down to 50 ha thanks to intense bullying from the logging lobbyists, but the rare little hopper can still save a serious stand of forest.

With the purchase of new-fangled movement sensing cameras, EEG, GECO and the surveyors have had great success. The old hair-tubing technique was a real needle in a haystack affair but this is a winner. It's thanks to our supporters we have been able to buy such equipment and help cover the surveyors' costs. Read about the latest site where a Potoroo was captured on film - page 16.

Jill's Jottings



Hope that everyone is able to understand the demands of the last six months. The Potoroo usually take precedence over all else but this newsletter has been on the list for all that time. Each month, it's had to be put back as more pressing demands were dealt with. It could become a regular pattern, especially as legal actions get going. We hope you stick with us. If you'd like to be kept up to date with news in between Potoroos, please send us your email address and we can put you on our e list for updates and urgent requests for help.

Thanks again for our members' great support over the last 6 months.

Jill

FORESTS FOREVER - hopefully not forever

Over 100 forest enthusiasts of all ages were keen to experience and learn about what one person said was "the natural history of forests and the unnatural history of the politics surrounding forests.

If anyone is interested in helping with the organisation of next year's camp, please let me know.

Jill - phone 5154 0145

Over Easter, a great bunch of people took part in rainforest wanders; measuring, marking and photographing ancient trees at Brown Mountain; stream dabbling; spotlighting; fascinating presentations; forest walks; learning about the ancient history of an alpine wetland; Mt Jersey's ecology quiz; talks; hearty soup and good company.

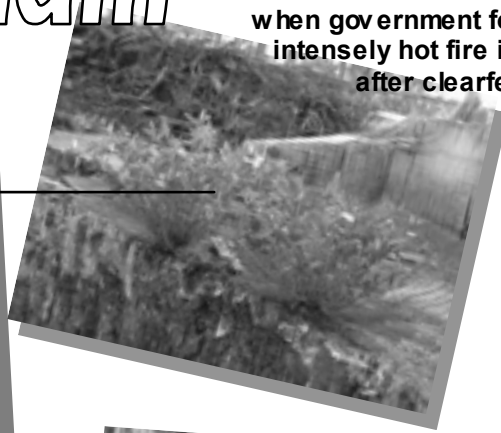
Thanks again to the organisers, John and Robyn, and the wider 'family' of supporters and friends. We hope that when the forests are saved, we can stop holding these camps.



The bower bird's bower, littered with bright blue track-marking tape in Brown Mountain.

Brown Mountain

The 600 yo Shining Gum was attempting to regrow again, but its valiant efforts were ended when government foresters lit an intensely hot fire in the coupe after clearfelling.



This Shining Gum (*E. denticulata*) could have started growing as early as 1380. It was cut down by order of the Victorian Labor government in January 2009. Premier John Brumby has since refused to protect these ancient forests.



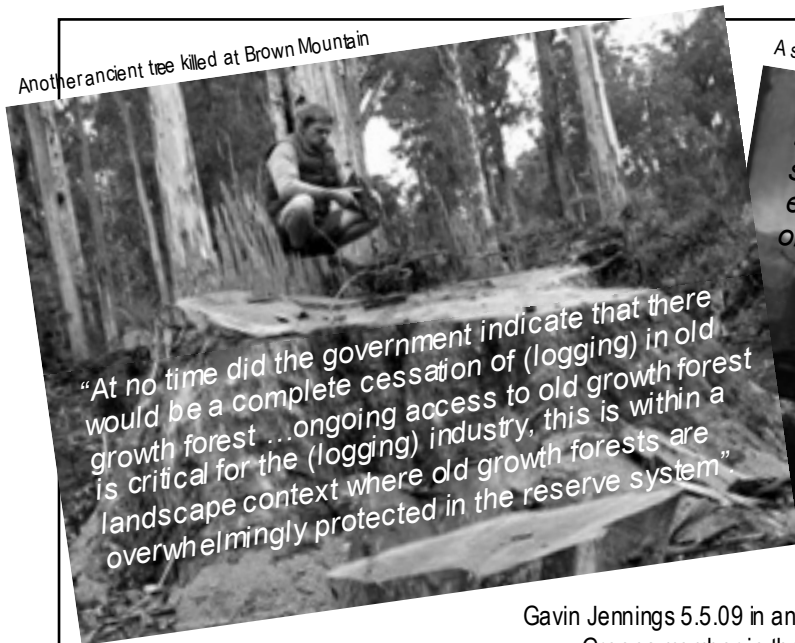
This was the small piece of wood that was sent to New Zealand for radiocarbon testing in February.



One of the lucky giants still standing - but its fate rests with John Brumby (at the time of writing).

CAN WE QUOTE YOU?

Another ancient tree killed at Brown Mountain

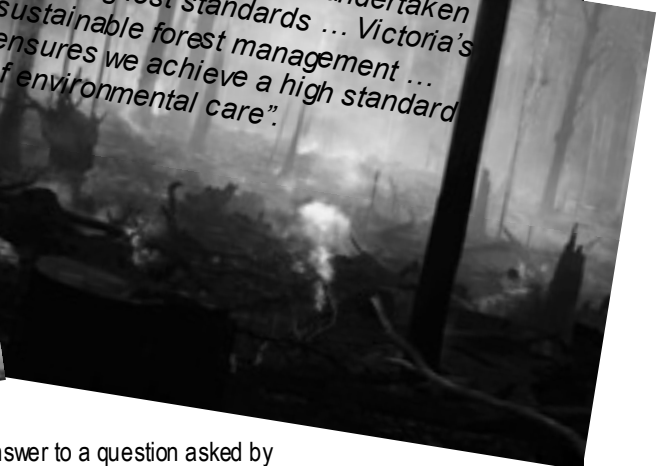


"At no time did the government indicate that there would be a complete cessation of (logging) in old growth forest ... ongoing access to old growth forest is critical for the (logging) industry, this is within a landscape context where old growth forests are overwhelmingly protected in the reserve system"

Gavin Jennings 5.5.09 in answer to a question asked by Greens member in the Victorian parliament.

A scene of devastation - Brown Mountain old growth forest, after the 'management burn'.

"Timber harvesting ... is undertaken to the highest standards ... Victoria's sustainable forest management ... ensures we achieve a high standard of environmental care".





Endangered wildlife

under new management

Thanks to some dedicated work by EEG and a small team of volunteer wildlife surveyors over summer, plans to quickly annihilate the rest of Brown Mountain's old growth forests were averted.

The Forest Management Plan for East Gippsland states that, where over 10 Greater Gliders are found in a set area, 100 hectares of that forest must receive protection. **MUST.** This is mandatory under law. At no surprise to anyone, this rich population of arboreal mammals was easily identified. The stand also turned up a Long-footed Potoroo and endangered owls. Then the beautiful rainforest-lined Brown Mountain Creek was shown to have the endangered Orbost Spiny Crayfish living in it - both the Potoroo and Cray have legal protection under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act.

VicForests plays Rambo

Such an ancient forest with large hollows is bound to have high populations of sensitive tree-dwelling mammals. The government would just prefer they remain undiscovered so logging can continue. No pre-logging surveys are ever carried out which means volunteers must do this work if these species are to have any hope. In case of Brown Mountain, the Department of Sustainability and Environment's (DSE) wildlife manager from Orbost took the right action and halted logging plans while DSE biologists carried out their own surveys to confirm our findings.

VicForests 'cracked a wobbly' which turned a simple process into a very hot potato. The moratorium still holds at the time of writing - just - and the union and VicForests

are still in the Premier's office playing political Rambo. Premier Brumby shows no backbone when it comes to the logging heavies within his cabinet and the inner ALP circle. Strangely, VicForests is lying, breaking the law, wasting government money, and throwing its weight around. And strangely John Brumby appears happy to submit.

“Instead of sending in biologists, DSE and VicForests sent in bulldozers!”

VicForests logs illegally

Despite the precedent of Brown Mountain, when the survey team moved on to equally valuable ancient forests planned for logging

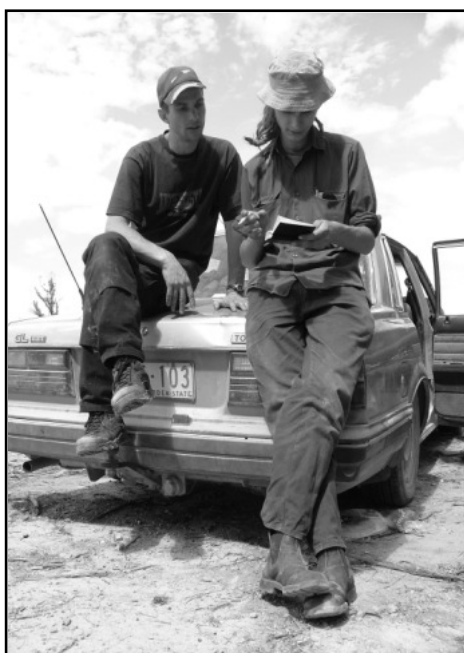
in the Stony Creek, Delegate headwaters and Bungywarra forests, their findings were ignored. Equally rich populations of Greater Gliders, Yellow-bellied Gliders and large forest owls were also identified in numbers that trigger protection. Instead of sending in biologists, DSE and VicForests sent in bulldozers!

The survey team consisted of two trained ecologists and others experienced in environmental management. Reports were drawn up professionally and presented to the DSE. By this time, the Brown Mountain moratorium had caused such outrage from the logging mafia that Brumby's office took control. Instead of following due process, Environment Minister Gavin Jennings handed the survey reports to VicForests and asked they 'take appropriate action'. They thanked DSE for the alert and duly sent the bulldozers in to start smashing down these very same forests. The wildlife is now dead, injured or without food, shelter and territory. DSE's response? A short manifesto of how terrific they are - liberally sprinkled with their favourite catch-words of 'balance', 'sustainable', 'in accordance with comprehensive regulatory...', 'high compliance standard', and that (after already having two months' notice), they will 'seek further information to determine if any further action is warranted'. Then an invitation to drive the 1,000km round trip from East Gipps to have a little face to face chat.

Legal avenues explored

EEG is now seeking legal advice on what can be done to force the government to adhere to its own laws. This could be costly but hey - we're supposed to live in a democracy; citizens must abide by the laws, why not those who wrote them?

Jill



Wildlife surveyors, 'Bang-Bang' and Andrew, documenting the results of their surveys.

Plantation tax schemes crash

In May, Australia's biggest forestry investment scheme went under, owing at least \$4 billion to investors and having avoided about \$8 billion in taxes. Great Southern has plantations, cattle properties and vineyards across Australia, including in Gippsland. The most controversial one is on the Tiwi Islands where vast areas of rainforest were knocked down (by East Gippsland contractors after taking an exit package), to be replaced with Acacia plantations.

The month before, another, Managed Investment Scheme (MIS), Timbercorp, bit the dust owing about \$1 billion.

Might this be partly to blame on the Australian government for doing nothing to stop the illegal undercutting of private plantation companies by state forest agencies? For instance, in Victoria, the DSE and VicForests have been selling pulpwood in direct competition with plantations, which is illegal under Australia's competition policy. Quality native forest pulp logs sell for \$2.50 a tonne royalty whereas privately grown quality pulp logs have to sell for over \$30 to make a profit. Let's hope the receivers are wise to this when they try to sell off the assets of these companies.

About 1.75 million hectares of Great Southern's agricultural and forestry land will soon be flooding the market. South Gippsland's Hancocks (currently logging the native forest in the 'cores and links' promised for protection by the Labor government) or Asian buyers are the most likely to snatch up the land and trees at bargain prices.

Great Southern and Timbercorp both used legal loopholes to give agricultural tax breaks to ordinary

The Federal ALP took to the election a changed policy that was against these tax-avoidance schemes. After Great Southern donated \$40,000 to the ALP in the year leading up to the election, their first political donation since 2005, the Rudd Government decided they weren't such a problem after all.

investors. Their shares plummeted from \$5 in March 2005 to 12c in May '09.

Another interesting one to watch is Futuris, owner of ITC (plantation company) and the big Neville Smith mill at Heyfield. Elders, who is in real strife as well, now owns Futuris.

And did you know Gunns not only butchers public forests but also owns plantations? They claim they're doing well, but we know what their say-so is worth.

ANZ is also in this up to their armpits. Great Southern has left them with huge debts. The ANZ loans were poorly secured and they're rightly shitting themselves. The 43,000 shareholders could actually have investments in a serious liability now - owning or leasing land that could cost thousands per ha to clear of trees to be able to sell on.

What a glorious greed-driven mess.

Jill / *The Australian*, 18.5.09 /
The Age 20.5.09

Gender bender in the Latrobe River

Simazine pollution detected in the Latrobe River near Rosedale is the highest level recorded on mainland Australia. It comes from agricultural runoff and can chemically castrate amphibians at levels as low as 0.1 parts per billion. Mammals like us are also sensitive to this family of chemicals.

The Department of Primary Industries carried out testing in 2007 and it was only through a Freedom of Information request by Friends of the Earth that this information came to light in May. Irrigated pastures on the Macalister River and plantations could also be leaching Simazine into waterways that supply major towns, like Maffra and Stratford. It's likely to be happening year round.

Besides town drinking supplies, the runoff also ends up in the Ramsar listed Gippsland Lakes, adding to its ill health.

This finding points to the scary possibility that most rivers that run through agricultural and plantation land would have similar chemical loads.

Jill / Friends of the Earth



Is money drying up for the Wonthaggi desal' plant?

Has the Global Financial Crisis thrown a spanner in the works of this silly idea? No money, no plant. Both State and Federal coffers are running low and the prospective French companies are also feeling the pinch.

Jill / *Age* 9.3.09

HAPHAZARD REDUCTION BURNING

Many friends of the environment were lost to us over the February fires this year. Many others lost their friends, family members and their homes. It was a shocking time. Besides having to deal with these losses, the environment movement was accused of being responsible. Let's analyse this ...



The shameless politicisation of such an immense tragedy, happily whipped along by the media, shows that the land abusers and the news industry have unlimited lack of decency. The accusations cantered around the supposed lack of prescribed burning and the absurd claim that green groups have been stopping burns. Once more, let's take another look at this issue. In southeastern Australia, these mega-fires are the manifestation of two things - man-made land abuse that dries our ecosystems and man-made planet abuse that changes our climate. Every time a bushfire hits us, this fact is overlooked. Instead, the lynch mob rides around wildly gathering momentum and media mugs, looking for someone else to blame. So, as James Woodford asked, why don't we see this type of blame game after floods or cyclones? Maybe there are no empires to be built, no competition between agencies for hero-status and more funding, no lobby groups who can push this barrow for more access to forests, more clearing, more development in bushy areas and more demonizing of environmentalists.

But there is no logic or decent science behind any of their arguments. There is only a decrepit 'expert' or two who gains a disproportionate amount of media space to tell us their outdated opinions from the 60s.

Blame the Greenies

Greens cop the blame relentlessly and the media is happy to provide the arena to perform this blood sport that the red-neck brotherhood has made popular. 'Greenies' are used as bait to satisfy this primordial indination for revenge. Forget fair debate or evidence. Has the environment movement ever run a campaign

against fuel reduction burning to protect property? Well no - but why bother with this fact if the lies build up the fantasy, if they bolster the opinions of the traditional 'men of the land' and justify their established habits? And besides, there's primal scrotal excitement to be had when burning anything that will take a match.

And with the logging industry on the decline, the mega million-dollar fire lighting arm of government is set to soar. What government would deny its land managers' an open wallet to burn and bulldoze all in the name of 'public safety'?

Wildlife watch-out

In April, Premier John Brumby pre-empted the Royal Commission's findings by allocating millions of dollars to continue burning forests that survived the last three mega-fires. Maybe he isn't aware that his own Scientific Advisory Committee has shown that frequent fires have the potential to further threaten the endangered Spot-tailed and Eastern Quolls, Long-nosed and Long-footed Potoroos, Squirrel Glider, Southern Brown Bandicoot, Ground Parrot, Glossy Back Cockatoo, Ringtailed Possum, Sugar and Feathertailed Gliders, and many other species.

That the very recent haphazard reduction burns carried out around Marysville made not one iota of difference to the town is not mentioned. The fact that cleared, drought stricken, open grassland burnt fast and furious was ignored. And the speed at which the fire raced through regrowth forest and plantations was best overlooked in the arguments for more incineration of forests.

Burn big and burn often

Prescribed burns might help on an average day - MIGHT. But they have no effect on restraining a flaming tornado influenced by temperatures in the mid 40s and powered by 180km per hour winds. Just look at the language; hazard reduction burns and fuel reduction burns. Yet no one has proven that a forest's understorey is either fuel or a hazard.



In normal conditions, normal methods of fire suppression and attack should be ample. Some careful burning immediately around towns could help protect assets. But in blow-up conditions, just head for the bunker. Areas burnt as ferociously that were 'control burnt' as areas that weren't burnt. So why do authorities try to placate the public by telling them that burning will make them safer? It might show the government is doing something but it could be more dangerous than educating people to be self-reliant in the face a bushfire.

In 2007-08, Victoria torched a total of 156,000 hectares of its public lands. Much of this was again burnt in the February '09 fires. The blitz-burn lobby wants to at least treble this area. But where's the evidence that it will achieve anything besides more modification and drying out of the landscape?

In some areas, grape growers have lost their entire annual crop due to smoke taint, tourists have gone elsewhere or stayed home, and the public in general is fed up with breathing smoke (complete with natural toxins) for weeks on end, especially the elderly and those with respiratory complaints.

Although this will never be made public, health authorities know that asthma deaths increase during smouldering prescribed burns in the calmest Autumn weather, when there's no wind. Is it possible that DSE's 'cool' burns kill more people than bushfires do? Now those figures would be interesting to obtain.

Aboriginal burning

In a detailed study on the fire history of the Alps over the last 600 years, fire scientist Phil Zylstra shows that post European fire frequency increased 8-10 times than when Aboriginal people used the country. It's folklore that there was serious fire-stick management by Aborigines. When do records show most major bushfires occurring? When the place was regularly burnt! The claim that increased burning stops bushfires just goes up in smoke with this information.

We've altered forests and the climate to create the perfect mix for mega fires. We're now paying for

centuries of altering the environment. Rather than using a simplistic box of matches solution, we need to look at house and block layout, larger community planning, bunkers and burning close in to human assets - where needed.

Uneducated politicians, 'men of the land', and the finger-pointing, self-interested lobby groups don't yet have the answers. Nature is complex and delicate - even in the face of fires and environmental recovery. We don't have the science right. But we do know that fires will be a threat to us for decades to come. We should organize ourselves to be personally responsible in the face of fires, to live with what is just part of the nature of our corner of Australia. We also need to recognize that more intense fires will be thanks to our tampering.

Jill / James Woodford

<http://realdirt.com.au/2009/02/18/hazard-reduction-the-blame-game/#more-181>



Logging makes forests flammable

Here it is from Forestry Tasmania itself! From their Technical Bulletin on Thinning and Flammability. The document is called 'Thinning regrowth eucalypts' and supports our claim that logging dries out and makes forests more flammable.

Fire Risk

One of the major planning constraints associated with thinning

is the *higher level of fuel present after the operations*. It is not considered feasible in Tasmania to carry out fuel reduction burns in thinned coupes because of the *high fuel loads and the sensitivity of the retained trees to fire*. The location of thinned coupes amongst conventionally logged coupes is *problematic*, as it is *not recommended that any regeneration burn take place within two kilometres of areas with high levels of flash fuel within two years of harvest* (Cheney 1988).

Tree crowns (heads), bark, and other harvest residue make up the fuel load. The climate on the floor of the forest is altered by thinning, with higher wind speeds and temperature, lower humidity, and lower moisture content in the fuel itself. Understorey vegetation characteristics change because of these *changes to the microclimate, especially increased light. Bracken ferns and cutting grass may grow vigorously, each having a far higher flammability than the replaced woody species* (Cheney and Gould 1991).

Fire retardants and the dying Lakes

Who ever stops to consider what might be in those bright pink fire retardants the DSE dumps by the thousands of tonnes all over our forests, water catchments, houses, bridges and streams almost every summer? In the desperate situation of a bushfire, who wants to know? Certainly not the government.

The plight of the Gippsland Lakes after the '03 and '06 fires could well be related to the weeks of retardant dumping in the catchments. After the '09 fires, Melbourne's water catchments will be similarly polluted with the unknown hot-pink cocktail. But any impacts will be blamed on the ash and of course 'greenies'.

Toxic algae connection

Fire retardants vary slightly in their composition but they all contain fish-killing ammonia compounds. In the US, ammonia compounds make up to 90% of the product, with thickeners, dyes, corrosion inhibitors and attapulgite clay added. This clay



compound could well harbour the new type of year-round marine algae, *Noctiluca scintillans*, which is blooming across the Gippsland Lakes.

This species feeds on detritus, phytoplankton, protozoans and fish eggs. Although this species does not produce a toxin, it has been found to accumulate toxic levels of ammonia which is then excreted into

the surrounding waters, possibly acting as the killing agent in blooms. This ammonia stench has made residents feel sick during the height of the blooms.

In the US, federal and state agencies drop between 15 - 40 million gallons of retardant annually and environmentalists and the Firefighters United for Safety, Ethics and Ecology are questioning the over-use of the retardant. A US federal lawsuit is demanding that the fire agency conduct a study of the impact of fire retardant under the Endangered Species Act. In 2002, 20,000 fish were killed after one dump. Endangered salmon are often killed.

Could the ongoing deaths of molluscs and aquatic life in the Gippsland Lakes be connected to the same problem?

Jill/New York Times, 16/11/09

Feedback

On parasites...

Maybe it's time to list "Logging parasitism" as a threatening process under FFGA and EPBC Act.

We know the parasites, the hosts are elected politicians (you and I are in no risk of direct infection what so ever), previous claims of protecting forests does not provide immunity alas. The effects on non infected population are indirect but drastic; affected people are delusional. Maybe medical funding to search for a cure is required. They often say that it is hard to get rid of parasites without badly affecting the hosts but this is a case where getting rid of both may be warranted!

Cheers
Pascale

On 'Jobs' ...

Re claims that the forest protestors are destroying jobs. What if the jobs are in a project that is worse than useless? Indeed, tragically stupid.

If we had to create it - supposing we could - what would we pay for a massive carbon sequestrator, flood mitigator, soil conservator, water filtrator, rainfall generator, biodiversity hotspot and tourist attraction occupying land too steep for farming or settlement?

And if we were promoting Australia to the world, what could be more amazing than trees the height of office blocks with bases big enough to fill small living-rooms?

And why wouldn't we go to plantations for a source of better timber and woodchips that can be

harvested without public subsidy?

The slogan "Jobs! Jobs! Jobs!" is dangerous. There are good jobs that benefit us and preserve the life-support systems of the only planet we've got, and there are bad jobs that do the opposite.

And deliberately destroying the best old growth forests in East Gippsland is a very bad job.

Colin Smith

On the Potoroo

Keep up the great work Jill, Potoroo Review is the most informative, interesting and critical environmental publication around!

Jess Abrahams

VicForests rules the Labor camp OK

Even John Desal Dredger Pipeline Brumby should be feeling a wee bit uncomfortable about VicForests being spawned by the ALP. Here's just a wee sample of some of their recent deeds that we've stumbled upon.

VicForests blockades tourist road for three months

For three months over summer, Brown Mountain was blocked to tourists and visitors, who were under threat of arrest for entering the Park. VicForests took their job of enforcing Public Safety Zones too far while they logged the old growth along Errinundra Road. This is the main entrance road into the National Park.

Despite calls to the Orbost office, nothing was done. It was only when EEG finally sent a photograph of the sign to the head of Parks Victoria in Orbost that anyone believed this was happening. It was quickly altered with an additional proviso nailed up. Both signs were extremely off-putting and intimidating to visitors.

The so-called Public Safety Zones were rushed through as a new law to deal with protesters in 2004. Under this law, anyone who enters these zones can be charged and fined. The zones are mapped much larger than the logging areas, and can include main roads, town

edges and houses. VicForests is recklessly riding roughshod over state laws and



The unfriendly sign nailed to a tree on the main entrance road to the Errinundra National Park. The tiny sign was added once complaints made.

overriding other departments. This is just one example of many.

Gumtree or plum tree?

Another issue that was in need of explanation was the incorrect identification of trees at the Stony

Creek old growth logging area. The coupe plan stated it was 100% Mountain Grey Gum. In fact, there was a mix of species including Messmate, the rare (for East Gippsland) Mountain Ash, Shining Gum, Grey Gum and Manna Gum. Any forester should know that Mountain Grey Gums don't grow in pure stands. The reason from government? It was just a rough estimate for *internal* use to help VicForests do *internal* planning. No wonder they get it all so wrong. The plan also stated that necessary soil tests weren't carried out. But upon questioning, VicForests claimed they did but just didn't enter it because it was a new method. Work that one out! The EEG letter was sent on 8th February and a reply was finally received on 29th May.

What gully logging ?

The hillside of a gully at Priestleys Track that was logged should have been protected with a buffer strip, as it was a drainage line. However, the bulldozers went straight through it from top to bottom. Despite photos sent as evidence, the regional VicForests Manager, Barry Vaughan, said there was no issue to investigate. That has also gone to the various Ministers in charge of this government-owned rogue logging company.

Jill

What's changed?

In 1874, the Minister for Lands and Agriculture presented a report to Parliament on "Forest Conservancy". It stated that *"no more effective method of legalising the destruction of timber could be devised."*

In 1895, the government invited Inspector General Ribbentrop of the Indian Forest Service to inspect and report on Victoria's Forestry. His report said *"State Forest Conservancy and management are in an extraordinarily backwards state. Forest laws are inadequate, waste and destruction by fire is rampant, revenue from the forests is ridiculously small and the money spent on the forest is inadequate."*

Want to have your say on forests?

Contact your local politician as well as Environment Minister Gavin Jennings.

Gavin.Jennings@parliament.vic.gov.au

Phone 9096 8830

Premier John Brumby

John.Brumby@parliament.vic.gov.au

Phone 9651 5111 or 5000, or his electoral

office is 9300 3851

or write to them at Parliament House Spring St, Melbourne, 3002.

Shorts



Shipments of paper dip 20%; worst since '88

Shipments of paper and paperboard in February '09 fell 20.5% from the previous year to 1.938 million tons, marking the steepest fall under the current data system introduced in 1988. Demand hit rock bottom in January-February but the industry

was hoping that orders would increase in April when the new financial year began in Japan.
Daily Timber News 4.3.09

Wood fibre prices tumble globally

Woodchip consumption by struggling pulp and paper industries decreased worldwide in the last quarter of 2008. This was the largest drop in over 20 years, according to the Wood Resource Quarterly. Prices for sawlogs, pulpwood and wood chips also dedined. It can be expected that wood fibre costs will continue to slide in 2009.
Daily Timber News 4.3.09

Eden chipmill biomass plant on the cards

The Eden Chip Mill is planning to develop a \$20 million, five megawatt native forest biomass power station. The Australian government classifies all biofuels as carbon neutral, even though energy generated from wood pulp releases more than 6.4 times the amount of CO₂ from burning coal for the same amount of energy. The Eden chipmill is also making huge stockpiles of native forest logs as it can't sell its normal booty to the Japanese buyers.

*Chipstop/NSW State Govt
Hansard December '08*

SA bans placcy bags

South Australia has banned plastic shopping bags and authorities are urging other states to follow their lead. Three cheers to the SA government!
EcoMedia - May 2009

World's largest solar power project

Kevin Rudd has announced that dose to \$1.4 billion will be spent creating the world's largest solar project. Four separate solar plants are envisioned for the project, which will go out to tender later this year.

18.5.09 Eco Media

World's largest coal industry gift?

Under the 'Continue Polluting Regardless Scheme', the Rudd Government will be giving over \$16 billion as carbon credits to our largest polluters in the first five years of the scheme's operation.

ABC radio

Snowy River still dying of thirst

The NSW government has deliberately restricted flows to the Snowy River to about half of the amount set out in their legally binding agreement. They are diverting the water instead to the Murray, for power and crop irrigation. Above the dam wall, water has been restricted to 1%-4% of its natural flows for decades. The promised amount to be returned in 2009 was to have been 15%. NSW Water Minister Phil Costa blames the drought.

Eco-media 8/2/09

Double drought for Victoria and Melbourne

As if it wasn't already desperate, some Vic Bureau of Meteorology forecasts show there could be a severe El Nino-caused drought in catchment areas that are already struggling because of drought, fire and logging. The impact could be felt within months and may force Melbourne to adopt tighter water restrictions.

18.5.09 Eco Media

More money for new uses of trees

The Rudd Government is offering \$20 million to the logging industry. There will be \$9 million available in its first round of grants under the new Forest Industries Development Fund. This is planned to 'stimulate competitiveness globally (and), prepare the industry for dimate change'.
ALP media release 12.1.09



Sea Shepherd raided

In mid February, Australian Federal Police raided Sea Shepherd's anti-whaling ship, the Steve Irwin, as it was docked in Hobart. This was at the request of Japanese authorities. What about the law enforcement of illegal whaling? Or the whalers' use of high-powered water cannons and "military grade" sonic weapons against Sea Shepherd crew?

Herald Sun 22/3/09

Tassie Devil in peril

Previously listed as vulnerable, the Tasmanian Devil is now officially considered as endangered. How this translates into protection is unknown. The facial tumour disease is the primary cause of an estimated 70% drop in population in just 13 years.

22.5.09 Eco Media



Brown Mountain *20 years on*

Here's a quick summary of the Brown Mountain saga so far:

- This controversial area of National Estate forest has been in the limelight since 1989. Small but viable stands of ancient forest remain after years of butchery.
- A 20 ha stand of old growth was clearfelled on Brown Mountain over summer 08-09. VicForests lied to the Minister's office about the need to log it. VicForests also mockingly called the coupe "the Walk" knowing it was the mapped and planned old growth walk Steve Bracks had previously agreed to fund.
- The logging was targeted for protest action and people were arrested and charged and media reported the conflict.
- Ministers' staffers visited
- The adjoining stands of ancient forest were surveyed, species were found that should be protected; a moratorium was placed on logging the adjoining forest and it was later surveyed by DSE biologists.
- The DSE survey results are currently with the Minister waiting for a decision (we have put in an FOI for the report).
- EEG took samples from a large stump and sent it off for radiocarbon dating; one tree was found to be about 600 years old.
- The clearfelled site and the resprouting 600 year old stump were killed in a department incineration burn in April.
- We're still waiting for Mr Brumby to announce that the remaining areas will be protected due to high densities of sensitive tree dwelling marsupials.

Many people wrote to the Government objecting to this logging. The response was an insult. It basically said:

1) We identified all the old growth areas needing protecting back in 2006 and Brown Mt wasn't one of them. These other areas have a moratorium on them now.
*** what they didn't say is that over the last 2 years while they protected thousands of hectares of degraded regrowth, they destroyed key old growth forests. They ignored urgings to protect Brown Mt. The ALP also promised to protect the old growth walk in the same 2006 election promise - the area they logged and provocatively called "The Walk" by VicForests.*

2) There's more parks than logging areas, we only log 8% of public land and it's all done under law and to the highest standards which are checked by EPA audits
*** Reserves are often areas not wanted by logging industry (Alpine snow gums, coastal scrub, Mallee etc) so the very best is still being destroyed. The amount of loggable forest on Victoria's public land is small anyway and, as most of it has already been converted to pulp farms under the guise of regrowth, what is being logged now is the absolute best of what remains - less than 8% of our original forests. It was also legal to hunt whales once upon a time. Destroying things by law does not make it right. The destruction of old growth and killing threatened wildlife is not audited by the EPA. Though its audits consistently show serious breaches of logging Codes.*

3) We are currently reviewing the lines on the map for old growth areas and when we've finished it'll be all hunky dory and will only be destroying a little bit.

*** Meanwhile much old growth that should have been protected has been wiped out. Offsetting those losses with 100% protection of what remains would be decent. Their crooked definition of old growth allows them to claim they don't log it when they do.*

4) The most outrageous comment in their form letter is their last paragraph. It says that clearfelling and burning is actually good for climate change! And that they replace all the species again and in time it's all beaut.

*** The most recent Australian and overseas scientific research states the opposite (see page 13, and the last Potoroo for details). We don't have 500 years to soak up the lost carbon from logging forest and burning it to the ground. Despite it being law, forests are never restored to their original composition - they are converted to single species tree farms managed intensively for short rotation wood pulp. Evidence is right across Eastern Victoria's forests to prove it. Values lost include water, species composition, biomass and carbon storage capacity.*

If you receive these insulting letters, please let them know you are not placated (which they hope you have been). Express your outrage at being treated like fools and fed manure by Brumby (via bureaucrats). Just a one paragraph spit will let them know they haven't fooled you.

Jill

Green ideals grabbing the voters

The WA by-election for the seat of Fremantle saw the Greens candidate, Adele Carle, win 44% of the primary vote. This was the highest ever recorded by a Greens candidate at a State or Federal election. It shows the rising dissatisfaction with the ALP and Liberals. There are now seven Greens State and Federal MPs in

WA. Across Australia, there are 26 Greens MPs in parliaments, and more than 100 local Greens councillors. This is the highest representation in the Party's history - and growing every election. There are Greens MPs in the lower houses of Tasmania, ACT and WA.

Greens media release 17.5.09

**VOTE 1
the planet**



Obituaries

Cora and Jack Curtis -

Jack died in 2004 aged 95 and Cora, at a sprightly 99 years and 8 months, passed away in early December 2008.

Cora and Jack Curtis have been two of our longest and most faithful supporters. Both were sharply intellectual right to the end, often running rings around much younger minds. They lived a full and healthy life and were great supporters of the environment and EEG.



They were deep green conservationists and humanitarians who fought for their local environment. They successfully had an area of Redgum forest on the banks of the Murray protected from development.

Their ashes have been scattered among the Redgums at Corowa.

Written 15 years ago ...

Dear Jill

My wife and I often speak of you and the Potoroo Review and marvel at your continued dedication and enthusiasm. There are thousands like you in Australia, but to us you seem to be a little bit special. Keep it rolling.

Jack Curtis

Jenny Barnett

Our dear friend and colleague, Jenny Barnett, along with her husband John, died in the Black Saturday fires. She was a dedicated conservationist, zoologist and an expert in planning regulations. Jenny was one of the few people who had the stomach to pour through and dissect government documents to make extremely detailed comments. She would find the flaws and argue for improvements. Her assessments were always absolutely rock solid.

She achieved much in the 25 years that she worked with the Victorian National Parks Association. Her latest project was a major study into the impacts of fire on ecology.

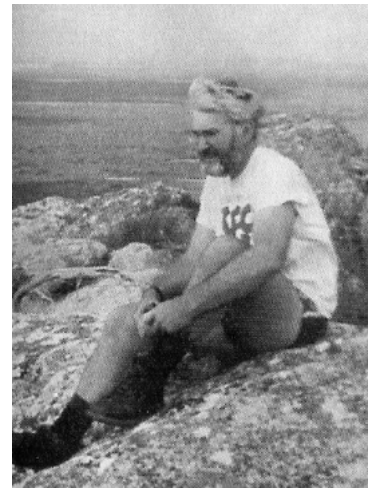
The VNPA has established a Jenny Barnett Tribute Conservation Campaign to try and fill the enormous gap that she has left. It will ensure her intelligent planning for nature conservation continues. If you'd like to donate, please contact the VNPA on 03 9347 5188 or vnpa@vnpa.org.au



Jenny Barnett

Conservation Tribute Campaign

25/08/1947 – 07/02/2009



Bob Thompson

Many Gippslanders knew Bob Thompson of Cape Woolamai as a passionate advocate for the environment. Early last August, Bob died suddenly, aged 64.

He was a tireless worker for climate change action, protecting the Bunyip State Park and many other causes. He had the ear of politicians at all levels. His most recent goal as the convenor of his Bass Coast Climate Action Group was to organise a high-level climate change debate in Gippsland based on the Climate Code Red movement. He already had Greg Hunt, Federal Liberal and shadow environment minister, on board. He was also chasing Christine Milne and Penny Wong. Bob was never afraid to stick his neck out!

Another project he was working on was attempting to get Australian Paper to set up an office paper recycling facility at Maryvale.

Many Gippslanders and travellers would have seen Bob's marvellous banners all over Gippsland prior to the last three elections. They had a major impact on the environmental vote. I won't forget the day Bob Brown came to the beach at Kilcunda for a desalination plant protest and there was one of Bob's banners up on the bridge for all to see.

Bob was ingenious, an enthusiast, a doer, a passionate conservationist and a very active Greens member and worker. He will be greatly missed. Vale Bob!

Jackie Dargaville.



Carbon in old growth forests



The Green Carbon Report put out by the Australian National University shows that industrially managed forests only return to 60% of their original (undisturbed) carbon capacity if left to grow on.

The carbon stock of forests subject to commercial logging, and of monoculture plantations in particular, will always be significantly less on average (~40 to 60% depending on the intensity of land use and forest type) than the carbon stock of natural, undisturbed forests. The rate of carbon fixation by young regenerating stands is high, but this does not compensate for the smaller carbon pools in the younger-aged stands of industrialized forests compared with those of natural forests.

In reply to many people's letters on Brown Mountain (see page 11), a government underling responded to concerns on carbon, climate and logging. Janine Haddow claimed that "Over time ..." the carbon is again captured. However, the latest ANU research shows they may never gain the full carbon-carrying potential, especially if thinned at 20 years and logged again after 50 years.

Forest & Wood Products Australia published an industry booklet in 2006, "Forests, Wood and Australia's Carbon Balance". It claims that, once tables and chairs are made from a few trees, 200 years later the carbon storage of a logged forest rises to "about 500 t C/ha" ... "more than double the carbon

stored if the forest had been left unharvested for the same period of time." We assume this is thanks to those thousands of tonnes of surviving tables and chairs.

The ANU now shows that the stored carbon can be on average about 1,600 tonnes a hectare in ash forests - the richest and most dense stands of carbon on Earth.

Destroying old growth forests will never result in "an absolute reduction in greenhouse gas concentrations" and the government should be ashamed to have been caught peddling these lies.

Steve Meacher / Jill
http://epress.anu.edu.au/green_carbon_citation.html

RFAs told to get real

Currently, logging in RFA regions is exempt from Commonwealth environment laws (EPBC) because the RFAs are assumed to protect the environment - simply because RFAs claim they do.

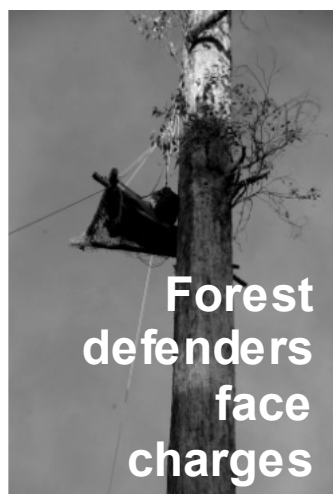
There was an interesting little report from a bunch of Federal

senators in late April who were looking into the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC). The Senate Committee agreed that the Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) should be cleaned up. The reform of RFAs would make sure they actually deliver environmental outcomes, which they don't now. This weakness was highlighted by Bob Brown's legal case against the Wielangta logging in Tassie.

Reform of these agreements would also mean that appeal rights and enforcement would be no weaker than the EPBCs.

Logging destruction in RFA regions like East Gippsland currently doesn't have to abide by the EPBC Act. The RFAs will be reviewed independently and an interim report is due sometime in June.

Jill/TWS 11.5.09



**Forest
defenders
face
charges**

A dedicated group of 30 conservationists halted the logging of critical areas of East Gippsland forest throughout summer and autumn.

Brown Mountain, Stony Creek, Bungywarr and the Delegate River headwaters were all ancient forests that suffered the ongoing chainsaw management of this government, and all logging operations were stopped by protests for a number of days.

Many people were arrested trying to physically prevent the logging, by locking onto the bulldozers' tracks and by

attaching cable and rope to machinery and tying them off to a tree sit platform 30-40 metres up a tree. Bulldozers as anchors are very effective and held up logging for several days until police Search and Rescue arrived to safely remove people before charging them. At times, conservationists would have a day off to catch up with sleep, then be back again to set up another tree sit.

There is a legal team helping defend them against the charges of entering a public safety zone.

Jill

Quality forests sold for as little as

\$2.50 a tonne

Last year almost a third of the native forest logs that came from East Gippsland was sold to the Geelong-based export woodchipper Midway. The state-owned logging enterprise, VicForests, sold them as dirt cheap, low-grade pulp logs.

The Victorian Government has undermined its own forests policy that says public forest logs must be sold so that a commercial return is made to the state (and the owners - you and I). By selling off native hardwood timbers for as little as \$2.50 a tonne, while plantation companies have to sell the same quality log for between \$38-60 a tonne, the government is also breaking the ACCC rules. This states that a government body must not undercut the price private businesses sell a product for.

Dr Judith Ajani, forest economist and author of *The Forest Wars*, said VicForest's behaviour in East Gippsland harmed the commercial plantation industry. She said a hardwood plantation grower can't survive with less than \$38 per tonne for pulp logs but VicForests undercuts this drastically by heavily subsidising the cost of logging native forests. Plantation companies would survive better if they didn't have competition from VicForests which sells hundreds of thousands of tonnes of native forests at give-away prices.

Midways also owns eucalypt plantations but prefer to buy their native forest woodchip

logs from the government because they are so much cheaper. They then sell them on to Nippon Paper which ship them to Japan.

In the past, EEG exposed the government for selling public forest logs for 9c-11c a tonne royalty in the 1990s and early 2000s. \$2.50 is hardly a decent price increase when we consider the forests value as water producers, air purifiers, carbon stores and biodiversity arks. A truckload of forest sells for the price of a counter lunch.

VicForests said the reason they sold the wood so cheaply was because the pulp logs were left-overs from cutting down trees for sawn timber "combined with some high-quality pulpwood such as Mountain Ash". This quality flooring and timber furniture would sell for \$60 a tonne minimum as saw logs but is going for the price of a cup of tea when sold as pulpwood. The woodchippers prefer the white straight clean fibers that the Ash has.

Jill/The Age 5.4.09/ VicForests' statement to a Parliamentary Committee



Thousands of tonnes of East Gippsland logs represents thousands of acres of forest. They are stacked at the Bairnsdale railway siding waiting to be railed to Geelong for chipping and then sent to Japan in huge tankers - for a measly \$2.50 a tonne.

Media love a good fire story



This is the classic story of how fires are the perfect fodder for a media that love real life drama and conflict. The opportunity to do a bit of enviro-bashing on the side is just too good to miss as truth and verification of claims fly out the window.

Illegal land clearing established

Back in August 2002, Liam Sheahan, a landowner from Reedy Creek, decided to clear over one hectare of mature stringy bark trees from his property without a permit. In November, several neighbours complained to the local Council, and these complaints started an acrimonious dispute that has dragged on for several years and resulted in the Sheahans being fined \$30,000.

Trees claimed to be the enemy

In the wake of the recent fires, the dispute again flared up. Unlike his neighbours, Sheahan's house survived and he went to the media with the story that its survival was as a result of his illegal clearing and he now felt vindicated. He said that he wanted his convictions overturned and fines repaid.

This story was featured prominently in an Age article on 12/3/09, which triggered another wave of hysterical greenie and council bashing stories and calls on talk-back radio. The anti-environmental VexNews web site ran a story praising Sheahan for his defiance but curiously, many of the comments posted pointed to problems with the line being flogged in the media.

Spotlight on the lies

Somebody had posted a link to Mitchell Shire Council's minutes from September 2005 which had a detailed summary of the Sheahan dispute. These minutes made it quite clear that the media was only providing a part of the story.

Tree clearing caused a fire risk

It turned out that although stories in the media had claimed that the trees had been 'cleared', in fact the felled trees were still on the ground

on the Sheahan's property. The logging had been very poorly timed – this was done at the start of the 2002/3 bushfire season and all the trees were not removed until later in 2003. The local CFA raised the fire hazard posed by the dead trees and a Fire Prevention expert engaged by the Council found that because of the number of dead trees left on the ground, the fire hazard faced by the Sheahans had probably *increased*. It was just luck that the fires that affected the State in 2002/3 did not include Reedy Creek.

Sheahans lost their case

The Council was reluctant to take this case to Court and spent several months negotiating a settlement with the Sheahans. In April 2003, the Sheahans signed an agreement with the Council to do some rehabilitation planting and pay Council costs of \$2,500. They were given 6 months to complete their work. Unfortunately, the Sheahans failed to honour this agreement – they dumped their local legal team and engaged Clem Newton-Brown, a Melbourne barrister, to defend their case.

The Sheahans lost their case, and ended up with a large legal bill and costs from the Council. *The magistrate did not accept their claim that they were doing the clearing for fire prevention* and found that they had only sought to consider exemptions under the Mitchell Planning Scheme after the event.

Lack of trees wasn't the saviour

Rather than end the dispute, it has been simmering away for several years. When the fires raged through Reedy Creek earlier this year, the Sheahans were on their property prepared to fight the fires.

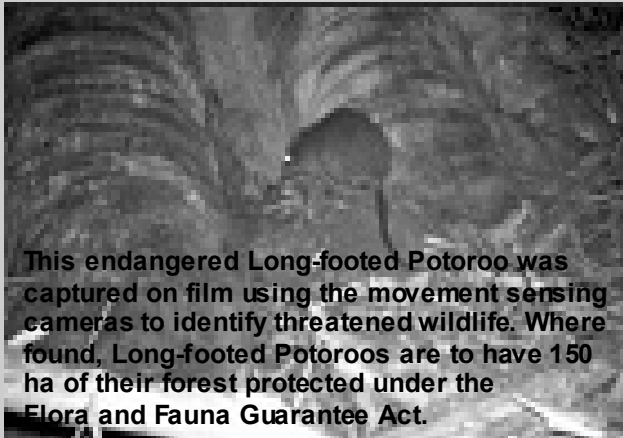
According to the local council, other properties had been evacuated. Despite their illegal clearing, the Sheahans house caught alight eight times so if they had not been on the property, their house would have burnt down. There is also some evidence that the fire could have approached the house from the opposite direction of the illegal clearing. Despite this, the Sheahans have been given permission to be heard at the Royal Commission in August where they will again be using their story to undermine native vegetation clearance regulations.

Lateline joins the gutter press

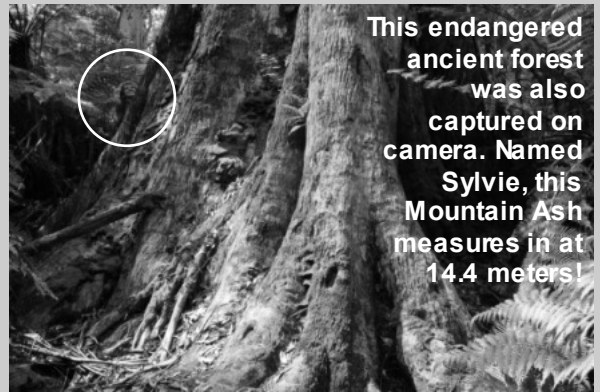
Sadly, large sections of the media have swallowed the land clearing codswallop hook line and sinker. Shortly after the Age article appeared, the ABC's Lateline ran an appalling biased version of the Sheahan story which ended with the reporter, Raphael Epstein, *endorsing* Sheahan's illegal clearing. The segment ends with Epstein going to one of Sheahan's neighbours burnt houses and says "you can see here at the neighbours that it's very different [from the Sheahan house]. On all sides there are trees. They didn't do the clearing that cost the Sheahans hundreds of thousands of dollars". This attack on victims of the fires was appalling but shows the new lows of journalistic standards that were plumbed during the fires. Epstein's claim that the Sheahans spent hundreds of thousands of dollars clearing around 1 Ha is clearly absurd and one of a number of factual errors that riddle this story. A complaint about this biased segment is currently with the Independent Complaints Review Panel)

Dean Haywood

Potoroo in Yalmy !



This endangered Long-footed Potoroo was captured on film using the movement sensing cameras to identify threatened wildlife. Where found, Long-footed Potoroos are to have 150 ha of their forest protected under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act.



This endangered ancient forest was also captured on camera. Named Sylvie, this Mountain Ash measures in at 14.4 meters!

The magnificent stand of old growth Mountain Ash in the Yalmy River catchment is earmarked for clearfelling. It supports endangered species. If volunteer groups hadn't bought and set up the cameras (several thousand dollars worth), it would have been destroyed. The find is currently being assessed by the DSE.

Burning native forests **for power**

The Victorian government has released a draft strategy for the future of the Forestry industry which includes lifting the current ban on burning native forests to burn as renewable energy and increasing timber contracts from ten to twenty years. These measures would undermine efforts to transform the logging industry into a climate-positive, value-adding, innovative, job-creating industry.

A study released by ANU last year estimated that if we were to leave the native forests of South-east Australia and allow them to reach their full carbon storing potential, they would absorb enough carbon dioxide to offset the equivalent of 24% of Australia's 2005 emissions per year for the next 100 years.

EcoMedia 15.4.09



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