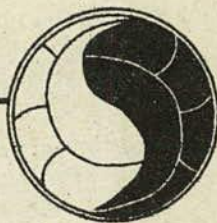


October/November 1994

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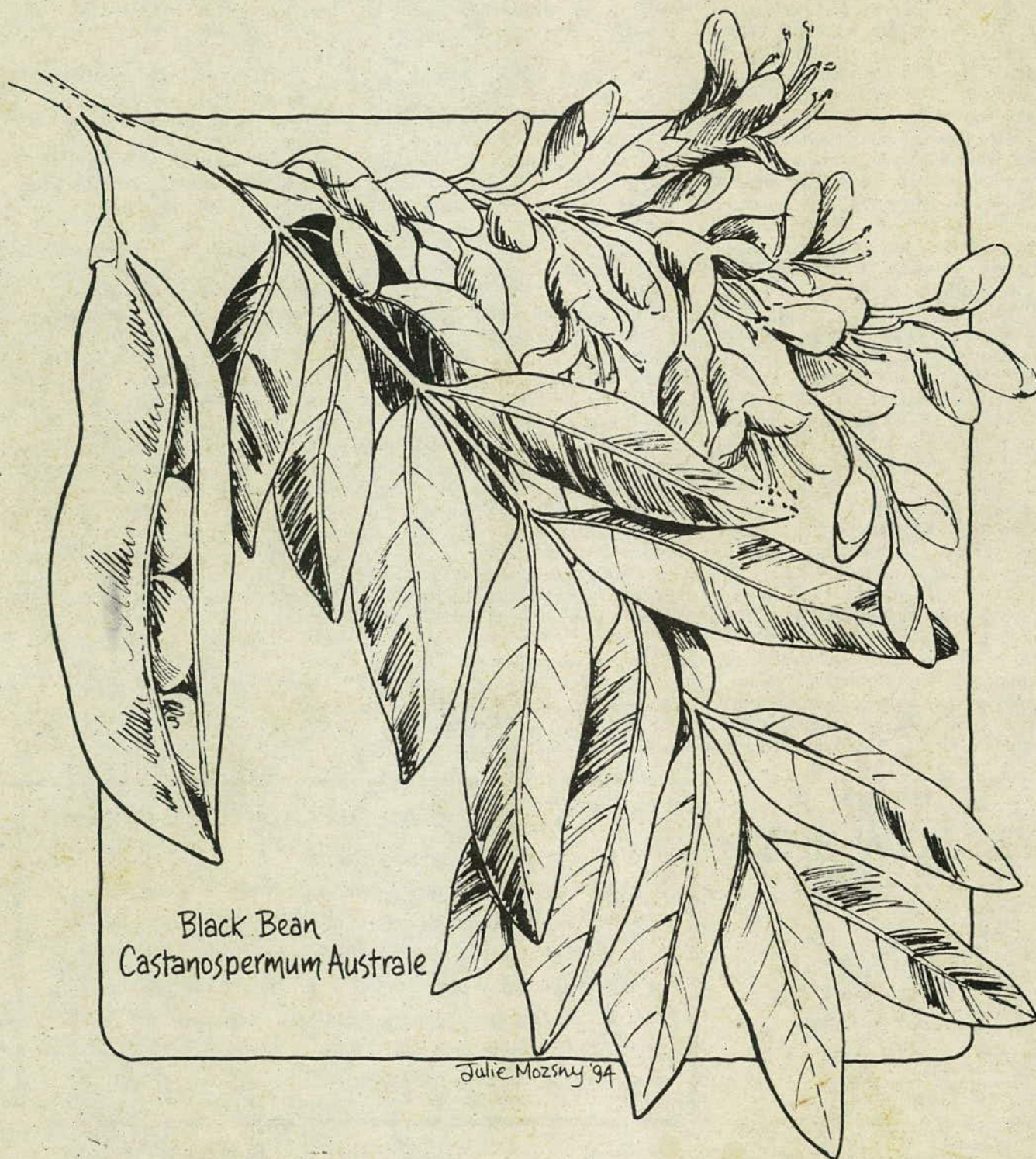
# Environs



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**THIS ISSUE:** ● Biodiversity & Patenting, ● New Local Mine,  
● Australian Population, ● Nymboida's Water, ● Company Greening

**the north coast environment magazine**



Black Bean  
*Castanospermum Australe*

Julie Mozsny '94



# BONGIL *the latest* BONGIL *twist*

**T**he NSW State Government has agreed to purchase land at Bonville (near Coffs Harbour) to create Bongil Bongil Coastal Park. The current landowner, Bonville Beach Hardwoods, is in receivership and effectively controlled by the State Bank, which is first mortgagee, so essentially we have a situation where the Government will be negotiating with itself. The land will be purchased under the Coastal Land Protection Fund as a flora reserve and pass through the Department Planning, and maybe CaLM and State Forests before being handed over to the NPWS, (a worry!).

This worry was justified when, on Wednesday September 14, Dr Lloyd of the Coffs Harbour National Support Group, found that the expected area of 655 hectares was not purchased; instead only 570 hectares was acquired.

"570 hectares is inadequate for the purpose, the acquisition leaves out prime development land which is needed as a buffer zone to protect environmentally sensitive areas, waterways and wetlands", Dr Lloyd said on ABC radio 2-KPTR. Dr Lloyd said that the proposal can no longer be seen as a National Park, but is really a nature reserve, just set up for conservation. "The only areas that have been conserved are the environmentally sensitive areas, there are no areas for recreation, for users, it's simply a nature reserve conserving very sensitive areas. We want

it to be more than that. We want it to be a park that people can visit and picnic in and participate in - it's not that sort of Park".

The Coffs Harbour National Park Support Group says the 85 hectares were always part of the park plan, which was drawn up by the NPWS and "referenced". The 85ha were considered a buffer zone to protect Pine Creek and wetlands; it allowed the land to go right up to the railway line which is a very good boundary for a Park.

"It does seem strange, that 86 hectares were left out, and they could have purchased that small amount of extra land for very little. The receiver, Pete Marwick, said he would be willing to take \$300,000 for it which is quite a small amount. If you look at all the land that they have excised from the park, it is all the high land, all the land which has good real estate value, - or which could be used for recreation, barbecuing and picnicking, - or, we suspect in this case, it could now be sold privately, for caravan parks, resorts, and that sort of thing" said Allan Lloyd.

Development adjacent to very sensitive areas, and the consequent intrusion and pollution from people and animals, would put the aquatic system and flora and fauna at risk, whereas there could have been a good high fence all along the railway boundary line. The health of this aquatic system is very important as it is one of the few areas on the coast that still

has original seagrass beds. Currently they are not protected. The wetlands are also a haven for a large amount of migratory wading birds.

"Not only the environmentalists, but the National Parks and Wildlife Service, who have done many studies, have also strongly recommended to the government that those buffer zones be included. They have just been excised without any real thought", said Dr Lloyd.

"As a long term venture this Park is doomed to failure. This is not really an exaggeration. The health of the aquatic system will be compromised and so we believe, (as do other scientists), that over the long term it is self destructing."

"This land is public land, and therefore we should try to obtain the very best park we can, not just for us, but for future generations so they can enjoy and see a small segment of our coast line as it once was. The first rule in making a National Park, is to make sure it is self sustaining; this park is not. We will lobby the Minister for Planning to acquire this essential part as we are determined to get a viable park and we have no hesitation in going to political parties with our case." concluded Dr Lloyd.

Sources: ABC Radio 2KPTR 14/9/94  
Coffs Harbour National Park Support Group, PO Box 11, Bonville, 2441.  
Letter 8/8/94.

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## The Dunggir Conservation Proposal

- Is there any Old Growth remaining?
- What does 'Dunggir' mean in the Gumbaynggr language?
- Why was Mistake State Forest so named?
- Who are the rightful owners of this land?
- Is the soil remaining in place?
- Are State Forests really logging rainforest and Old Growth?

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\* Len edit

# CHIPS IN COURT

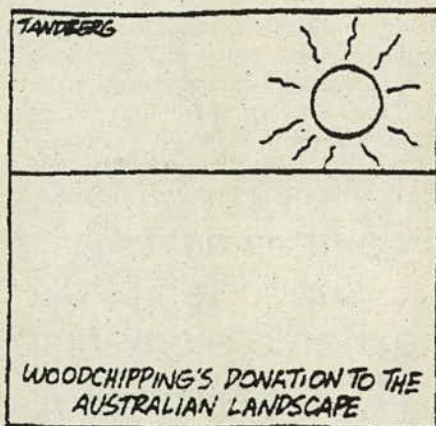
*Beddall secretly approves Boral Woodchip Licence  
and NCEC takes him to the Federal Court!*

**A**n interim licence for three months has been granted to Sawmillers Exports Pty Ltd, which is 80% owned by Boral Timber, for woodchipping in NSW.

Spokesperson for North East Forest Alliance, Barrie Griffiths, said that Federal Resources Minister, David Beddall, had acted improperly in approving the interim licence for continued woodchip operations in north east forests.

"Operations taking logs from native forests in NSW for woodchips exported to Japan have been occurring for ten years without assessment of impacts as required by law. Last November when the existing licence, which had been issued illegally, expired, a licence for a further 6 months to June 30th was issued, despite the fact that a belated EIS had not been completed. The final EIS was published in May, and now we find a further interim licence has been granted without reference to advice from the Environment Minister and without considering Reports on the EIS by Commonwealth Departments. These Reports have been completed, and we understand they have been received by Mr Beddall's office. We expect these Reports to be highly critical of this EIS which is manifestly inadequate, and consequently the licence cannot lawfully be issued.

"Mr Beddall's office has informed us today [8 July] that the decision was made about two weeks ago, in order that there be no interruptions of supply to Boral. The decision was made secretly, without



any public announcement, and apparently without even informing the Environment Minister! Senator Faulkner did not mention the decision during NEFA's meeting with him last Friday, apparently because he did not know of it himself! It was precisely this decision which NEFA was seeking to prevent through representations to Senator Faulkner. Beddall's arrogant and pre-emptive decision is an abuse of process and legal requirements.

"Mr Beddall is continuing the tradition of successive Resources Ministers meeting whatever demands are made by Boral and other major woodchippers, and in doing so, ignoring the advice of Environment Ministers and Government Departments, and community concern about the impacts of woodchipping.

"The full Federal Cabinet must obviously intervene in circumstances where a Minister acts improperly and seeks to circumvent or undermine the responsibility of another Minister in a matter of such importance to the environment and concern to the community. The Government should act responsibly in accordance with law and the National Forests Policy and impose moratoriums on operations in all States which have not been subject to adequate assessment."

"Senator Faulkner should immediately issue an Interim Assessment Conservation Order and require Comprehensive Regional assessments for North East NSW, said NEFA spokesperson, Barrie Griffiths.

President of the North Coast Environment Council Inc, Mr Terry Parkhouse commented that an application was made on 21 June to the Minister for the Environment by NCEC solicitors, the Environmental Defenders Office, seeking Senator Faulkner's agreement to issue an Interim Assessment Conservation Order (IACO) under the Commonwealth Endangered Species Protection Act 1993. [This was before Mr Beddall issued the interim licence].

Speaking on 14 July, Mr Parkhouse said: "We have heard nothing from the Minister for the Environment and no IACO has been issued. The specific concerns which we foresaw have come to pass despite the Minister having plenty of time to act. Mr Beddall didn't consult Senator Faulkner and took his own action to continue Boral's woodchip supply, but regrettably Senator Faulkner failed to take any action on our urgent request."

The IACO application named 8 animals and 67 plants, listed on the national schedule of endangered species, as being present in north coast woodchip supply zones and at risk from logging and shipping operations.

Mr Parkhouse said that both the Minister for Resources and the Minister for the Environment had been sent further solicitor's letters asking for the reasons for issuing a further export licence and for failing to act to protect nationally endangered species.

"If their reasons are unsatisfactory the Environment Council will consider legal action to challenge their decisions in the Federal Court," Mr Parkhouse said.

Later, on September 15, Mr Parkhouse said: "As the Minister for Resources has not replied within the specified time, an application was lodged with the Federal Court on September 13th, asking that the Minister furnish a statement in answer to the request as to why he granted the Licence. September 30 has been set down as the date for a Directions Hearing."

Sources: North East Forest Alliance, Media Release July 8th 1994, North Coast Environment Council.

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# Bushfires excuse more destruction

‘intense pressure to prevent the further establishment of wilderness areas, and to bulldoze more fire trails through national parks’

Following each major bushfire event calls are heard for the scalps of ‘greenies’. Conservationists, according to some community members, are responsible for fire disasters and should also be accountable for losses of property and life. It is not surprising that the loudest calls for retribution come from those whose interests will be best served by eliminating conservation of natural resources from the political and economic agenda. Some see wilderness areas and national parks as nothing more than wasteland. One of these is David Hodgkinson, Vice President of the NSW Farmers Federation: “there are”, he says, “vast resources locked away in National Parks at the moment contributing nothing to society”. They are merely reserves for “growing weeds, nourishing feral cats... and providing a few walking tracks.” Meanwhile, more farsighted members of the rural community are planting trees on degraded farmland in an attempt to repair the erosion and salinity caused by excessive clearing.

In the bushfire post mortem, there will be intense pressure to prevent the further establishment of wilderness areas, and to bulldoze more fire trails through national parks. This will be enthusiastically supported by extreme elements of the 4WD lobby, whose principal aim is to ensure

**enthusiastically supported by extreme elements of the 4WD lobby**

unrestricted access for their none-too-gentle vehicles, and by horseriders who seem unaware of the damage they cause, particularly when they stray from the trails. Predictably, the Forest Products Association has already leapt on the anti-wilderness bandwagon by proposing “environmentally sensitive remedial logging” in national parks.

A more realistic analysis of the fires may show that the principal deficiencies

lie with council approvals of housing development in vulnerable areas; inadequate construction and fire-proofing standards; houses furnished with highly inflammable synthetics, and the decision, made by many people, to take the risk of building hard against their beloved bush. And, there will always be pyromaniacs who derive pleasure and a sense of power from the sight of uncontrolled flames.

Irrespective of the findings of the various enquiries, we cannot legislate for an absolutely safe and risk-free life. The recent fires in NSW are part of a regular and predictable environmental cycle which has been integral to the Australian environment ever since eucalypts assumed domination of the landscape. Learning to live with fire so that losses of life and property are kept to a minimum, while at the same time preserving our natural areas from exploitation is the repetitive challenge we face.

*From: Editorial from Environews No 2 Feb 1994, via TREE Vol 5 Apr 1994*

## Lessons unlearnt

Jim Boswell faced the fire that ravaged homes in Bonnet Bay, Jannali and Como in January 1994. He writes: ....

From statements made to date by our politicians, I am not confident that we will learn much as a community from these fires. The people with the power will make sure that they receive no criticism and the vested interest groups will push their private barrows and get whatever advantage they can. A few more million dollars will be spent on official enquiries and we will find our-

selves back where we were before.

The Politicians and media wise-men have allowed the public to believe that “hazard reduction” equals “burning off”. It doesn’t!

If fire bugs should be severely punished - what should we do to politicians who drain away the funds from the National Park maintenance?

If South Australia and Victoria changed their fire fighting systems and bought better equipment after the Ash Wednesday fires, then why didn’t New South Wales?

I believe that many of us will be challenged over the next few months to say what we believe about the bushland and fire. The community will be told that “the Australian bush needs to be burned off regularly! That’s how it regenerates!” Like all propaganda this statement contains a modicum of truth. But we know that there are many species that will not survive this fire because of the intense heat and because they are not regenerated by fire. There will be a strong campaign to burn off all urban bushland on a regular basis. We know that even the species that do use fire, do not need the amount of fire that this will mean.

We need to inject some sanity into the debate. We need

to set up building codes and hazard reduction plans that will help us to live in greater harmony with this beautiful flood-and-fire-scarred land. We need a method of valuing our urban bushland so that it becomes part of the “economic equation”. How much is a settlement worth if you take away the bush? Yet we will now set up regular burn offs with a clear conscience and fool ourselves that the bush will continue to come back again exactly the same as before. The Royal National Park will never be the same again. Some plant species are probably gone from there forever.

*from: The Journal for the Society for Growing Australian Plants: Native Plants of NSW - June 1994.*



\* Len guto

# TYRE DISPOSAL:



the wheels fall off

**E**ver seen tyres used to form a private jetty or to stabilise a river bank somewhere? Maybe you've heard about a project where thousands of tyres will be used to form an artificial reef.

This is good, right? They just sit there in those stockpiles otherwise, don't they? And the piles get bigger and bigger and they catch alight and burn for years; why not put them to some constructive use. It can't do any harm, can it? You'd be surprised.

A study by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency has found that waste tyres and other tyre derived products are not suited for any use below the water table or in surface waters.

The study concluded that:

Metals are leached from tyre materials in the highest concentration under acid conditions. Barium, Cadmium, Chromium, Lead, Selenium and Zinc all exceeded drinking water recommended allowable limits. Polynuclear Aromatic Hydrocarbons and other petroleum hydrocarbons are also leached from tyre materials.

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency has introduced the following guidelines:

1. Waste tyres, cannot be used in saturated conditions (below the water table or in surface waters).
2. Verification must be provided that the proposed use of the tyres is economically and technically beneficial to the proposed

project (as opposed to burial for disposal).

3. Measures must be taken to minimise infiltration of water or leaching in the area the waste tyres are used.

4. Measures must be taken to ensure the waste tyres, are not exposed to the environment at the surface of the construction project.

*There are no similar guidelines in place in Australia.*

There is an alarming lack of scientific research into the environmental impact of waste tyres in any situation. The cynics among us would not be surprised by this as the knowledge of the problems associated with waste tyres brings with it a terrible burden of responsibility. Given the enormous amount of waste tyres generated by 20th century transport systems throughout the world, the magnitude of the implications of the Minnesota Pollu-

tion Control Agency study is breathtaking. Sooner or later humanity is going to have to rethink its approach to getting from A to B; or at least improve the technology used in doing so. Given the seemingly universal surrender to the business interests of transnational leviathans by governments throughout the world, blissful ignorance must be a fairly attractive option on their behalf.

*Reference: "Waste Tyres in Sub-grade Road Beds: A report on the Environmental Study of the Use of Shredded Waste Tyres For Roadway Sub-grade Support". Published by Waste Tire Management Unit, Site Response Section, Groundwater and Solid Waste Division, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, 520 Lafayette Road, St. Paul, MN 55155. (612) 296-6300. February 19, 1990.*

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# New Mine for Bellingen Shire

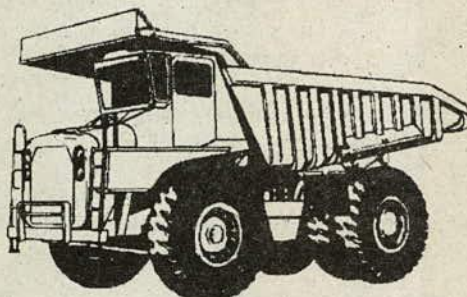
*Antimony, Arsenic and Mercury ore to be worked  
in Nymboida and Wild Cattle catchments...  
concerns for water supply*

**B**ellingen Council has given approval for a company to mine antimony ore and grind, crush and concentrate the ore on site. In this process the toxic heavy metals - antimony, mercury, and arsenic - are used.

Councillors inspected the site in August and then at their meeting continued debate well into the night before finally approving the development application by Allegiance Mining for the antimony mine, 22 kilometres north of Dorrigo. A group of objectors, mainly residents along Lower Bielsdown Road, had sought to have the matter deferred for two weeks to allow further discussion. After Council resolved to approve the application, they said the matter was headed for the Land Environment Court.

One of the conditions of approval is that Allegiance Mining must satisfy Council by the end of this year that an appropriate management plan has been developed for the population of Stuttering Frogs found on site, in consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). The NPWS has advised Council that in their opinion the proposed development is likely to result in the "Take or Kill" of endangered fauna, in particular the Stuttering Frog (*Mixophyes balbus*) - the only endangered species detected in the removal area. The Fauna Impact Statement has been formally exhibited and application for a 5.120 licence under the NPW Act (1974) has been made. The NPWS, whilst accepting the Fauna Impact Statement for exhibition, has requested the consultants to prepare an addendum more clearly defining the conservation significance of this particular population of Stuttering Frog, and to explore options for the capture and relocation of individual frogs.

The proposal by Allegiance Mining comprised two principal operations: 1. Open cut and underground mining to produce antimony ore; and 2. Milling (crushing, grinding and concentrating) to produce antimony concentrate. The antimony concentrate will be transported from the site approximately once every two



days for further processing at Newcastle to produce a range of value-added products.

The applicant envisages that the open cut program will last for up to two years, mining thereafter will move underground. Bulldozers and light blasting will be used in the removal of overburden. A rock dump will be required to accommodate an estimated 250,000 cubic metres of overburden and waste rock. The projected life of the operation is approximately five years. Tailings will be stored in a tailings dam system comprised of two dams, a large primary dam to handle the mine tailings with a small dam to handle water storage and recycling. The construction of the tailing and water storage dam along a drainage line will result in the removal of approximately one hectare of wet gully forest and two hectares of open sclerophyll forest.

The Council's acting director of Environmental Health and Planning, Chris Pratt reported that the location of the tailings dam in a wet gully forest of conservation significance has been a key area of concern and that alternative sites have been investigated. However, the site chosen is the most suitable as it is close to the mine; is the area with the least catchment; and is the furthest most practical site from Wild Cattle Creek.

The likely presence of rocky material and unsuitable water-holding soil properties at the dam site has raised concern for the possibility for seepage. The applicant has stated that the clay on site has been determined as adequate to line the dam and fill any rock crevices. However, a condition of approval requiring a geotechnical report certifying the dam is

structurally sound and impervious has been recommended.

Chris Pratt states that water quality is a critical issue associated with the development. The proposal includes a "Closed Circuit" disposal system for the tailing and runoff from the crushing and stockpile area. Due to the nature of the metals present, ie Antimony, Arsenic and Mercury, it is critical that the closed circuit is effective. The Environmental Impact Statement proposes considerable safeguards to maintain the efficiency of the system which will become part of the Water Management Plan. It will be necessary to assess this Plan to ensure it is adequate, similarly implementation of the Plan including an action plan for use in times of adverse monitoring will be critical.

Monitoring is proposed as part of the Water Management and Action Plan. It is not indicated what would be done if levels were unacceptable. A solution would be transferral to the tailings dam via a pump. This would however necessitate redesign of the tailings dam to accommodate the additional load. A requirement that water testing be carried out in the waste rock and overburden dump settlement dam prior to the release of water into Mine Creek ensuring that levels of heavy metals met ANZEC guidelines for aquatic environments has been recommended as a condition of approval. Should levels of heavy metals be above acceptable guidelines, an Action Plan shall be devised to ensure contaminated wastes do not escape into the creek. Furthermore, details shall be submitted on the dimensions of the settlement dam to cater for frequent storm events.

A road levy has been calculated by the Council's engineer. The EIS stated that for the first two years the open cut stage would employ 29 employees and for the remaining three years, 53 employees would be engaged in the underground mining operation.

Mr Pratt said "The proposed rehabilitation of the site appears adequate however it is important that council have input



what is  
NVCA?



environs, the north coast environment magazine

into the annual review of the Mine Rehabilitation and Environmental Management Plan to ensure that appropriate and acceptable mining rehabilitation and environmental management practices are in place. A suitable bond is recommended to ensure rehabilitation works are completed."

In conclusion, Mr Pratt said: "It is considered that the environmental issues raised as a result of this proposal have been or can by way of conditions, be adequately addressed. Compliance with conditions of consent and the EIS will ensure mining occurs within acceptable levels of environmental impact."

Objectors are concerned that, with the soil in this area being a porous loam, and rainfall high, there is a possibility of seepage or overflow of the toxic heavy metals which would pose a serious threat to animal (aquatic) and human life. The tailings dam is a short distance from Wild Cattle Creek and the Nymboida river system which is the most extensive west of the Dorrigo, Coffs Harbour and Grafton and used by a large number of people for their water supply. Also it is likely the Coffs Harbour Council will use the Nymboida River system to supplement their town water supply.

**If you are concerned you can write to your local MP, Bellingen Council, the State Environment Minister and others or join your local environment group.**

**Addresses:**

**Andrew Fraser MP**, Suite 2, 1 Duke Street, Coffs Harbour.

**Bellingen Council**, Hyde Street, Bellingen.

**State Minister for Environment**, Mr Hartcher, Parliament House, MacQuarie Street, Sydney.

**NPWS District Manager**, PO Box 170, Dorrigo.

**Sources:**

*Bellingen Courier Sun 24/8/94*

## THREATENED SPECIES UNIT

### Koala Survey Farce



John Gillbank

### No Protection in the Mistake Forest

**T**here was great disappointment among NVCA members after a visit by the Threatened Species Unit (TSU) of National Parks and Wildlife Service to Compartment 366 in Mistake State Forest last Tuesday, 13 September.

A lot of hard work, planning and lobbying went into getting the TSU to consider the koalas in this area, and when they finally came, they were accompanied, at all times, by eight State Forests Officers. Conservationists were refused a request to accompany them and had to wait while they did their transect work. Then they informed NVCA members that they had made their decision about how the koalas would be dealt with. "After a hard-fought-over private talk between NVCA and TSU, there was no change in the TSU's position", spokesperson for NVCA, Paula Flack said.

"It's outrageous that the Threatened Species Unit consider a single three-and-a-half-hour visit sufficient to assess the substantial koala population here and ensure their survival", she said.

Steve Phillips of The Australian Koala Foundation visited the compartment on September 11 and found ample evidence of koalas and recommended a full survey be done before logging.

NVCA had expected that NPWS would insist on an independent survey

before logging, but their Threatened Species Unit decided this was not necessary. Their solution was to set aside a small area of trees where there was intense koala activity, to be excluded from logging. They also applied restrictions on the rest of the compartment based on a State Forests' prescription in the Wingham Management Area of which Steve Phillips wrote: "are not only inadequate but will potentially contribute significantly to the escalating decline of the Koala in New South Wales".

Steve Phillips' latest findings of home range use and behaviour of koalas suggest that isolating one patch of trees and logging the rest may have an impact that may very well tip the scales on a population that is delicately balanced, resulting in a steady decline in numbers.

The only ongoing 'survey' work to be done will be by the State Forests' foreman as he is carrying out his main duty of tree marking. Meanwhile logging is occurring in areas already marked. State Forests term these "incidental surveys" and send their staff for training with NPWS officers, so they can recognise the presence of koalas.

NVCA is not satisfied with this outcome and will be negotiating further with NPWS and State Forests for a more environmentally satisfactory one.

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Concerned Citizen

October/November 1994, page



# Joint-venture plantations proposed

## State-Forests to Plant Private Land

State Forests of NSW are encouraging eucalypt plantations on private land on the north coast, and Bombala (south coast) region. Members at the last meeting of the Nambucca Valley Conservation Association enjoyed a talk given by Mr Ernie Chiswell, a private consultant to State Forests, outlining the scheme.

The project is titled "Joint Venture" and has been initiated by State Forests and other government agencies to try and ensure a long term wood supply for the industry. Basically, the land owner agrees to allow State Forests to prepare the site (usually a minimum of 20 hectares), and establish, maintain and harvest the plantation. In return he or she receives an annual rental on the land, and an agreed share of the royalties from thinning operations at about 15 to 20 years after establishment, and from clearfelling at the end at about 35 to 40 years.

The entire operation, from initial preparation to final harvesting is subject

to contractual agreements between the two partners regarding shares of the profit, areas to be left unplanted, (such as steep gullies of bush remnants) whether grazing will be allowed and so on. There is some flexibility in the way the plantation is managed, although Ernie Chiswell pointed out that generally, herbicide (Roundup) would be used for initial site preparation and ongoing maintenance, and that only a limited number of species - Blackbutt, Flooded Gum, and Sydney Blue Gum, were currently being planted.

This inflexibility will not suit everyone. Many conservationists would prefer to see a mixed species, mixed age, type scheme which would approximate a more natural forest. Mr Chiswell agreed that this could be a problem, but pointed out that State Forests are in the scheme to achieve a profit and that clearfelling of a single species would be most cost effective.

However, all those present at Ernie's talk, saw the potential of the scheme for

repairing land degraded by, for example, excessive cattle grazing. Although slopes over 18 degrees will generally not be considered for planting, if the soil is poor and/or infested with noxious weeds, or prone to erosion, giving it a "rest" for 40 years can only benefit the environment. One member even pointed out that it would give some farmers in the valley something to rely on apart from mining gravel from the river.

Ernie Chiswell is hoping to gain support and interest for the "Joint Venture" project from a wide range of people, and is currently approaching every group he can think of who might be interested, from conservation groups to reforestation societies, to the Farmers Federation. If you would like more information, Ernie can be contacted by phone or fax on 066 537227. NVCA has brochures on the project available in its office in Bowraville.  
by: Alison Pope, Secretary NVCA



## On the road again

### No Warnings of Frenock Spraying

Nambucca Shire Council now uses the herbicide Frenock as well as Roundup for roadside spraying. Councillor Lyn Orrego put a motion to Council's meeting on September 8, that would have made it council's policy to advertise to local residents when their roads were to be sprayed with chemicals for

noxious weed control, but this motion was defeated. "It's hard to believe in this day and age that a Council would refuse to inform their community about Council activities which effect them," said Ms Orrego.

As the manufacturer has seen fit to place a 14 day withholding period for spot spraying of Frenock, there is good reason to inform the commu-

nity of spraying so hazardous areas can be avoided.

The Toxin Action Group suggested to council that they contact the National Registration Authority for scientific data on the effects of Frenock, including its carcinogenicity and possible bio-accumulation. TAG also asked council for their reasons why they refuse to reinstate warning signs where chemicals have been used.

"Surely Council should act responsibly and warn residents and visitors to the Shire, both in urban and rural areas, that this chemical has been used", said spokesperson for TAG, Lawrie Medbury. TAG fully

support Councillor Orrego's concerns over the use of dangerous chemicals such as Frenock without public notification.

Ms Orrego said: "If there are other people who think Council should advertise when and where they will be spraying, I urge them to let the other councillors know, and also write a short letter to the General Manager, Mr Tom Port (PO Box 177, Macksville, 2447), asking that Council adopt such a policy.

"I can have another go at putting up a motion for such a policy in three months time", she concluded.



# Campaign to save Wingham forest

By Tom Kelly

**W**ingham Forest Action's (WFA) many-faceted campaign to defend forests and fauna from logging in the Wingham management area, north-west of Taree in northern New South Wales, has found its way to Sydney's Land and Environment Court.

A general licence to take or kill endangered fauna in the Wingham management area, issued to the NSW Forestry Commission in February, is currently being appealed in the Court. According to the August 12 Sydney Morning Herald, Noel Hemmings QC, (a former judge of the Land and Environment Court) representing the Forestry Commission, predicted that a ruling against the validity of the licence could set a precedent that would stop all logging in NSW, since the licence concerned is typical of many being applied throughout the state.

WFA is objecting to the licence, granted by the Director General of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), on the grounds that the areas of forest reserved for conservation purposes fail to include the favoured habitat of many of the 33 endangered species known, or likely to occur, in the disputed area.

Commenting on the licence in March this year, WFA spokesperson Jeffrey Nicholls quoted the NPWS Decision Report: "A critical resource in the Wingham Management Area is the old growth hardwood forests on gentle slopes ... They comprise 11,452 hectares or 60.8% of all

unlogged forest in the Wingham Management Area. Based on information provided in the Environmental Impact Statement, the Service estimates that by the end of the first cutting cycle as proposed in the EIS, 96% of the hardwood on gentle slopes will have been logged. Neither the EIS nor the Fauna Impact Statement considered the implications of this for fauna".

According to WFA, the NPWS was critical of the EIS because "the proposed reserve system was based on non-ecological values such as low timber value and inaccessible land".

While Forestry Commission policy is to minimise the impact of logging where endangered species are known to occur, its implementation depends on the animal being sighted before it is too late.

A recent survey of the Wingham Management Area by wildlife ecologist Harry Hines found Yellow-bellied Gliders, Sooty Owls, Powerful Owls, Tiger Quoll, Parma Wallabies and Koalas in areas soon to be logged. Hines, who spoke as a witness for WFA in court, commented that these animals, "are all listed by National Parks as endangered

species. There needs to be a reassessment of remaining old growth forests to establish their fauna values". Forestry, rather than conducting surveys such as this, only inspects for likely habitat.

Nicholls pointed out, "if you destroy habitat, you destroy fauna. This fact is implicitly recognised by the licensing process. Logging kills endangered species so a licence is required".

Wildlife ecologist Christina Potts observed that, "if the reserve system proposed for Wingham Management Area is an example of the state department of forests' commitment to conservation, then the future for old growth-dependent species throughout the state is very grim".

Dr Harry Recher, an ecosystems management expert based at the University of New England, compared logging the habitats of endangered species to keep people in jobs, to cutting up works of art in galleries to keep confetti makers in business.

*Wingham Forest Action can be contacted on 065 504 572.*

*From : Green Left Weekly 24/8/94 via Pegasus*

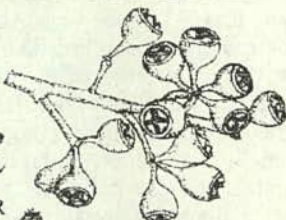


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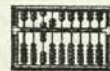


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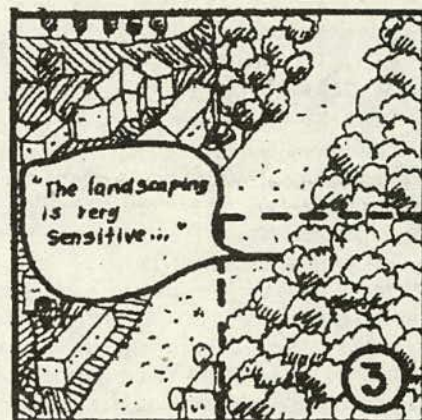
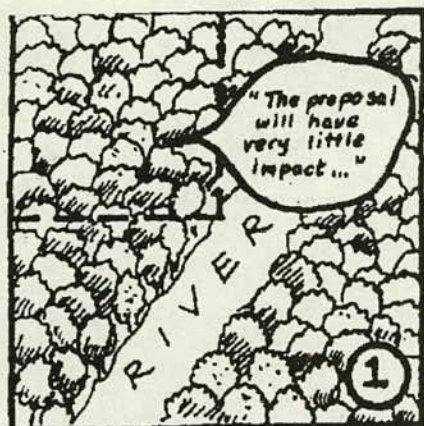
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# BIODIVERSITY: business and living things



Mention "biodiversity" and we immediately think of the natural world and its wide range of species; the "diversity of life", as the term suggests. The voice of David Attenborough appears along with brilliantly photographed images from the many documentaries he has narrated. Tropical rainforests, the depths of the oceans, the as yet undiscovered ..... But wait. We've missed the boat. We've thought small. To all the big players, the giant transnational conglomerates and the governments who represent their interests, mention "biodiversity" and we should be thinking "biotechnology". We should be thinking of a huge and lucrative gene pool lying idly in the public domain of nature just waiting to be slightly modified and promptly patented.

This was what was on George Bush's mind when he refused to sign the "Biodiversity Convention" at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. The problem with biodiversity is that its not spread evenly, by some strange coincidence the third world has a wealth of it and the "developed" nations don't have much of it anymore. For example tropical rainforests cover only seven per cent of the earth's surface yet they contain more than half of the world's total species. So as far as George was concerned (not to mention the US biotechnology, pharmaceutical and agricultural seed breeding companies) the most important aspect of

biodiversity was not to merely preserve it but to keep the "public domain" public.

Biological and genetic resources available for commercial exploitation fall into two broad categories-

Material from "wild" animal or plant populations; and material which has been improved over the millennia by traditional animal and plant breeding techniques. The latter may also be accompanied by indigenous or traditional knowledge about the cultivation or traditional uses of a particular plant. Both the Biodiversity Convention and Agenda 21 (the action plan negotiated at the UNCED) encourage the sharing of capital, technology, scientific knowledge and training, and profits gained from the commercialisation of biological resources between the first world and biodiversity-rich, technology-poor third world countries. Agenda 21, however, failed to recognise the ownership of these resources by indigenous and traditional communities, or grant them any right to reward for improvements through traditional plant breeding.

The Uruguay round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) was concurrently negotiating the protection of intellectual property rights through world patent and copyright law "harmonisation". Patent harmonisation will mean that all countries participating in GATT must enact and respect uniform patent laws, laws that effectively protect first world commercial interests at the expense of third world farmers and indigenous peoples. The intellectual property

in question is not music, literature or any of the art forms with which we normally associate copyright, but "plant breeders rights" which grant monopoly control over new commercial plant varieties, and the related concept of patent law. A patent is:

*"basically a contract between inventor and society, in which inventors make their inventions public, and society grants them an exclusive monopoly right to exploit that invention for a certain time."* (Rainbow Group, European Parliament)

This is where we pay the price for thinking of David Attenborough, resplendent in Safari suit, whispering to the camera so as not to upset the mountain gorillas when we should have been thinking about genetic engineering, BMWs with car phones and a high-rise block on the Gold Coast. When the invention at issue is a living thing many questions too inconvenient to be addressed by transnational biotechnology leviathans and lame governments are raised.

Who owns biological and genetic resources? Who has the right to profit from their use? And the fundamental issue: Should living things be patentable at all?

As current patent law completely denies any recognition of prior "ownership" or control of the raw material for these inventions (the plant material or genetic material isolated from plants) it is probable that citizens of third world countries will pay expensive royalties for the use of patented seed varieties, medicines and "natural" herbicides and pesticides



“the most important aspect of biodiversity was not to merely preserve it but to keep the ‘public domain’ public.”



developed from their own biological resources. The first two questions can be partially addressed by the following solution; to let first world scientists and commercial interests continue to collect, conserve and develop third world genetic resources, but to compensate third world governments or citizens groups for their contribution. This idea has been debated in international circles since the early 1980's, meeting with resistance from first world interests, although recent political activism and the slowly awakening realisation that current commercial practice will not sustain these industries has led to some progress being made. Natural biodiversity is diminishing at an increasing rate, and attempts to devise "ex situ" systems for protection of genetic resources (gene banks and cold storage of agriculturally important plant material) often fail, having higher rates of genetic erosion than the native habitats from which the seeds were collected.

The current thinking amongst third world activists and non-government organisations (NGOs) active in the area of conservation of agricultural biodiversity, is that conservation will only work "in situ", where traditional crop varieties are grown in the variety's native habitat, by the traditional cultivators. Farmers may be paid to grow the traditional varieties, but recognition of farming communities' traditional ownership would increase the likelihood of conservation.

Not surprisingly, third world governments aren't too impressed with the

biotechnology onslaught and the lack of international controls on its activities. When George Bush's pen came down with stage fright in Rio, Washington was seen to favour and desire the continuation of the predation that in the 80's, according to some estimates, caused the extinction of either an animal or plant species per day. In his message to the Rio meeting, Cuban President Fidel Castro claimed that in the next 20 or 30 years around 250,000 species will be wiped away from the face of the earth. He contended that in the industrialised sector it is impossible to find both wild vegetable and animal species. The front line technologies depend on natural resources to operate, and if the protection and control of these resources (all in the third world) are validated, it would restrain the biotechnological monopolies.

There are a number of third world countries who are seeking to protect their rights in regard to the exploitation of their biological heritage. Ethiopian customs officers search departing air travellers for coffee seeds; India bans export of some pepper varieties; Indonesia bans export of some fruit varieties and Turkey bans the export of a number of crops. Peruvian native (coloured) cotton seeds are banned from export unless permission is given by Peruvian regional peasant farmer organisations.

Costa Rica has gone one step further. In 1991, Merck, the world's largest pharmaceutical company agreed to pay Costa Rica's National Institute of Biodiversity

\$1 million to assist in screening Costa Rican plants and insects for potentially useful medicinal agents. If any of these are commercially utilised, Merck will pay the Costa Rican government a share of the royalties, and those funds will be used for conservation purposes.

The debate continues. The Food and Agriculture Organisation, UNESCO and UNCED have been unable to reach a just conclusion. The UN Development Program is currently preparing a major report on the implications of intellectual property rights on indigenous peoples. This topic was also discussed at the UN conference on Human Rights in Vienna. In the same way the television series *M.A.S.H.* lasted longer than the war it was dramatising, so too may the debate on biodiversity last longer than the biodiversity all parties claim to be saving.

Perhaps the stumbling block is that we still fail to recognise biodiversity as the common heritage of humanity, and therefore private companies have no business claiming ownership to living things. As biodiversity continues to erode, it must become obvious to all that the only real solution is the equitable sharing of reward and responsibility.

*Edited by Tom Goodwin*

*Sources: 'Biodiversity - who should profit?' Julie McGuinness. Bogong Volume 15, Number 1.*



# GREEN NEWS



## Forests destroyed, water lost

The North East Forest Alliance has expressed its outrage that the logging destruction of New South Wales' most precious water-producing forests is continuing at 60 hectares per day under the direction of the NSW Minister for Water Resources and Forests, Hon George Souris.

Twenty seven years of scientific research has shown that old growth forests yield twice as much water to streams and rivers as regrowth forests or plantations.

"With NSW in the grip of a severe drought only our relatively small areas of old growth forests are still producing surface water flow for our streams, rivers and community water supplies. Despite this, the destruction of the water producing characteristics of these forests continue to produce water to sustain riverine ecology and public water supplies. It is unbelievable that a society can be so stupid as to continue to destroy the ability of our water catchments to allow our children and grandchildren to have a bountiful life," Mr Trevor Pike said.

"The Buccrabendini Valley, an arm of the Nambucca River, is an example of a river degraded by current and past logging practices. For most of its length the Buccrabendini Creek has no surface water flow at all. The forest of the Little Wonder Creek is the only forest producing surface water flow in the whole of Buccrabendini Valley. Despite this, State Forests refuse to stop logging in this Little Wonder catchment," he said.

All NSW north coast rivers have had their water flow rates significantly reduced by State Forests logging in their catchments.

NEFA Press Release, 12/9/94

## Worms as pollution-meters

Scientists at Britain's Natural Environment Research Council have devised a simple way of using earthworms to detect pollution such as heavy metals and dioxins in the soil. Due to their feeding habits, if there is pollution in the topsoil, the worms will discover it. Re-

searchers take a sample of body fluids with a syringe before returning the worm, unhurt, to its burrow. Worm cells are dropped into a dye that is absorbed. If the worm is healthy the cells release this dye slowly, but if the dye is released quickly, it means that the cells are under stress and have been working overtime to rid themselves of unfamiliar poisons. Scientists say that it gives them an index per square metre of the level of contamination and whether it is significant.

*The Guardian, via Earth Garden Sept 1994*

## Green Guilt

Feel rotten about polluting the atmosphere by driving your car? Welcome. Australians feel more "Green guilt" about their cars than about any other aspect of their way of life, a survey has found. Close behind cars on the personal guilt list, Australians worry that they buy too many products, that they are not recycling enough and are using too much water and energy.

Four in five people said they had changed their behaviour in the past five years for environmental reasons and were confident this had helped to protect the environment. The report, commissioned by the NSW Environment Protection Authority, surveyed the environmental concerns and attitudes of 1115 people in NSW. The environment was identified as the single biggest issue likely to face the State Government in a decade, ahead of unemployment, education, health and crime.

Despite the level of concern, 86% of respondents said they did not know enough about how to protect the environment. The report identified a core of about a quarter of the population of mostly older men who had not changed their behaviour for environmental reasons.

*From: SMH, via Earth Garden, September 1994*

## New kangaroo found

A new species of tree kangaroo has been found by an Australian-led expedition to remote mountains in Irian Jaya. It has a sweet black-and-white face

and is friendly and amiable. The marsupial is yet to be given a scientific name but is called bondegezou (man of the high forest) by the Moni people. The marsupial, which could weigh up to 15kg and measure 1.2m from nose to the tip of the long tail, has probably been living in the cold, rugged Maokop mountains for several million years. Although a form of tree kangaroo, with a pouch, it is a poor climber and not very agile. "There is nothing like it among other tree kangaroo species," said Dr Flannery of the Australian Museum. "It is humbling to know that such a large and distinctive animal as this has remained unknown to science for so long."

*AAP, via Earth Garden Sept 1994*

## Renewable Energy conference

SOLAR '94 a conference of the Australia and New Zealand Solar Energy Society will happen in the first week in December in Sydney. Key note speakers include: Professor Paul Erlich, Dr David Suzuki, and Professor Martin Green (of solar cell breakthrough fame). There will be an associated trade exhibition and public day. Solar '94 aims to bring together the tremendous potential of research, technologies and applications to meet the energy needs of the future.

## Ominous re-naming of NSW Forestry Commission

The line between Government and Corporation is becoming more blurred in the wake of the "Corporatisation" of the Forestry Commission. The evolution of The Forestry Commission into the ominously named State Forests is, in economic terms, the equivalent to liquidation of the forest asset. Our valuable native forests are being placed on the market in the form of long term timber contracts. As recent indications seem to show, the Forestry Commission has consistently underestimated the amount of timber in our forests. This is a dangerous situation. The



# GREEN NEWS



NSW Government has been locked into supplying huge amounts of timber to the Corporation. This is timber the Government cannot possibly supply without fatally damaging the ecosystem.

*Quote from: 'Money Loggers And Forest' by David Julian  
NEFA LEAF JULY 1994*

## Irrigation water privatised

According to the Report of the Environment Liaison Officer to NSW Parliament, Ben Oquist, covering the autumn session March to May, 1994: "If there was one issue that came before the Parliament that deserved more media and public scrutiny it was this one". The Irrigations Corporations Bill exempts the management of NSW's rivers and groundwaters from the EP&A Act. The Bill passed - almost unnoticed by the media and general public - through both houses of Parliament after the government secured the vote of independent MP John Hatton in the Legislative Assembly. This government bill has been variously described as an unmitigated disaster for the environment and as resource security for irrigators.

In summary, the bill provides for corporatisation in two steps. In the first step it will allow state owned corporations to manage seventeen schemes previously operated by the Department of Water Resources. In the second step, state owned corporations may be converted to irrigator owned corporations at the request of irrigators. In the process, the government has ensured the corporations, when issuing water licences, will not be subjected to the EP&A Act for the next 15 years. Even then the original licences may be extended indefinitely, thereby avoiding the EP&A Act forever.

The Bill marks yet another example of moves to privatise public resources while making no provision at all for protection of the public values of that resource.

*From: Report of the Environment Liaison Officer to NSW Parliament, Ben Oquist, July 1994*

## WA forests into cardboard

The Western Australian State government and its Department of Conservation and Land Management has in 1992, removed the moratorium on logging our native forests in winter, a measure that was to halt the spread of Jarrah die-back, a disease damaging to the isolated unique forests of south west Western Australia.

Clearfell logging has started already in 2 of some of the most precious ancient wilderness forests remaining, and roading has begun in two others. 80% of the Karri and almost all the Marri which comes from these forests will go for woodchip exports, largely to make disposable packaging in Japan, despite their recent listing by the Heritage Commission as a valuable part of Australia's National Estate. This listing awards areas judged to have the greatest conservation value. They are the last remaining unprotected examples of these forest ecosystems in the world.

The Minister for the Environment, Kevin Minson, has dismissed opposition to these moves as "insignificant". The Western Australian Forest Alliance (WAFA), a coalition of 20 environmental groups in the state, and the Wilderness society are calling on the state government to halt the logging and roading, and preserve these 4 tiny areas of biodiversity, the habitats of some 28 endangered species as National Parks for future generations. Blockades are underway to halt the destruction, but this will NOT be enough. Public opinion on this issue must be made clear to both the State Environment Minister and the State's Premier.

### Please send letters to:

The Hon. Richard Court, Premier of Western Australia,  
AND The Hon. Kevin Minson, Minister for the Environment,  
Parliament House, Dumas House, 2 Havelock Street,  
Perth WA 6005

*From: The Environment Centre, Perth, August 1994.*




## The great escarpment walk

### ...the second leg

The walk is now resting for winter, but will restart on the spring equinox - 23rd September - at Point Lookout near Ebor. They plan to walk for 3 weeks through New England, Oxley Wild Rivers, and Werrikimbe National Parks finishing at New Country Swamp in the Enfield State forest where a "Council of All Beings" workshop will take place and general celebrations. All are welcome to join the tribe and information on this "second leg" of the walk can be obtained from Bellingen Environment Centre, or other Environment Centres on this section of the coast.





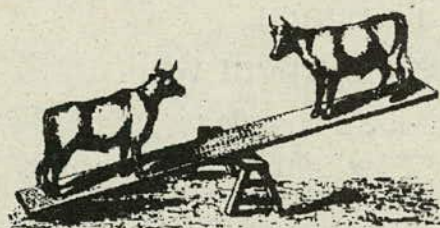
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## 'Environment in Crisis' .....Conference report

# Lobbying versus Activism



By Lisa Macdonald

**M**ore than 200 people gathered at Sydney University on August 27 to participate in an "Environment in Crisis Conference" convened by the Nature Conservation Council (NCC) of NSW.

The conference brought together activists from a wide range of local environment groups in Sydney and around NSW, as well as individuals from the peak environment bodies and relevant government services. In order to guarantee a gathering of "genuine conservationists", representatives of political parties, green or otherwise, were not permitted to attend.

The stated aims of the conference were to facilitate information exchange and networking between environmentalists, to clarify the NSW environment movement's priorities and assess the State Government's environmental record, and to maximise the NSW movement's impact in the coming state elections, which are to be held in March 1995.

In April the NCC canvassed around 450 environment groups in NSW regarding their main concerns, issues and election priorities. The responses to this survey were compiled into a list of draft resolutions which were the basis for discussion at the 21 workshops held at the conference.

These workshops covered topics ranging from water and forests issues to Aboriginal land and environment issues, public transport and local government. Lists of five priority resolutions and questions for forthcoming election candidates were discussed, compiled and taken back to a conference plenary from each workshop, where they were adopted by consensus or a 95% majority, or rejected.

The outcomes of this process will be published as conference proceedings and will form the basis of letters from the NCC to state election parties and candidates seeking their response. The answers received will be publicised.

The number and diversity of people and local environment groups that attended the conference was a clear indication that the environmental crisis continues to be a major concern for large numbers of people who are prepared to take action at the grassroots level. This was also reflected in the rich discussion in the workshops, which generated hundreds of ideas and proposals for both immediate and longer term policy changes to protect the environment.

Despite the enormous potential of this gathering, however, most of it remained unrealised by the end of the day. Compounding the problems created by time constraints was the tight control of the agenda, process and possible outcomes by the conference conveners.

The result was that, while a general aim of the conference was to discuss strategies for environmentalists to impact on the state elections, in fact discussion around any strategies other than lobbying the parties and candidates in the elections was not possible. When, for example, reporters from workshops raised proposals for non-candidate directed grassroots campaigning, they were told to reformulate their ideas in lobbying terms.

This narrow and basically conservative perspective which dominated the conference was summed up by Milo Dunphy in his closing address when he said, "We have to clearly define what we want if the government is going to take us seriously". No assessment was offered of why the government has not been taking seriously the many crystal-clear demands of the environment movement in NSW in recent years (such as to stop logging the south-east and north-east forests).

The domination of the lobbying approach to environmentalism at the conference contrasted sharply with the activist approach which characterised the Stu-

dents, Science and Sustainability conference held here two months ago. The earlier conference, which brought together many more young activists and far fewer representatives of the peak bodies in the environment movement, launched and built a number of campaigns which have since drawn new people into the movement.

In certain respects the outcomes of the Environment in Crisis Conference were very positive. The compilation of current issues and demands of large sections of the movement, for example, was very useful. The question remains, however, what is the most effective use of this information.

The experiences of the environment movement in Australia to date clearly indicate that neither the ALP nor a Liberal government will respond to such lists of concerns and demands, no matter how reasonable, well thought out and well presented they are, in the absence of a mass movement which actively mobilises increasing numbers of people against government policy. The goals and emphasis of the Environment in Crisis Conference would have been better focused on developing tactics and strategies to build independent activist campaigns that take the movement well beyond the framework of parliament.

Readers can contact the NCC (NSW) on (02) 241 2502 to obtain a copy of the conference proceedings.

From: *Green Left Weekly* 7/9/94, via Pegasus Network

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# PLUGGING the PIPES

## Hydro Station steals Nymboida's Water

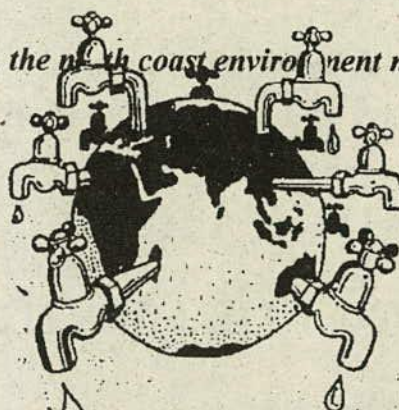
An organisation known as Friends of the River - Nymboida, staged a non-violent/non-destructive action at the site of the inlet pipes to the NRE Hydro station on 8/6/94. The aim of the action was to highlight the degradation of the Nymboida River as a result of 70 years of river diversion for hydroelectric power generation by Northern Rivers Electricity. The FOR group successfully plugged the inlet pipes of the hydro station which resulted in heavily restricting the flow so as to allow the water to rise and flow over the weir wall. NRE subsequently decided to shut the power station down due to the inadequate waterflow to the station. The wonderful spectacle of the river flowing over the weir wall giving the river system a much needed flush was glorious to see. Dancing and frivolity spontaneously occurred by FOR Activists.

It is a not well known fact that the water used in the hydro station is not returned to the Nymboida system but is diverted through Goolang Creek to the Orara River subsequently starving the Nymboida River of massive amounts of water needed to sustain the fine ecological balance of the river. Currently the Nymboida River below the weir is fed by a pitifully small outlet pipe situated at the base of the wall, the amount being released to the river has been estimated at one sixth of the lowest flow ever recorded. FOR have included in their demands that the Department of Water Resources cancel the existing licences to NRE issued over 70 years ago and in their place install interim Environmental Flow Requirements of 100 per centilitre, ie equivalent to the lowest recorded flow, which is five times more than is currently

flowing through the pipe in the weir wall. Also that the department immediately undertake to commence the study of the Nymboida River that they continue to put off because of "insufficient funds" or "waiting for the right time of year to commence". It is rumoured that more drastic demonstrations may be launched by FOR to awaken these sleeping bureaucrats into action. FOR also wish to be involved in round-table discussions with Water Resources and NRE to map out a suitable strategy for the rehabilitation of the river below the weir.

The Clarence Environment Centre although not connected to FOR does strongly support Friends of the River in their quest to reestablish the Nymboida River to its original state as one of NSW wild rivers.

From: Clarence Environment Centre Newsletter, Aug 1994



## Permaculture, ecology, world future, and a history of civilization!



**The Final Empire:**  
*The Collapse of Civilization  
and The Seed of the Future*  
by Wm. H. Ktke.

William Ktke has created a most important work which is surely destined to become a classic amongst people who thoughtfully and deeply care. It is for those who truly want to make a worthwhile contribution that will bring about lasting changes - leading to the survival of humanity.

The acknowledgements show that the Author is not writing simply from an academic viewpoint but that he has learned much from the more important school of life's experiences. His perceptive wide-ranging investigations take

us, in the first part of the book, through "The history of disintegration", "The collapse of the ecosystem", "The exhaustion of the industrial empire" and "The analysis of empire culture". This is not done in a negative manner but as a means of discovering how we have arrived in the critical condition in which we find ourselves. This search is carried into Book 2 - "The Seed of the Future" in which the Author explores a vast range of topics, such as creation of life, morality, the cultural organism and tribal cultures.

We are then led to solutions, which are based on Permaculture in the very

broadest sense. We look at the natural history of the San Francisco River Watershed and, from there to "Planetary-Watershed Restoration" and, finally, to creation of the future.

Having studied Ktke's presentation one would find it difficult to dispute his recommendations on what must be done to heal the wounds of the past and to survive the future. He is forthright in pointing out that tinkering with odd bits of "green" (25% recycling equals 1% reduction in initial consumption, etc.) will only clear the conscience and not avoid catastrophe.

I implore you to read this outstanding book and to ensure that you persuade as many others as possible to do so. It also provides a wealth of guidance for those fortunate enough to already be in a community.

Book Details: ISBN 0-9633784-5-7, Published (1993) by Arrow Point Press, P.O.Box 14754, Portland, Oregon 97214. \$19.95+\$2.00 shipping. Reviewed by Paul Sykes, Book Review Editor of the Permaculture Edge magazine, published in Australia. (Appears in Vol 3 Issue 3)



## REMNANT VEGETATION

# Valuing the remaining pieces of original ecology

By Geoff Butler

Australia's opportunity to conserve remnant vegetation is fast running out. Human pressures on remnant vegetation manifest themselves very slowly, and the decline is insidious. The next decade will prove to be the critical time in making the necessary attitudinal and legislative changes required to save what is left.

Recent moves by the NSW government to 'dispose' of remaining Crown Lands under its control could result in the remnant vegetation so often found on these sites being lost forever. It also provides an opportunity for committed community groups to apply for stewardship of these areas for conservation purposes.

Remnant vegetation refers to communities of Australian plants that have remained basically intact and functional (even if somewhat disturbed) since the European invasion of Australia. Creek banks, uncleared private land, many types of public lands including travelling stock

reserves, railway easements, cemeteries and rubbish dumps, are examples of where pre-European vegetation communities still exist in modified but reasonable shape, and in the majority of cases are certainly worthy of conservation.

The importance of these areas has been well publicised and in most cases is self evident. Factors include:

- protection of soil
- protection of water resources
- protection of wildlife habitat

- provision of shelter for livestock and people

- provision of seed banks for local revegetation projects \* preservation of an 'Australian' landscape

- conservation of biodiversity
- tourism.

In many cases these patches still harbour endangered species of flora and fauna. There is a vast amount of information available from various agencies on all the above issues, so they won't be discussed here.

The major threat to remnant vegetation is people. Human activities, often implemented through ignorance or apathy, will continue to be the main threat to conservation in this country. This may lessen, but only if we can bring about major changes in public attitudes in the very near future.

Typical threats include fire-wood gathering; 'cleaning-up' (the removal of understorey habitat, usually implemented because of our European obsession with tidiness); environmental weeds; feral (and sometimes domestic) animals; the increase in frequency and intensity of fire; dieback; insects; some recreational activities; and most importantly, fragmentation (caused by subdivision). Once again, the effects of the above threats are obvious, but some are worth discussing further, particularly fire and subdivision.

Since the fires in Sydney in early January 1994, the people of NSW have been subjected to a totally illogical but devastating knee-jerk reaction to bushfire. An insidious and opportunistic movement of self interested individuals and



Scenes from the year 2000:  
The last elephant hides  
in the last rainforest

## Vegetation Clearance

Clearance of native vegetation in NSW is continuing at a rate of 100,000 hectares each year, according to one recent estimate. Another survey in the 1980s put the annual figure as high as 430,000ha. Without decisive action, this devastating attack on the State's biodiversity, soils, water systems and climate is set to continue.

Drought and economic downturn may have temporarily slowed the rate, but a recent survey of lessees' intentions indicate that massive clearance will continue. Opponents of legislation argue that clearance is mainly an historic phenomenon, but this is a myth. The Australian Survey and Land Information Group estimates that the last fifty years has seen as much clearance of native Australian bush as the first 150 years of European occupation. The last two gen-

erations of Australians have carried out an unprecedented war against the bush - waged with heavy duty modern technology. Ideally, major political parties in NSW should join forces to enact strong, effective legislation banning further native vegetation clearance. Unfortunately, on past form, a recalcitrant farming lobby and other vested interests will fight hard against legal controls. Mr Fahey's history of caving in to rural backbench bullies does not inspire confidence in his Government's response. All candidates at the next State election should articulate policies for ending demolition of the bush. Conservationists demand the parties make strong commitments and take immediate action; write to your Local Member for their position.

From: *Nature Conservation Council of NSW.*

*Environment News*, Spring 1994.



*Graphic  
with Balloon  
eliminated  
and the text typed in*

*environs, the north coast environment magazine*

organisations have used a community disaster to either open up (for development) or otherwise alienate remain natural habitats and ecosystems (including wilderness areas) in NSW. Their use of untruthful statistics presented during and after the bushfires, together with their proposals and remedies for bushfires and their control, resulted in a series of recommendations produced by the NSW Cabinet. These were incorporated in the Bushfires (further Amendments) Bill.

The NSW Cabinet recommendations will take us back decades in environmental management now they are adopted. They will have severe implications for bushland (especially remnant vegetation) throughout the State. 'Hazard reduction' burning will become commonplace and too frequent. This will lead to increasingly rapid decline of native vegetation and the flow-on effects on fauna.

Rural subdivisions are increasing and they are a significant threat. The land uses of these blocks are highly questionable in some instances, with overstocking, mowing and slashing, and the introduction of environmental weeds (and other exotic vegetation) escalating rapidly. There need to be major restrictions on the use of non-native species in rural zones throughout the nation.

All remnants are important, and (obviously) the larger the better. They will all need to be managed. The term 'manage' may seem out of place, but we need to learn how to manage these sites properly because natural balances have been disturbed. Weeding out of invasive flora species and regenerating are examples. Where remnants containing numerous species are available, regeneration can be achieved by simply fencing to exclude stock. It is also essential to monitor these areas, promote the educational uses of them and ensure protection for non-human species there.

The Department of Conservation and Land Management will accept applications from members of the community who wish to manage Crown Land for conservation purposes. It behoves all of us who profess to be concerned about conservation in Australia to accept this challenge, and apply to manage selected reserves for their conservation into the future.

*From: an article by Geoff Butler in BOGONG magazine Vol 15 No 2 Winter 1994. Geoff Butler is an employee of the Australian Nature Conservation Agency.*

# Seven steps towards company greening



by: Guy Dancy

**W**hen a company says 'we're green', how can you tell if they're genuine and how far they take it?

Most companies have only been thinking about these things for two to three years, and as you will see from the scale, the process of 'deep greening' involved some fairly profound shifts.

## Stage one: Green trimmings

The company make a symbolic nod in the right direction, and might have five green products among 5,000 ungreen ones, coupled with a big green marketing push.

## Stage two: Green cuffs

As well as their small green product line, the company orders an in-house, staff-run paper recycling operation, and stocks up with environmentally sound cleaning liquids.

They place 'switch-off' notices by the light switch, and run a regular corner on the environment in the company newsletter.

## Stage three: Green clothes

The company commissions a full in-depth environmental audit, appoints an environmental vice-president, adopts an environmental mission statement, and includes an environmental section in their annual report.

They instigate permanent changes in areas such as waste management, packaging, transportation, paper-use, pollution control, employee involvement, eliminating ozone-depleting substances etc. They develop a solid green product line, and adopt a policy on social responsibility.

## Stage four: Green body

The company redesigns its product line to eliminate toxic and non-recycleables at source.

They do a complete materials-use analysis, with a view to long-term sustainability and recyclability.

They examine and overhaul their purchasing policy to ensure that they are supporting sustainability down the line. They adopt a policy on global responsibility.

## Stage five: Green brains

The company develops and implements a long-term business plan designed to achieve environmental sustainability, and effect a strategic redeployment of its assets and resources into sustainable products and activities - for example shifting out of oil, into solar.

This entails a major shareholder education plan, to protect themselves from hostile takeover bids.

## Stage six: Green heart

The company undertakes the transfer of its company stock from the open 'value-free' marketplace, where all that matters is the financial bottom line, into stock ownership funds equipped with social, environmental and global responsibility standards.

It develops a community co-ownership program for local plants and branch offices.

## Stage seven: Green soul

At this final stage, the company embarks on a conscious evolution of its overall goals, policies, practices and processes, to shift into a mode of planetary service.

This is a shift which many individuals are undertaking in their lives, in response to the planetary situation.

This involves asking the question 'How will this benefit the planet, the environment, the community, the customer, and the work team?', and incorporating the answers into every action.

*from greenweek.news No: 248 August 5, 1994 via pegasus computer network  
Guy Dancy is the author of After the Crash: the emergence of the Rainbow Economy.*



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# How many Australians is enough?

*Australia's  
population clock is  
ticking up 700  
people a day or,  
255,500 a  
year...Tick Tick Tick.*

**A**t the United Nations Population conference in Cairo, nations of the world came together to ask a simple yet fundamental question: what can be done to control humanity's lemming-like rush to the brink of extinction, courtesy of its remarkable reproductive "success"?

The world population now stands at 5.66 billion, says the UN Population Fund. With every tick of the clock, the population grows: three people a second, a quarter of a million every day.

The needs and wants of the burgeoning human population drive the overuse of the world's resources and environment. Population pressure forces debt-ridden Brazilians to log the rainforest and hungry Africans to convert grassland to desert through overgrazing. It exacerbates political tensions which may, as in Rwanda, boil over into human and ecological devastation of war. It is obvious that a polluted, despoiled planet cannot support human life comfortably or indefinitely.

It is easy for Australians to pretend that we do not have a population problem. After all we have an enormous continent of 7.6 million square kilometres in which to house 17.8 million people. However, UNPF numbers show that we, with Canada, have the largest rate of population growth in the developed world of 1.4% per year. Catholic Italy has 0.1%, Germany and France 0.4%, and USA 1%.

Although Australia's biomass does not equal that of most countries, we do not tread softly on the earth, as a developed country we are among the 25% of the global population that consume 60% of the earth's resources. Scientists, such as Dr Paul Erlich and Dr David Suzuki note that when it comes to using the continent's resource capital - air, water, soil and other gifts from nature - Australians are big spenders, even over-spenders.

Professor Charles Birch, emeritus professor at University of Sydney, puts it more bluntly. "our present population is the equivalent of a billion Indonesians in terms of our impact on the environment," he says.

It is time to pose the question, how many Australians should inhabit this dusty red land? Governments, not surprisingly, have shied away from setting a firm population target as open options make electoral, if not environmental, sense. The federal government began a slow journey towards a population policy in 1990 when the Prime Minister, Mr Hawke, asked the National Population Council (NPC) to "examine the major issues which flow from an increase in Australia's population." The NPC did its homework and in 1991 produced "Population Issues and Australia's Future". In the report it concluded that Australia required a clear population policy, but left the "magic number" up to later investigators. That quest has been taken up by Mr Barry Jones, Chairman of the House of Representatives Standing Committee for Long Term Strategies. Along with 11 other committee members, Mr Jones has barnstormed across Australia, sounding out experts and the public. The committee collected 261 submission and will make recommendations to Parliament in December. The recommendations cannot arrive too soon. The population clock keeps ticking. Australia's population grows by 700 people a day, or 255,500 a year.

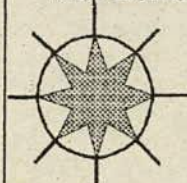
Dr Dennis Saunders of the CSIRO claims: "water is the one thing that's going to limit population growth in Aus-

tralia." Australians, he says, are drawing on reserves such as rivers and bore holes faster than Mother Nature can refill them. As the population grows, farmers must wring ever more from nutrient-poor soils. To do so they irrigate, apply fertilisers and pesticides and continue to clear land. Dr Chris Watson, a soil scientist with CSIRO, says that, ironically, these methods make matters worse. Along with other experts, he believes that unless farmers mend their ways, the productivity of the land will drop catastrophically.

At present, 22 million hectares of arable land is under cultivation in Australia and roughly 70% of that land is degraded. At most, there is another 55 million hectares that could be used, says Professor Henry Nix of ANU. What this means, he says, is that Australia can feed 50 million people, tops. And to achieve that, every scrap of arable land must be turned over to cultivation, food exports must be stopped and degraded land restored immediately. So what of an optimum population? In his forthcoming book, *THE Future Eaters*, Dr Tim Flannery of the Australian Museum in Sydney argues that given the vagaries of Australia's climate, a safe bet is a long-term population of 6 to 12 million, a range that many ecologists and biologists espouse. The problem of such a low optimal target is obvious, it means that Australia is already over populated and must design a population policy to cut back.

*from: Sydney Morning Herald 10/9/94*

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# Logging in private forests

*Greens asked to keep watch on logging in private forests*

**approximately  
half the total  
volume of timber  
products comes  
from private land**

**N**ew provisions for the protection of endangered fauna habitat on private land are an improvement on paper, but in practice they are not being adequately enforced. The new measures only apply to steep land, Councils and landholders are generally not aware of them and they are not being properly enforced by the Soil Conservation Service. The SCS have not demonstrated that they have the commitment or the capacity to enforce prescriptions for protecting endangered fauna and their habitats.

The lack of adequate controls on private property is a serious concern. Much of our remaining biodiversity is not in pristine forests, but in logged and semi-degraded forests, including private land. In north east NSW approximately half the total volume of timber products comes from private land, which includes forests with high conservation values and important catchment values.

The new procedure is set out in a CALM (Dept of Conservation and Land Management, which includes the SCS) document, "Destruction or Injuring of Trees on Protected Land: A Step-by-Step Guide to the Application Process", June 1993. Although the first step is to determine whether Protected Land is involved, this is not defined in the document, - the landholder contacts CALM.

If protected Land is not involved, no authority is required and if development consent is not required from Council, the logging operations are not subject to any controls. Many Councils do not require consent for logging operations. If protected land is involved, and no exemption category is applicable (these are not listed in the document), CALM undertakes an assessment of erosion hazard and environmental features, and decides whether an Fauna Impact Statement or Environmental Impact Statement is required, in which case the landholder contacts NPWS or Department of Planning respectively. The field inspection report includes information concerning rare flora and scientific values but does not refer to fauna values (Appendix 1). CALM is required under the Endangered Fauna Act and EPA Act to determine the significance of the proposal on endangered fauna, and employs guidelines developed by Smith and Van der Lee, (1992), based on habitat components to do this. There does not appear to be a requirement to consult NPWS or other agency for records of the presence of endangered fauna in the area.

The publication by Smith and Van der Lee is deemed by CALM to be a confidential internal document.

The NPWS can give advice, if asked, but cannot demand a FIS. They have power under the NPW Act to issue a stop-work order, but have never exercised this power on private land. The so-called "7-point test" for habitat features is administered by CALM, who issue permits and attach the conditions. CALM decides whether an FIS is required, and the Service is only involved if CALM determines an FIS is required, and CALM is not required to consult the Service in making this decision.

Most of these private forests have been overcut on short rotation cycles, so that old and mature trees which provide essential hollows and forage requirements for endangered species are disappearing. If we are to prevent further local extinctions of species from many areas it is vital that we retain these old trees and sufficient recruitment trees to replace them when they die or fall over from fire or wind damage. We also need to prevent further loss of understorey, shrub layer and ground cover if many of our species are to survive, and if we are to protect water quality and ensure continued supplies of water from our upper catchments into the future.

**The North East Forest Alliance (NEFA) would like to hear from anyone with information about logging operations on private lands, particularly land over 18 degrees slope, environmentally sensitive land, or forests which are likely habitat for endangered fauna. It would be useful if people could ask Shire Councils and CALM for details of approvals and conditions applied, and document and report any apparent breaches, or failures to obtain approval. Photographs are particularly useful to show the intensity of harvesting and breaches of soil erosion and filter strip prescriptions. Copies of the approval process and general prescriptions can be obtained from the Soil Conservation Service (CALM). From: NEFA Forest Update, Nimbin News June-July 1994**

## Hungry Times Coming

**W**orldwatch Institute issued warnings that there are now signs that population increases are outpacing the world's resources available to produce food. The Institute reported that world grain production per person is falling about 1% per year and the seafood catch is falling by 2% per year.

The authors of the Report - Lester Brown and Hal Kane, said that fisheries and farming are no longer able to produce enough food to keep up with population growth, that around 900 million

people are already hungry, and that food security will replace military security as the principal preoccupation of national governments in the future.

The World Bank estimates that the world's population increases by 1 billion people every 12 years. The world population will be discussed at a major international conference being held in Cairo from the 5th to the 13th of September.

*from: 2XX News, Friday 19 August  
via Pegasus computer network*



This Month's Cover - Black Bean (*Castanospermum Australe*)  
It's time to think about ordering trees from the Nambucca Reforestation Society for delivery next March, so I've chosen the Black Bean or Moreton Bay Chestnut as the cover illustration for this issue. This handsome rainforest tree with its dark green shiny leaves and red and yellow pea-like flowers, is the source of a very valuable cabinet timber, and has large seeds, edible roasted.

This year's tree list includes a Rainforest Timber Kit as well as the very popular Bird Attracting Kit.

The Reforestation Society are a voluntary group who have been encouraging tree planting in the Nambucca Shire for many years by organising low cost tree seedlings for large scale plantings - shelter belts, shade for stock, streambank stabilisation, rainforest regeneration, timber lots, and smaller shrubs & trees to attract birds to your garden. The tree list is available from Nambucca & Macksville libraries, Nambucca Trade Centre, Dept. of Agriculture and The Co-op produce store, and contains over 50 species, most of which grow naturally in the local area.

Julie.


# Environs

the north coast  
environment news  
magazine

Environs is published every other month on a voluntary basis to bring together reports from a large number of environmental organisations. Many groups are affiliated with Environs, including the Bellingen Environment Centre, and the Nambucca Valley Conservation Association.

Editorial contributions are welcomed. They should include the authors name and phone number and should be sent by mail to: Environs, PO Box 123, Bowraville 2449, or by fax to (065) 647 808, or by email to: peg@environs. Subscriptions are \$12 for 6 issues. Advertisements may be lodged with Julie Mozsny by phoning (065) 695 360. Editorial for Environs is by Carol Margolis and the Environs team. Layout and typesetting is by Mike Holland. Cover artwork is by Julie Mozsny.

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